



# Gang-gang

**APRIL 2020**

**Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.**

## **APRIL MEETING**

**Wednesday 8 April 2020**

**There will be no meeting in April.**

Due to the COVID-19 crisis the COG Committee has agreed to take a precautionary approach and to implement preventive strategies aimed at minimising viral transmission through our activities. Among others the following measure has been put in place:

- Monthly COG meetings will be cancelled. There will be no April meeting this year or subsequent meetings until further notice.
- Sale of publications will resume when meetings resume.

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

What a difference a month makes! After the very significant rainfall event in the first week of March and the relatively mild weather following, conditions have greened up completely and are so different compared with early February. Despite this, for the first major part of the 4 weeks from 27 February covered by this column, the early autumn bird activity in the COG area of Interest (AoI), at least judged from posts on the COG chatline, seemed relatively quiet. Since then, COG woodland survey reports have provided mixed results, with two indicating very active bird life (one after a slow start), and the other two very quiet conditions, as they have been in my local patch. Also, as detailed below, from a closer analysis it appears that a number of species have stayed longer than usual.

The seeming increase of this activity appeared to coincide with the first reports of migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** with, from 17 March, small flocks (maximum 50+) being reported from central Tuggeranong, Kambah,

*Continued Page 2*

*Julian Robinson*

**Yellow-faced Honeyeater**



**Everyone welcome**

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## Coronavirus: notification of cancellation of all COG meetings, gatherings and field trips

Since the COG Committee sent out the message below last Friday, we have kept developments with the Covid-19 coronavirus under active review. Understanding of the magnitude of the risk to everyone of this pandemic has increased rapidly. Like effectively all community groups, and in line with government announcements, COG is therefore cancelling forthwith all COG meetings, field trips, and activities that involve people gathering together.

Our previous precautionary approach to field trips was, on further analysis, assessed as being unlikely to ensure that participants were able to adhere to guidelines of personal distance, either during carpooling and during the walk itself, and thus was assessed as being unlikely to provide sufficient protection to participants against possible cross-infection. It is also very possible that gatherings of more than a few people will be specifically banned in the near future.

Now may therefore be a time to bird-watch solo or with only a few friends, to bird-watch closer to home, or – if a period of complete lock-down is announced – to spend time with our bird books and photographs. The birds will still be there when activities slowly return towards their previous normality in the months ahead.

The COG Committee will continue to keep developments under active review, and will continue to meet electronically. We will continue to produce Gang-gang and Canberra Bird Notes, and to run the COG website and chatline – so please continue to submit notes and articles, and join chatline conversations. As before, we seek the cooperation of members to minimise community spread of the virus, and ask that all follow the precautions that medical organisations and governments advise.

**COG Committee**  
**25 March 2020**

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

Narrabundah Hill, Duffy, Pearce, Florey, Mawson and Watson. By 20 March activity had increased with Lindsay Hansch reporting that honeyeaters were well and truly running over the Jerrabomberra flyway (as I've pointed out previously this is directly over his house and probably the most important one currently in the COG Aol). There had been a steady stream of flocks from mid-morning until mid-afternoon that day, the largest flock over 200 birds with two others around 150 and several in the 70-90 range.

This is an early start as checking my columns over the past 5 years reveals that only in 2016 were the first flocks reported earlier, on 12 March. The question is, where is the source area? As Michael Robbins pointed out, this may be areas to the west and north-west of the ACT which have not been burnt, as opposed to the extensive areas to the south-west. In respect of the latter, Nicki Taws posted that that she had spent a couple of days in the Cabramurra area during the week of 9-13 March. She noticed a handful of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and a couple of **Red Wattlebirds**, noting that it was hard to imagine where they were coming from given the extent of the devastation to the south-west and that, in the direction they were heading, it would be at least 25 km to find an unburnt leaf in the canopy.

At about the same time, Con Boekel spent time in the Billy Billy Creek area on the Corin Dam Road observing/recording any bird behaviours that related to the burned landscape. He noted that the Orroral Valley fire heat must have been quite patchy there. In some places it had crowned and the ground layer was thoroughly scorched. In other areas some shrubs survived. The gullies had been severely burned in particular. The regrowth saplings half-way up the slopes were scorched with an extensive percentage of dead leaves. For some reason, the fire had missed bits altogether, and some mature trees had a partially green canopy. Others had a mix of green and scorched leaves. He noted he was seeing flocks of 5-7 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** milling about in this partly burnt area close to the northern edge of the fire.

The big question is how many honeyeaters will come through this season and how long will the movement last. So please keep a lookout, including for the **White-naped Honeyeater** which will join these flocks in April and is usually the dominant species towards the end of the period. Please also an eye out for partial migrants such as **Red Wattlebirds**, whose numbers seem to have been down compared with usual, with only some small flocks reported migrating. Similarly, numbers of **Striated Pardalote** and **Silvereye** seem to be down, with more reports coming to my attention, including in mixed feeding flocks, for

the **Spotted Pardalote**. Look out too for the **Noisy Friarbird**, for which only a few flocks of up to 15 birds have been reported.

Of the late-staying birds noted in my previous column, there have been no further reports of **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, **Brown Songlark** or **White-browed Woodswallow**. The **Horsfield's Bushlark** has still been reported from the Coppins Crossing pipeline track by Alastair Smith, with 3 there on 9 March, a very late record for this species. The **Rufous Songlark** was reported from 2 locations, the last from Aranda Bushland by Matthew Larkin on 28 February, again quite a late report for this species, though some do occasionally overwinter. The **White-winged Triller**, so widely recorded over spring/summer, was still reported from 8 locations on the eBird Australia map during the period, the most recent being a single female at Bluetts Block by David Dedenczuk on 23 March, again a very late record for this species.

In keeping with the very poor year for local cuckoos, there have been no further reports of **Pallid Cuckoo** or **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** since 25 and 21 February, respectively. There has been only a single report of **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, a recently-fledged young seen in company with **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** at the National Arboretum main dam by Alastair Smith on 9 March. This is a remarkable record, akin to that of the **Pallid Cuckoo** fledgling noted in my previous column, as the most recent previous record for this species was on 22 January at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. According to the BIRD INFO data on the COG website, this is also a very late breeding record, the first dependent young for March over the 35 years of records, with only 3 such records in February.

In contrast the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which I've mentioned previously as the least migratory of our local cuckoos, was reported from 4 locations, most recently on 17 March. However, there have been no reports for the **Brush Cuckoo** since 21 January, including as they come through Canberra on their return migration. This contrasts with the **Rufous Fantail**, another passage migrant, which has been reported from 4 urban locations, including regularly at the ANBG (the latest on 20



Rufous Fantail

David Cook



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Good birding, good food

**Tours that are cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19 will be run in similar timeframes in 2021.**

### The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

13 to 22 July 2020  
Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

### The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

24 July to 2 August 2020  
Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

### Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

7 to 17 August 2020

### Adelaide to Nullarbor Plain

5 to 20 September 2020

### Plains-wanderer Weekends 2020

24 & 25 October 2020  
14 & 15 November 2020  
28 & 29 November 2020

### Top End birding tour

May 2021  
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau.

### Atherton Tablelands

& Iron Range NP June 2021

### Plains-wanderer Weekends 2021

16 & 17 October 2021  
30 & 31 October 2021  
6 & 7 November 2021  
27 & 28 November 2021

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March) suggesting there has been enough unburnt habitat to the west of Canberra for at least some of this species to have survived. It is not possible to come to the same tentative conclusion for the **Satin Flycatcher**, as there is only the single such record of a male seen by Ash Allnutt at Stromlo Forest Park on 29 February.

Of the species that usually leave early in March, the **Dollarbird** was still recorded from around 10 locations over the period, most recently from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 8 March (about usual), and the **Rainbow Bee-eater** from around a dozen locations, most recently on 18 March from the Stoney Creek NR by John Hurrell. The **Sacred Kingfisher**, usually the last of these 3 species to leave, was recorded from a similar number of locations, most recently by Bron and Darryl King on Ginninderra Creek at Latham on 23 March; some later records may be expected.

The last record I can find of the **Eastern Koel** is one bird at Garran by Alastair Smith on 18 March; my impression is of an earlier season finish for the bulk of this species than in recent years. While the **Leaden Flycatcher** was recorded from around 8 locations, the most recent one was at Mulligans Flat NR by David Dedenczuk on 14 March, also suggesting quite an early departure. In contrast **Latham's Snipe** and **Australian Reed-Warbler** were still present at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 23 March.

**Fairy Martins** were still reported from 4 locations, the most recent being 7 birds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 16 March. However, **Tree Martins**, reported from 14 locations during the period, were still observed at Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Tharwa Bridge Reserve on 22 March. Reports of **White-throated Needletail** were from 10 locations, but all in small numbers, with the most recent (and highest number) being 14 at Kowen Forest by Chris C on 21 March. However, there have been no reports of the related and usually less numerous **Fork-tailed Swift** since 16 February, reflecting a relatively poor season for seeing these two species (few, if any, sightings seem to have been associated with the significant rain event of 4-5 March), which can usually be seen up to early in April.

So during April please keep an eye out for the above and other spring/summer migrants which are still being reported but usually leave during April. These include **Noisy Friarbird**, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, and most of the **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** (large groups of the latter have been reported moving through from mid-March as is usual). A number of these last two species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and **Superb Parrot**. During March there were some reports of the latter species feeding on Chinese Elm seeds, a possible further example of how adaption to local food sources has allowed this species to increasingly stay over winter.

Of the first altitudinal migrant species that move from the mountains but stay here over winter, the **Scarlet Robin** gradually seems to have moved into urban and peri-urban locations in Canberra, having been recorded from around a dozen such locations, mainly the latter. The **Golden Whistler** has moved into around 16 such locations, with some surprising numbers reported at a single location (a maximum of 15 at the ANBG). The **White-eared Honeyeater** has similarly been reported from around 16 such locations.

So look out for these and the other altitudinal migrants which usually arrive later such as the **Flame Robin** (only reported from The Pinnacle NR so far), the **Rose** (a single report of 4 birds from Pierces Creek Forest on 23 March) and **Pink Robin** (no reports from the ACT so far), the **Crescent** and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** (no urban or peri-urban reports for either so far in 2020), and the **Swift Parrot** migrating from Tasmania (none so far but please keep an eye out as much of its usual winter feeding areas have been burnt, including the South Coast)

Fewer "unusual" species seem to have been reported over the 4-week period. By far the most interesting was the report of an **Eastern Curlew** posted on the Canberra Nature Map (CNM) on 19 March. It was identified as a young (2-4 year-old) bird photographed in an open paddock away from watercourses near Mt Clear in Namadgi NP on 11 March. It begs the question - what was it doing there? One suggestion was possibly a temporary stop while migrating north across the country. However, having just read Andrew Darby's book *Flight Lines* (an excellent, very well written book which I can thoroughly recommend), migratory waders wouldn't do this unless forced down by illness/lack of fuel or bad weather, noting no major storm events, etc, seemed to be around at the time. This coastal shorebird is a threatened species, declared Critically Endangered as its numbers have dropped dramatically in the past years. There is no entry for it in the 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR), though the November 2017 Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Australian Capital Territory on the COG website includes it as a non-breeding vagrant. The CNM notes it as only the fourth record in the ACT, though of these I can confirm only the 1977 one at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, which is included in Steve Wilson's book *Bird of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change*.

The first report for 2020 of the **Musk Duck**, a single male at Yerrabi Pond, was recorded on 19 March by Cedric Bear. Other observers recorded it there since, a favoured local spot in the past, up to 24 March. On 21 March Sandra Henderson photographed a female which rapidly disappeared into the reeds at Tuggeranong Marsh which, as I've noted in the past few months, is a surprisingly deep pond thought to collect run off at the southern end of Greenway Oval.

Apart from Cotter Dam, the **Great-crested Grebe** was reported from West Belconnen Pond, a possible new location, on 15 March. The **Common Sandpiper** was last photographed by Kym Bradley at Isabella Pond on 10 March, having been present for over 5 months since it was first reported there on 7 October 2019. A **Black Falcon** was reported from east of Lake George by Michael Lenz on 18 March, and a further one from Goorooyaroo NR by Steve Holliday on 22 March, whereas single **Black Kites** were reported from 5 locations over the period.

On 4 March David Rosalky reported a **White-headed Pigeon** (also the first for 2020) on a cedar, where it sat preening for some minutes, in his next-door neighbour's garden in Deakin. There have been two further reports of single **Cockatiels**, again both in wild colouring, at Calvary Hospital on 26 February, and at Swinger Hill on 14 March. The **Azure Kingfisher** was last reported from Cotter Reserve by Alastair Smith on 2 March.

Apart from the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** mentioned above, there has still been breeding activity reported, as follows:

- On 7 March Jean Casburn told me she had finally seen the **Satin Bowerbird** feeding young in her garden. A couple had been around for a while with lots of calling going on, and intermittently two were in trees across the road, where one 'adult' was eating something. Then the feeder bird hopped/flew across to an unusually coloured and sized juvenile and, to her surprise, fed it. No calling was involved. My experience is that they are very quiet feeders; at most you sometimes can hear very soft begging. Also, it's often hard to tell which is the adult(s) and which are the juveniles.



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- As noted in the report on the COG outing on 15 March the **Australasian Darter/Cormorant** breeding along the Molonglo River west of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass has continued. However, despite the rain and deep water, breeding has not recommenced at Tuggeranong Marsh, with Sandra Henderson reporting only a single **Little Pied Cormorant** on her visit there on 21 March.

- On 18 March Michael Lenz reported a pair of **Australasian Grebes** incubating a clutch of eggs on a farm dam on the eastern side of Lake George. He noted this was very late breeding, no doubt triggered by the recent rains. This is supported by the BIRD INFO data on the COG website which shows 1 nest with young for March, but 2 nests with eggs and 10 on/leaving nest, and only dependent young from April to June. Graeme Clifton noted that his pair in Carwoola were rearing their third brood of the summer and he wouldn't be surprised if they go again. Last breeding season they had 5 broods and interestingly the success rate declined from the first to last brood, starting with 5 chicks and ending with 1. The water level of the dam rises and falls with pumping in and out. In 2018 he built a platform for the pair to nest on and they started nest building on it within one day. He noted that breeding on their dam is not limited by drought, and may be more limited by parental exhaustion!

- On 24 March Sandra Henderson photographed a female **Chestnut Teal** with 7 very small ducklings on the dam at Callum Brae. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows four records of dependent young for March over the 35 years of records, with records for these in all months except May, showing how duck species can breed year-round depending on conditions.

Finally, there have been very few new **Eastern Koel** fledgling reports over the period and the tentative total is now around 66, around 20 fewer than last season despite the much earlier start. This figure includes a couple of extra from me in Rivett/Chapman as a careful analysis of my records has indicated there were at least 8, easily the highest number in a relatively small area this season

More mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have come to my attention, including some large ones consisting of up to 12 species. Also look out for single species flocks starting to form. Locally **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, which have again been widely recorded from over 60 locations, seem have been coming together from just 2-3 to around 20 birds. Numbers of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** associated with their local roost sites have been unchanged at around 500 birds in March, but with few if any big roost flight flocks observed.

On 18 March Martin Butterfield reported a large flock of 336 **Silver Gulls** roosting on the Target rooftop car park in Civic, from where he has reported them before. On the morning of 29 February Michael Lenz checked how many **Welcome Swallows** were roosting under the Eyre Street Bridge at Kingston Harbour/Norgrove Park. While 803 departed from the roost, this was only half the 2016 and 2017 numbers at the same time of the year, with 60% of the flock size leaving between 1-10 birds, also lower than usual. He noted such low figures probably indicate a poor breeding season.

April is the last of the more than 3 months when there is significant bird movement in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above, including those that usually leave by the end of April, 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 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 chatline") 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.

Finally, to all readers please keep safe and maintain your social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis while still birding under these restrictions. It will be interesting to see how they affect the summary in my next report which I will draft in 5 weeks.

Jack Holland



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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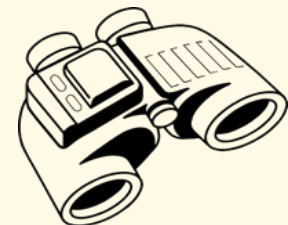
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# Field Trip Reports

## Tuesday 10 – Thursday 12 March - Ulladulla and district

Only 2 attended this trip due to recent events including hail damage to cars. I visited in early December 2019 and the picture was grim with fires and smoke approaching Ulladulla. Evacuees were streaming north and wetlands and lakes were stagnant so I could not stay. This visit was encouraging. Although vast areas were burnt, dams were full, the Shoalhaven River at Oallen Ford was flowing and regrowth beginning. At South Pacific Heathland Reserve, off Pitman Avenue, Ulladulla, we were rewarded with 2 **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. This site of 14 hectares is a hotspot for wildlife and plants. Ticks can be a problem with foliage that brushes as you walk past.

Bada Dam, at Dolphin Point, was covered in water lilies and lots of waterbirds including **Royal Spoonbills**, **Australian White Ibis** and **Eastern Great Egret**. Burrill Lake nearby was quiet due to high tide and no waders were seen.

Wilford's Lane Wetlands, south of Milton township, was transformed from a salt-encrusted pool in December to teeming with waterbirds such as **Straw-necked Ibis**, **Black Swans**, **White-necked Heron** and **Australasian Shoveler**. As it is some distance away (on private land), a scope would be needed to pick up all species.

Garrads Reserve at Narrawallee escaped the fire and was called a green island. It is a hotspot and always yields good birds. This time a pair of **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** was observed for some time feeding in a casuarina by the track and was there an hour later when we returned. At the mangrove a flock of **White-breasted Woodswallows** was roosting in the upper canopy of a tall eucalypt. They are summer visitors.

Most of the road to Lake Conjola from the highway had severe fire damage to trees with all leaves burnt. By contrast, some of the village was spared and trees along Thorne Street although burnt underneath had their crown foliage intact. This may have been due to action by the Rural Fire Service which was located on the same road. Lake Conjola was now open to the sea with a wide entrance and dune grasses responding to the recent rain. With high tide no migratory waders were evident. There was a cluster of 21 **Red-capped Plovers** on the southern spit near the entrance and 40 **New Holland Honeyeaters** were milling about near the carpark.

A total of 65 species was recorded. The highlights were **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** at 3 different sites.

Bill Graham

## Sunday 15 March - Molonglo River Walk from Weston

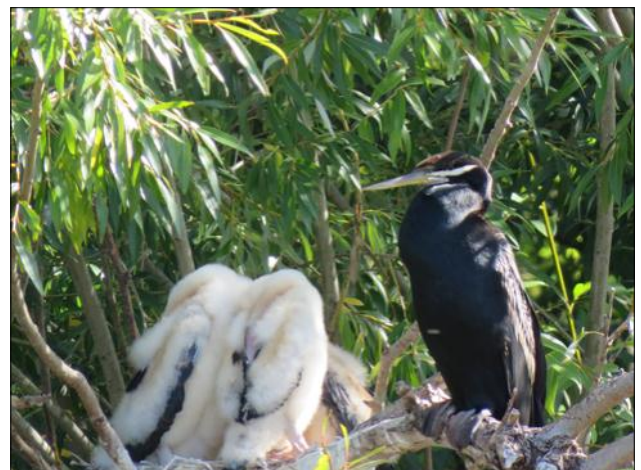
This walk was a 5km loop from near the RSPCA towards Scrivener Dam and back on the other side. It was timed to view the nests of cormorants and darters. There were quite a few nests with large young of both **Australasian Darters** and **Little Pied Cormorants**, and occupied nest of **Little Black** and **Great Cormorants**. Towards the end of the walk the local **Black-shouldered Kite** watched us cross the river from a vantage point next to the bridge. We saw a total of 39 species, including **Double-barred** and **Red-browed Finches**, and **European Goldfinches**.

Sandra Henderson



**Black-shouldered Kite**

*Sandra Henderson*



**Australasian Darter**, nest with young

*Sandra Henderson*

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### Wednesday 18 March – Bluetts Block

Twenty-four members and guests gathered, at social distances, on Urriara Rd on a fine and mild morning.

Thank you to Jean Casburn for leading this walk through a very interesting patch of bush. Those with long memories will recall it being threatened with conversion to a motocross track but saved by lobbying from COG and other groups concerned with conserving what remained of the Bush Capital. The list of species seen on this walk justifies the conservation effort.

The highlights were **Speckled Warbler** (2) and **Red-capped Robin** (2). In both cases these were heard within the first kilometre of the walk and then sighted very well in the last kilometre. We also saw at least 9 **Scarlet Robins**: either the fire has pushed them out of Namadgi or reports of their demise are a little premature. Two **Eastern Yellow Robins** completed the expected trio.

The most common bird was **Grey Fantail** with 19 birds marked off. This was a very conservative estimate as they were everywhere. Possibly 'X' would have been the more accurate report measure as they were present in highly mobile little groups. Also surprisingly common were **Golden Whistlers** with at least 7 birds seen.

A **Grey Currawong** provided a lifer for some visitors.

A total of 41 species was recorded.

Martin Butterfield

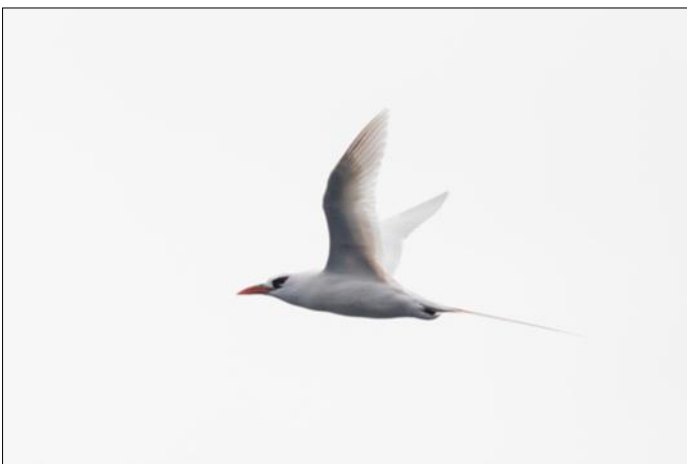
### Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 March – Eden pelagics

March is an exciting month for seabirds as you never know what you might find.

We had a great start on Saturday morning as we headed out of port, seeing plenty of shearwaters (**Wedge-tailed, Short-tailed, Flesh-footed, Fluttering** and **Hutton's**), **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatross**, several **Arctic** and **Pomarine Jaegers** and plenty of Common Dolphins which followed the boat for a while. Soon after we arrived at the shelf edge we were joined by several **Shy Albatross**, a **Buller's Albatross** and a magnificent immature **Southern Royal Albatross** which I initially mistook for a Northern Royal until I looked at my photos after the trip. Southern Royal Albatross are quite rare in NSW and a report will be submitted to the NSW Rarities committee. We also enjoyed great views of **Wilson's** and **White-faced Storm-Petrels** and the odd **Grey-faced Petrel**. As we were starting to head back in a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** appeared above the boat briefly before flying north. Needless to say tropicbirds are incredibly rare this far south. We added one **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** on the way back to port to bring our albatross tally to 5. A truly unpredictable day with two rare visitors – one from cold waters to the south and one from hot waters to the north!

Activity on Sunday was somewhat lower compared to Saturday. We only had one **Pomarine Jaeger** fly over on the way out and we couldn't relocate the **Southern Royal** or tropicbird. We still managed 3 species of shearwater, **Grey-faced Petrel** and 4 species of albatross (**Shy, Black-browed, Buller's** and **Indian Yellow-nosed**). As with Saturday, a highlight for many was the great views of **Wilson's** and **White-faced Storm-Petrels** as they dipped and danced on the water. Given the coronavirus situation these trips are likely to be the last travel for many of us.

Tobias Hiyashi



Red-tailed Tropicbird

Tobias Hiyashi



Southern Royal Albatross

Tobias Hiyashi



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# New Places: March 2020

Sandra Henderson

## Narrabundah Wetlands

Where is it: Matina St in Narrabundah. (Matina St changes its name to Goyder St at some point along the street). It is right next to the Monaro Highway, across from the Canberra South Caravan Park. There is parking on Matina St.

This has been on my list for a while, so I took the time to wander around in late March. The wetlands (the Mill Creek Rehabilitation Project, according to the sign) diverts Jerrabomberra Creek through a series of ponds then back into the creek. The creek itself continues on between the wetlands and highway. If you visit, be sure to wander to the underpass near the wetlands silt trap – it's where the **Welcome Swallows** nest and roost.

There seemed to be lots of small fish in the shallow ponds, which had attracted a **White-faced Heron**, as well as **Great and Little Pied Cormorants**. With slightly raised reedy areas between the ponds it may become a good area for crakes when the vegetation is more established.



White-faced Heron

Sandra Henderson

## Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve – Fidge St, Calwell

This is some distance from my usual entry point on Callister St in Theodore, and I'd never been on this side of the reserve. There is limited parking. There seemed to be plenty of bird activity from the hillsides, so I wandered upwards, off track. It is quite a steep area, rather rocky, so rather more of a challenge than the southern entry.

A lone **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** flew over several times, calling constantly. Two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were circling above the highest point I could see and, soon after I arrived, an **Australian Hobby**, with an **Australian Magpie** closely behind, flew down the hill and out over the suburb. A family of **White-winged Choughs** was moving up the hill, and **Spotted Pardalotes** were all around. There are some quite spectacular views from higher points, but it's a rather challenging area!

## Coppins Crossing – Pipeline Track

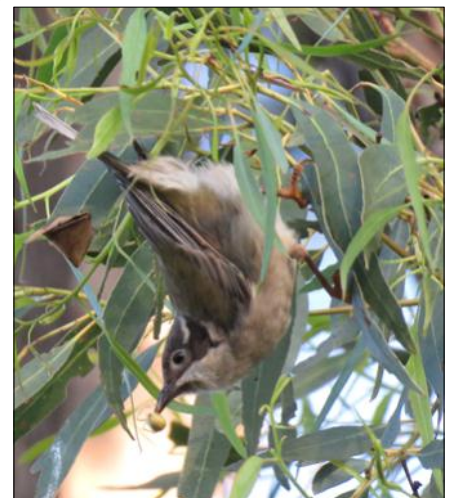
My previous expeditions from the Coppins Crossing carpark were down to and along the river. The Pipeline Track goes from the end of the carpark to Butters Bridge, across the bridge, and back on the other side. A really good walk, apart from the slightly tricky task of getting safely from where the track comes back onto Coppins Crossing Road and down to the carpark – a narrow, uneven verge and lots of traffic around a bend means it is not terribly safe.

There is an interpretive sign at the bridge, giving information about the bridge itself and Sir John Butters, an engineer and the first Chief Commissioner of the Federal Capital Territory. It is a bit disappointing that the sides of the bridge restrict the view.

I got some great views of a party of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** feeding in some eucalypts, and found a couple of **Australasian Pipits** on the grassy areas near the far end of the bridge. The hoped-for skylarks failed to materialise.

A slight diversion off the track can take you along a track overlooking the old (dry) sewage ponds, and it was apparent that a further diversion would take you along the fences to what was known some years ago as "finch central". I didn't go down to the river in that area.

Well worth a visit, but take care on Coppins Crossing Road.



Brown-headed Honeyeater Sandra Henderson

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# VISIT TO MALLACOOTA - 5-13 MARCH 2020

Barbara Slotemaker de Bruine

It was with some trepidation that we made the journey down to Mallacoota earlier this month. We had been in contact with some of the locals whom we've come to know, over the past 38 years. Some had lost their homes and there was a need in the community for clothing, linen, kitchen items, etc. We also donated a couple of bikes to a friend (who was acting as a co-ordinator), two DVD players, camping gear, books and other bits and pieces, which were to be distributed to people who had lost their homes. It was very much appreciated.

We drove via Cooma, Bombala and the Imlay Road and were amazed at the growth and regeneration. The forest had been really decimated, but the ferns were coming through and the gums were recovering. As we all know, wildlife has not been so fortunate.



On the Imlay Road



White Rock picnic spot

We called in at White Rock picnic spot (one of our favourites), which was closed, but it was still safe to walk around. We were pleasantly surprised when we heard 3 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** fly overhead. Our first encounter with some birdlife! Next stop, Mallacoota.

As everyone knows, this town was all over the news with over 4000 people trapped on the wharf on New Year's Eve. An incredible and dangerous experience. Fortunately, only one life was lost, that of Fred Becker, who was in his 70s. He was one of the locals who used to deliver firewood to our place. He was as 'tough as old boots' and died of a heart attack battling the flames. We visited our old place, Blue Wren Cottage, which fortunately was saved, thanks to a neighbour, Nick, who put out the embers with a bucket! He saved four homes. The neighbours across the road weren't so lucky! No birdlife was heard here, but our new owner, Geoff, said he had seen a koala on the block and the **Australian King Parrots** and **Wonga Pigeons** had been visiting for water.



**Blue Wren Cottage – minus many trees**



**Nick's corner**

We then moved into our accommodation in Karbeethong, which lost about 7 homes, but the Pole House where we stayed overlooked the lake and so the evidence of fire was not quite so pronounced. John, the owner, had planted many grevilleas, so now the fun started! We didn't have to wait long before an **Eastern Whipbird** appeared on the deck. This was soon followed by a **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Little Wattlebird**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Galahs**, **Australian Magpies**, **New Holland Honeyeaters**, **Crimson Rosellas**, **White-headed Pigeons**, **Rainbow Lorikeets**, **Grey Butcherbird**, a **Whistling Kite** and, of course, **Australian Pelicans**, **Silver Gulls** and a **Great Egret** on the lake.



**View from the Pole House**



**Great Egret**

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As we moved around town, other birds were spotted including **Common Blackbird, Australian Ravens, Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos, Common Bronzewing, a Wedge-tailed eagle, Australian Wood Ducks, Crested Pigeons, Eastern Yellow Robin, White-throated Treecreeper, Sooty Oystercatchers, White-faced Heron, Black Swans, Masked Lapwings, Pied Currawongs, Pied and Great Cormorants, Welcome Swallows and Willie Wagtails.** Another jewel in the crown (!!), though not birds, were two pods of dolphins surfing the waves off Bastion Point!



**Sooty Oystercatchers**



**White-faced Heron**

All was not lost and we heard **Bell Miners** on our way home on the Genoa Road! All in all 35 species were seen and that was without even trying! They will eventually come back, but we believe hundreds were lost. The other good news was that a couple of **Hooded Plovers** had nested successfully on Betka Beach hatching two chicks that survived. This no doubt was due to the fact that there were very few humans wandering around and also no dogs!!

It's still worth a visit, when we're all allowed out again!! Happy birding in your backyards!



Yes, these little fellas are still around!

## Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

## COG membership

2020-2021 memberships:

- Individual: \$50
- Family: \$55
- Institution: \$50
- School student (under 18) \$20

## New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

N Tsilikas

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2020 edition:

**Wednesday 29 April 2020**

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

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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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