



Gang-gang

AUGUST 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday 12 August 2020
virtual meeting

There will be another virtual meeting on 12 August. The following is the webinar link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/47/38148u15>

Participants are encouraged to register at least 30 minutes prior to 7.30 pm. They will need to have their video and sound working on their computer. During the webinar participants will be able to see and hear the presenters but not talk. Feedback will be via a typed live chat (which has about a 20 second delay). The webinar is scheduled to last up to one hour.

The speaker for this meeting will be **Dr Laura Rayner**, Senior Ecologist - ACT Parks & Conservation Service, on "**The Goldilocks Hollow.**"

Experts tell us that hollow-nesting birds are selective about where they raise their young. This assumption is accepted for many threatened species, but rarely tested with empirical data. In this talk, Laura will define the nest hollow requirements of the **Superb Parrot**, and reveal the probability of the species finding a tree hollow that is just right.

Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the 5-week period from 24 June covered by this column has seen above average temperatures, with only a few mild frosts and, except for a significant event in the final weekend, not much rain. Due to the mild winter there have been some early signs of spring. This mild weather has also affected insects with, on 19 July, Harvey Perkins posting that there have been more records than usual of various dragonflies and damselflies staying beyond autumn and into winter. Despite the potential food supply, my general impression is that bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) has remained relatively quiet. However, as summarised below, quite a few species have continued to overwinter in larger numbers than usual, but others which may be expected to, in particular the **Dusky Woodswallow**, have not been present, or only in small numbers.

There have been four species observed that have generated the most interest, as follows:

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Singing Honeyeater

Lindell Emerton

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

The first and most remarkable was the return of the **Northern Shoveler**. This was first reported from Kelly Swamp by Mikayla Burke on 19 July, and was then seen and photographed by many observers, being present at least to 25 July. While it again often associated with the **Australasian Shovelers**, this time it was much more active and aggressive, including towards them, than it was when recorded here later in the year from 10-19 September 2019. One can't help wondering if it is the same bird. Most remarkable is that Deb and Rod Ralph photographed it mating with a **Grey Teal**. Also remarkable is that, as far as I can tell from the eBird map, it is the only sighting in Australia so far in 2020. There are a number of recent examples of vagrant birds being found well out of range that are returning to the same spot each year, such as the Oriental [Crested] Honey-Buzzard and Eurasian Hobby that seem to be regularly visiting Perth.



Northern Shoveler

Alison Milton



Northern Shoveler

Shorty

The second species, and the one that grabbed the most attention before the above was found, was the **Singing Honeyeater** first reported on 2 July by Daniel Gautschi at Franklin Pond, and then also observed and photographed by many observers up to 18 July. According to the 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR), this has been recorded only in 4 different years previously, the most recent being 10 records from the Macfarlane Burnet Avenue Pond in Macgregor in April 2018. Before that it was recorded from the nearby West Belconnen Pond for over 6 weeks in January-February 2014. The species' seeming association with water in the COG Aol is very interesting since, as many readers will be aware, it is a bird that can be found in the driest parts of the inland, often where few other species are present. However, I have also seen it on the SW coast of Victoria, in the presence of the **Crescent Honeyeater**, a bird associated with the cool SE forests, particularly Tasmania.

The third species is the **Azure Kingfisher**, one of which was first reported on 28 June by Sarah Fieg from the Woodstock Nature Reserve on the northern side of the Murrumbidgee River. Two birds were then found on 19 July by Timothée Bonnet not far away on the Molonglo River, less than 1 km from its confluence. Most remarkable was that they were showing courtship behaviour as clearly illustrated by one of his photographs. A number of birders have since been able to observe mostly just a single bird near there, except for Sue Beatty and Kim Larmour who also photographed two birds showing possible courtship behaviour on 24 July. According to the eBird Australia map, since the start of 2014 this species has now been recorded between mid-February and the end of October from around 12 locations in the COG Aol, and the above lends some further support that it may be a resident and a possible breeder, noting the 2018-2019 ABR lists it as a non-breeding vagrant.

The final species, and the only one pointing to a possible early spring, was the **Pallid Cuckoo** heard calling at Goorooyaroo NR by Nicki Taws on 17 July. On the morning of 20 July John Layton then saw one perched quietly on a fence post at the Pegasus Riding School, Holt. It was possibly a favoured perch as he noted the post had a smattering of whitewash that was studded with the remains of tiny black caterpillars. These were early returners as the BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows it has been recorded in July in only 4 of the 35 years covered. However, the BIRD INFO data doesn't fully support my impressions that if it arrives early it's a sign that it will be a big year for them. None has been reported since, but it is well worth keeping an ear out for them as very few were reported last spring/summer.

Of the spring/summer migrants that had not been recorded so far this winter, it seems to have been the only early returner. No other cuckoos were reported except for the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** from another 7 locations. The **Western Gerygone** has also overwintered as it has been reported from 9 locations over the period, most recently from Mulligans Flat NR on 25 July. Perhaps some have been early returners, though the BIRD INFO data does show a smattering of records from May to July. In contrast, the **Dusky Woodswallow** was last reported on 14 June, so this species has been absent for at least 6 weeks this winter. Likewise, **Tree Martins** were last reported from Uriarra Rd at Mountain Rd on 26 June, and **Australian Reed-Warblers** last reported on 9 June, so have been absent for about 4 and 7 weeks, respectively.

However, single **Olive-backed Orioles** were still reported from 4 locations during the period, calling from a least two of these. After being absent for about a month, from 26 June the **Rufous Whistler** was reported from 9 locations over the period, also calling at some of them. The **Superb Parrot** was reported from just 8 locations, 3 of them southside, over the period. These were just 1-2 birds except for the tight flock of about 10 seen from the bus by Philip Veerman on 3 July, flying over the intersection of Athllon Drive and Hindmarsh Drive, Phillip. Single **Mistletoebirds** have been reported from 5 locations over the period.

Finally, the most widespread species staying over winter this year include the **Grey Fantail** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, which were reported from well over 70 and 25 locations, respectively. The **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** was reported from over 30 locations, while the **White-naped** and **Fuscous Honeyeater** were reported from around 20 and 9 locations, respectively.



Spotted Pardalote

Richard Arculus



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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

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website.

www.philipmaher.com

So please keep a look out during August for any of the remaining spring/summer migrant species above still present. Look out also for the other early returners which could include the other cuckoo species and the **Fairy Martin**.

Of the altitudinal migrant species that move into urban and peri-urban locations in Canberra during autumn/winter, the **Flame Robin** was reported from around 12 such locations (compared with 7 outside of these) in the period. On 26 June I was finally able to find at least 20 of them on the western side of Mt Arawang. This was about 400-600 m to the NW of where up to 10 birds were regularly recorded up until the winter of 2018. However, they were on the move and could not be relocated after a couple of days, though John Hurrell did find at least 15 birds near here on 22 July. The **Rose Robin** was still reported from 5 locations, most recently from the Mt Ainslie NR on 25 July, but there still have been no reports of the **Pink Robin** in the COG Aol in 2020.

While the **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from around 12 locations over the period, only 1 of these was urban, all the others being on, or west of, the Murrumbidgee River. This may explain why still no bird has appeared in my garden in Chapman, where they are usually present most winters. For the period there has only been a single report of a **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** from Tuggeranong Hill on 7 July. There have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** since 19 April, the only report I can find for this species in the COG Aol this autumn/winter.

The **Bassian Thrush** has continued to be reported from the ANBG but otherwise only from 7 wetter locations to the east and west of Canberra. The **Restless Flycatcher** was reported from only 3 widespread locations. Two birds were reported north of Gundaroo by Michael Lenz on 8 and 21 July, David Rees also reported 2 birds from near Wee Jasper on 24 July, and several observers reported one on the Naas Rd from 25-26 July. This increases the number of spots from which it has been reported in the COG Aol so far in 2020 to just 8 locations. The coastal **Brown Gerygone**, reported from the ANBG some winters, still does not seem to have been observed. During August please keep an eye out for these winter visitors.

Apart from the **Northern Shoveler**, **Singing Honeyeater**, and **Azure Kingfisher** mentioned above, there were fewer “unusual” species reported for the period, and none that were new for 2020. There have been some more reports by the public, including on the Canberra Nature Map, of **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** at Mt Majura/Mt Ainslie, but they have eluded the thorough searches done by some serious birdwatchers. There has also been another aural report of the **Powerful Owl** from the Warks/Blundells Creek Roads area.



Baillon's Crake

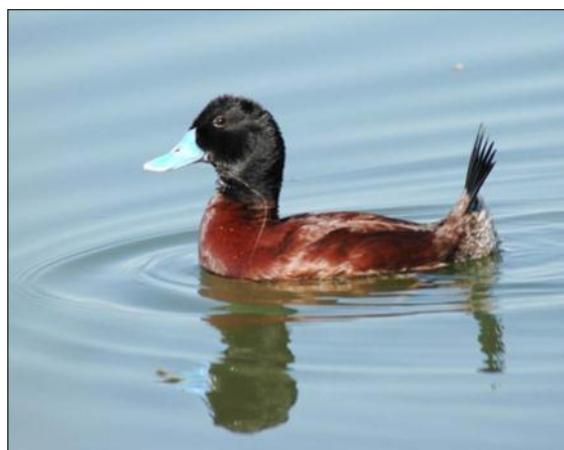
Lindsay Hansch

Again, according to the eBird Australia map, it was last recorded at the end of February.

A male **Blue-billed Duck** was first reported by Christine D from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant on 7 July, and subsequently was observed and photographed by many birders up to 16 July (and from Kelly Swamp on 29 July – ed!). Some of Deb and Rod Ralph's photos showed it in the presence of a **Hardhead**, which has a two-toned blue bill and can at first glance be mistaken for a Blue-billed. Sometimes also present was a female **Musk Duck** from 8-19 July. The male **Musk**

A rare winter record of a **Baillon's Crake** was by Julie Clark at Casey Pond on 21 July. According to the 2018-2019 ABR this is a rare, non-breeding summer migrant, that in 2020 has been reported from only 2 other locations in the COG Aol, most recently on 3 February. A **Spotless Crake**, listed in the ABR as an uncommon, breeding summer migrant, was reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR by Josh Lee on 21 July. According to the eBird Australia map this was recorded at 4 other locations in the COG Aol in 2020, most recently at the Crace Pond on 27 April. A **Red-kneed Dotterel**, also listed in the ABR as an uncommon, breeding summer migrant, was reported from the Fyshwick

Sewage Treatment Plant by Steve Read on 7 July.



Blue-billed Duck

Stuart Harris

Duck at Yerrabi Pond last reported on 6 June was reported again on 22 and 25 July, so it may possibly have remained present in between.

The only other “unusual” bird report was of a further **Blue-faced Honeyeater** in Curtin by Richard Allen on 29 June. Of the special birds I’ve been asking readers to keep a extra lookout for, up to 4 **Jacky Winters** have been reported by a number of observers, but from only roughly two locations within a couple of km to the NW and NE of Tharwa. This now increases the number of locations this species has been reported from this year in the COG Aol to 8. At one of these spots up to 3 **Diamond Firetail** were reported. By comparison this species, which is listed as vulnerable in NSW, was reported from 7 other locations in the COG Aol during the period. This further underlines my concern for the **Jacky Winter** which is not listed as vulnerable locally, so please continue to keep a special lookout for it.

Another species which can be present with the latter is the **Hooded Robin**, which is listed as vulnerable in the ACT. My attention was drawn to it by a possible sighting at Mt Taylor. The eBird Australia map showed 2 birds were reported by David Rees near Wee Jasper on 24 July. Prior to that it had been reported from only 5 other locations in the COG Aol so far in 2020. It no longer seems to be at the corner of the East West Rd, where for a few years it could be reliably found. Given this, it is another species for which I would like readers to keep a special lookout. Please also continue to look out the **Crested Shrike-tit**, which has been reported from just 2 sites in the past 5 weeks.

Compared with the early return of some spring/summer migrants, most of the signs of a possible early spring have been by the amount of breeding activity reported. These include the species noted in my July column, as well as known early or all year-round breeders. These include **Black Swans** nest building, on the nest, or with young cygnets, **Crested Pigeons** copulating, **Australian Magpies** and **Australian Ravens** nest building, and **Australian Wood Ducks** duetting in trees. However, there are a few worthy of special mention:

On 26 June Susan Robertson posted she had found a new **White-winged Chough’s** nest under construction in Campbell, and on 19 July she posted there was a nest in a willow in Glebe Park with some choughs visiting it. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows only one previous report of nest building in June over the 35 years of data, though there are 7 examples in July.

On 10 July Shorty reported **White-plumed Honeyeaters** copulating at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. In this case the BIRD INFO data show no examples of mating in winter, though there are single examples of nest building in June and July.

On 12 July Mark Clayton posted that the **Eurasian Coots** at Franklin Pond appeared to be building a nest while still with 3/4 grown chicks. In this case the BIRD INFO data shows just a single example of dependent young in July, but none of nest building in July and only one case of on/leaving the nest in August, so it does seem very early.

I have had a **Superb Fairy-wren** male in full breeding plumage in my garden over the whole of winter. We have also been seeing them regularly on the Molonglo woodland track, which runs north of the Edgeworth Pond in Coombs. On 12 June, of the 16 fairy-wrens we saw there, four (possibly 5) were fully coloured males, with 2 very close together (2 metres distance).

In mid-July Andrew Cockburn told me that it had been an abominable summer at the ANBG, with the worst conditions for reproduction of fairy-wrens in more than 30 years. However, this year the autumn and winter have been very much better, and he was anticipating an early breeding season. A record number of adult males had already donned blue plumage, and the females were looking frisky as well.

Over the past fortnight a **Common Blackbird** has been in full song before sunrise in Rivett, very early to be doing so in my experience.

There were still a few mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) reported in late June. Concerning single species flocks, on 15 July Con Boekel posted that there was a flock of 36 **Red Wattlebirds** in the Black Mountain NR. He indicated they were most likely feeding on a leaf-caterpillar infestation in the canopy, so were possibly not early returners.

After I counted 135 birds at the very noisy **Common Myna** roost in Rivett on 4 July, it broke up a few days later, having been active there for 48 nights. Despite listening for them for up to a kilometre or so away, I have not been able to find a new

roost site. I have, however, been able to find a new **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** twin roost site in Fisher containing up to 120 birds. This may explain the very variable numbers at the Chapman site only just over 1 kilometre away over winter; I have seen them flying in the Fisher direction just before settling down. This winter I have hardly been able to find any sign of **Red-rumped Parrot** roost flights, perhaps a timing issue as I walk my dogs fairly early, and this species is a comparatively late riser. I have also been able to find only limited, if any, sign of **Maggie-lark** roost flights now for over 2 years.

So please watch out for any overwintering spring/summer migrants mentioned above, as well as any early returning species, for the altitudinal migrants, for single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any late winter breeding activity, as well as a special look out for the **Jacky Winter**, **Hooded Robin** and the **Crested Shrike-tit**. It will also be interesting to see what species will be found in the fire-affected areas now that parts of the Namadgi NP have re-opened, especially the numbers of **Flame Robins** which are well known early colonisers of burnt areas. 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 email 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 remain safe and remember to maintain your social distancing when birding during the continuing COVID-19 crisis restrictions. It is critical that we avoid a second wave in the ACT.

Jack Holland

Garden Bird Survey

There has not yet been a full uptake of the GBS charts by members for 2020-2021. If you wish to receive one or more, please send your mailing address to cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au and I will post it/them to you. It does not matter if you miss the first few weeks. This year each survey week begins on a Friday.

This year, due to Covid restrictions, with no in-person COG meetings, you may not have returned your 2019-2020 GBS chart, so please post to the COG office at:

PO Box 301
Civic Square
ACT 2608.

Thanks,
Bill Graham

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.

Be Covid safe on COG field trips:

- Maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres
- Maintain regular hand hygiene
- Practise respiratory etiquette
- Do NOT attend if you have any cold or flu symptoms

Sunday 16 August – North Mulligans

Directions: Follow Mulligans Flat Road between Forde and Bonner. The carpark is on the left after the last roundabout by Forde.

Meet at 9.00am. North Mulligans is dry woodland with Red Stringybark the most common forest tree. 113 bird species have been recorded. Highlights include **Grey Currawong** and **Speckled Warbler**. Wear sturdy boots, and bring morning tea.

Register with Bill Graham beforehand, giving name and phone number, at: graham.br63@grapevine.com.au or phone 0466 874 723.

Bill Graham

Wednesday 19 August – Tharwa

Meet at 9am in the carpark at the Tharwa end of Tharwa Bridge. You can turn left or right off the bridge – if turning left you then go back under the bridge to a sealed carpark. The walking track leads to the historic De Salis Cemetery. This is an easy walk. Pre-registration is essential. Please send name, phone number, emergency contact name and number to (shirmax2931@gmail.com)

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 30 August – Sherwood Forest

Description: woodland. Possible Spotted Quail-thrush, mixed feeding flocks; possibility of early returning Noisy Friarbird, a bird not recorded for eBird at this location before.

eBird hotspot: Sherwood Forest

Meeting time and place: 8.00am at car park on Mountain Creek Road about 1 km from the intersection with Uriarra Road. If travelling via Cotter Rd, turn right into Uriarra Rd and then the first road on the left is Mountain Creek Rd. If travelling via Uriarra Crossing, turn left after the crossing and the first road on the right is Mountain Creek Rd.

Walking distance: 5km

Degree of difficulty: medium

End time (approx.): 12.00 pm

What to bring: morning tea, warm clothes and raincoat, sun protection.

Need to register: Yes by Friday 28 August, text to mobile 0417 222 154 giving your name and mobile number.

Numbers limited: to 15

Name of leader and contact details David Dedenczuk 0417 222 154

Saturday 5 September – Glendale, Namadgi National Park

Meet at the parking area at the beginning of the Brandy Flat walking track at 8.30am (This is named as Brandy Flat Road in Googlemaps). Register by emailing your name and mobile number to Ryu Callaway at ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp

Further details will appear on the website and in September Gang-gang.

Sunday 13 September – Oakey Hill NR

Description: Oakey Hill was burnt in 2003. Following that, damaged and non-local trees were removed. It has been affected by recent drought and kangaroo grazing so there is little undergrowth but some areas of allocasuarina, and others of acacia and eucalypt. There is a mixture of urban and bush birds, as expected given Oakey Hill's location.

eBird hotspots: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2541909>

Meeting time and place: 9:00 am at the locked gate on Heysen St in Lyons, near Tuggeranong Parkway. Cars can be parked on the verge along Heysen St.

Walking distance: approx. 4 km

Degree of difficulty: medium – hilly, some areas with rough or loose surface

End time (approx.): 11:00am

What to bring: water

Need to register: Yes, by email

Numbers limited: yes, maximum number depends on COVID restrictions at the time

Name of leader and contact details: Alison Mackerras, alison@mackerras.id.au, 0402 484371

Sunday 20 September - Molonglo Gorge

Description: The river corridor walk takes in riparian habitat and open forest and woodland with a good shrub layer. We can expect to see a nice mix of water and woodland/forest species, with a variety of honeyeaters, parrots and small insectivores usually observed. Previous highlight sightings from this reserve include **Speckled Warbler, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Spotted Quail-thrush, Scarlet Robin, Swift Parrot, Varied Sittella** and **Eastern Whipbird**.

Please note there are toilet facilities available at the Molonglo Gorge Recreation/Picnic Area at the meeting place.

eBird hotspots: Molonglo Gorge, Kowen Forest – Blue Tiles

Meeting time and place: 8.30 am at the carpark at the Molonglo Gorge Recreation/Picnic Area. If you haven't been here before, feel free to contact Suzi for directions.

Walking distance: Approx 6.8 km (return)

Degree of difficulty: Medium with a few steep rocky parts

End time: Around midday.

What to bring: Water, morning tea, sturdy walking shoes for some rocky sections, hat

Need to register: Yes, please email name and mobile number to Suzi if you intend to come along.

Numbers limited: Yes, limited to 15 people.

Name of leader and contact details: Suzi Bond, chowchilla29@yahoo.com

Sunday 27 September – location and detailed will be advised on the website and in September Gang-gang

Field Trip Reports

Monday 29 June to Friday 3 July – Lake Burrendong and surrounds

A group of 10, very ably led by Ryu Callaway, enjoyed COG's first long field trip since the coronavirus disaster hit us. Five of us met up near the Hall TSR on the first day to begin our trip up to the Wellington area and the beautiful Lake Burrendong. The first sign we were away from Canberra were **Apostlebirds** sighted on the roadside north of Boorowa. A wander at Breakfast Creek produced a couple of **Brown Treecreepers**, and the Cowra Sewage Treatment Plant gave us our first **Zebra Finches** of the trip.

On arrival at the caravan park at Lake Burrendong, we were greeted by a VERY friendly **Pied Butcherbird** at the cabin. Over the next few days that bird, a few **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, and busy groups of **Grey-crowned Babblers** and **Apostlebirds** were almost always within metres of the cabins.



COG Members at Geurie Cemetery

Kirsty Craven

On Tuesday the group spent the morning at the Burrendong Botanic Gardens and Arboretum, just up the road from the caravan park. A total of 55 species was seen during the morning, as we drove and walked around the very extensive grounds. A walk along a boundary fence gave us views of a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, and morning tea was interrupted by sightings of both an immature **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** and a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. **White-browed Babblers**, **Brown Quail** (heard), a **White-winged Triller**, a **Mistletoebird** and **Red-browed** and **Double-barred Finches** were other highlights. A pleasant afternoon walk in the Burrendong State Park gave spectacular views of a pair of adult **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** flying together.

On Wednesday morning we headed for the Geurie Cemetery, an eBird hotspot with an impressive reputation, which did not disappoint. Among the more than 30 species were **Red-winged Parrots**, **Plum-headed Finches**, **Peaceful Doves**, **Jacky Winters**, **Diamond Firetails** and **Brown Treecreepers**. The next stop was the Rotary Wetlands at Narromine. This is obviously a popular local walking spot, but our interest was drawn to a very obliging **Rufous Songlark** perched close to the boundary fence. We had just left those wetlands when an ephemeral wetland beside the road drew our attention. Expert bird counter Sue gave us a total of 420 **Magpie Geese** on this wetland, most standing along the far bank. A **White-necked Heron**, a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, several **Rufous Songlarks**, a flock of **Zebra Finches** and two **Cockatiels** added to the group list of good birds. On an already good day, we headed for a woodland patch further out of town for lunch. A quick walk through the woodland yielded **Western Gerygone**, **Chestnut-rumped Thornbills** and more **Cockatiels**, and we added **Singing**



Magpie Geese

Sandra Henderson

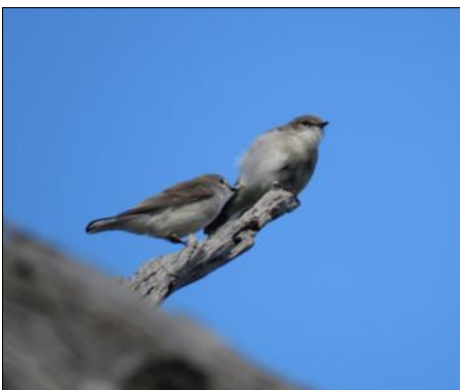
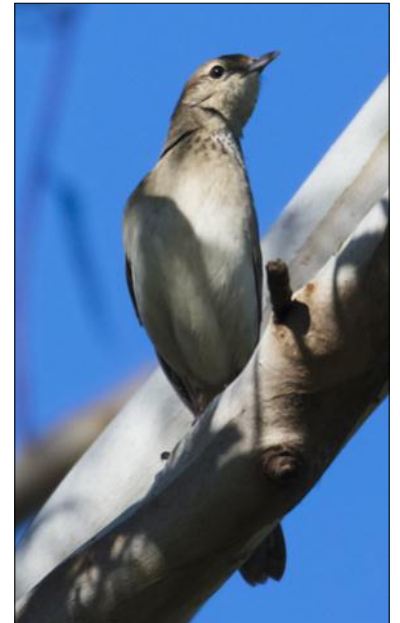


Lake Burrendong trip:

Top row: **Eastern Spinebill**, **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** - *Richard Arculus*

Second row: **Peaceful Dove**, **Plum-headed Finch** - *Sandra Henderson*, **Double-barred Finch** - *Richard Arculus*

Third row: **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **Tawny Frogmouth**, **Jacky Winter** - *Richard Arculus*



Lake Burredong trip:

Top row: **Straw-necked Ibis, Black Kite, Golden Whistler** - *Richard Arculus*

Second row: **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** - *Sandra Henderson*, **Magpie Goose, Apostlebird** - *Richard Arculus*

Third row: **Jacky Winter** - *Sandra Henderson*, **White-necked Heron, White-winged Triller** - *Richard Arculus*

Honeyeater as we sat next to a dam for lunch. A late afternoon visit to Goonoo State Conservation Area gave us wonderful views of a **White-necked Heron** at a dam. The bird sat in a tree watching us for a while before relaxing and coming back down to wander along the edge.

Our final day at Lake Burrendong started with an early morning walk to the shore, where we puzzled for some time over the identity of a raptor on a spit some distance away – with the help of a scope we identified the bathing beauty as an immature **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**. The target bird for that early morning stroll, a **Great Crested Grebe**, glided close enough to be identified before disappearing again. We moved on to Bald Rock Reserve, where every tree seemed to have some **Yellow Thornbills**. In Dubbo we visited the Devils Hole Reserve on the river, where **Plum-headed Finches** and a **Brown Falcon** were bathing in the river, and a **White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike** showed nicely. After dark we took the opportunity to look for night birds. Our only success was on the road not far from the caravan park, where Ryu located the **Australian Owllet-Nightjar** we'd heard call.

On our final foggy morning we visited the pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** Richard and Tricia had located the previous day within the caravan park.

Many thanks to Ryu for planning and leading such an interesting trip in an area that most of us have simply driven through in the past.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 12 July – Point Hutt Pond District Park

This pond in Gordon, developed in the 1980s as a water quality control pond, was new territory for many of those attending the outing.

Most of the more common waterbirds were present, including **Australasian Swamphens**, **Eurasian Coots**, **Dusky Moorhens**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Australian Wood Ducks**, a couple of **Australasian Darters** and two **Little Pied Cormorants**. A tight flock of **Rock Doves** (probably domestic rather than feral birds) was visible in the sky throughout our 1.5 hour walk. There were very few honeyeaters around, with 13 individuals of only four species sighted, although the **New Holland Honeyeaters** posed nicely.

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 15 July – Mulligans Flat



Bush Stone-curlew

Peter Higgins

A very popular Wednesday Walk, with well over 40 participants, including quite a few of the Mulligans Flat volunteers. To manage this number of participants, we broke into three groups, with Sandra, Lia and Chris Davey as the three leaders. Our objective was the Big Dam, so we headed in that direction from the Eric Wright St entrance, leaving plenty of social distance between the three groups.

We had ventured only a couple of hundred metres before three **Bush Stone-curlews** were spotted, and for many of us this was our first sighting of these cryptic birds at Mulligans. The Big Dam looked to have very few birds when we first arrived, but we found most of the expected species. **Pink-eared Ducks**, **Grey Teal**, **Australian Wood Ducks**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Hardheads** and eventually a pair of **Chestnut Teal** were all pointed out to the non-birder volunteers. A pair of **Black Swans** had an occupied nest in a less obvious area of the dam.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 19 July - Cuumbeun Nature Reserve

Fourteen members gathered on a still, mild morning to walk a 5 km loop on the south-eastern side of Captains Flat Road. We walked at a leisurely pace. It was really quiet on the bird front, with just 22 species observed, but participants were content to enjoy the outdoors in this nice piece of woodland, on what was a wonderful winter's day. Fortunately, we came across an occasional mixed feeding flock near to the track, which held our attention for a while. Several **White-eared Honeyeaters** made



COG Members at Cuumbeun Nature Reserve



Grey Butcherbird



White-eared Honeyeater

Tee Tong Teo

themselves known, and some of us managed a quick glimpse of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** before it disappeared over the horizon. **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** were the other highlight of the day, as well as the call of a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**.

Lia Battisson

Sunday 26 July – The Pinnacle Nature Reserve

A small group of five joined leader John Brannan for the outing at The Pinnacle on a grey, cool, wet morning. Expectations were not high, so we were pleasantly surprised to see over 35 species. The light rain persisted much of the time, but the birds were very active, and we encountered several mixed flocks. There were some eucalypts in flower, which were attracting honeyeaters, including an **Eastern Spinebill**, and **Fuscous, White-naped, Yellow-faced, Brown-headed, White-plumed** and **White-eared Honeyeaters**. Each mixed flock contained **Scarlet Robins, Golden Whistlers, Speckled Warblers** and thornbills.

Sandra Henderson

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Namadgi National Park – 30 July

With parts of Namadgi reopening on 27 July, Julian and I ventured into the national park with some trepidation. As soon as we sighted the Namadgi National Park signs (which are some way south of the visitors centre), the devastation was apparent and very sobering indeed. Where, in the past, we had driven past vegetation that was dense to the roadside, there are now thousands of boulders of all sizes visible among the remains of eucalypts and any signs of undergrowth are largely absent. Many, many trees are dead; some smaller eucalypts are lost while others are shooting from the base, and some big trees are re-shooting but others are too damaged to recover. In some places, Bursaria are shooting from the base and Cassinia popping up occasionally. Huge amounts of decomposed granite and silt are clogging the rivers and streams in parts, while in others the water was flowing freely.

The first glimmer of hope was around Glendale depot. Obviously the RFS, etc, put lots of resources into saving the depot and the open grassland made it easier to save a good number of trees as well, although the surrounding slopes are burnt to a crisp, as is the area around the beginning of the walking track. We found a respectable 34 species there including about a dozen **Flame Robins** and a pair of **Scarlet Robins** building a nest, as well as lots of **White-eared Honeyeaters**, a few small flocks of **White-naped** and 2 **Fuscous Honeyeaters**. **Eastern Yellow Robins**, big parties of **Striated Thornbills** feeding in the epicormic growth, 2 pairs of **Grey Currawong** and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** were other highlights. The interface between the burnt and unburnt areas was most productive.

We then ventured as far south as Old Boboyan Road. Amazingly, the forested slope to the west of the road was unscathed but both sides of the road itself are devastated and the road is closed 400m from the main road to traffic and walkers. Still, we scraped together 10 species here in the 400 metre length.

A visit to southern parts around Mt Clear will have to wait for another day.

Sue Lashko



Old Boboyan Road

Sue Lashko



Glendale Depot

Sue Lashko



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New Places: June 2020

Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum

Where is it? An extensive area (167ha) of bushland and curated gardens, near Wellington, NSW.

It is obviously not possible to walk around the whole site in one visit, so the COG members on the recent field trip alternated driving and walking to cover some of the more interesting areas over a little under five hours. This gave us a bird list of 55 species. **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** and **Wedge-tailed Eagle** were a nice diversion during morning tea. **Fan-tailed** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** were present, and a **White-winged Triller** female was rather unexpected. Definitely a place that needs more time!

Geurie Cemetery

Where is it? off the Mitchell Highway, outside Geurie, NSW.

A small country cemetery with its share of interesting graves (why was the grave of a teenage girl set well away from all other graves?), and a very impressive bird list. The obvious target birds were **Red-winged Parrots** and **Plum-headed Finches**, both of which appeared on cue. A female **Red-winged Parrot** posed nicely on top of a tall tree, and we had tantalising glimpses of small groups flying through the woodland. The **Plum-headed Finches** were quite plentiful, so everyone got a good look at these cute little birds. Other good species included **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Speckled Warblers**, **Brown Treecreepers**, **Diamond Firetails**, **Jacky Winters** and a **White-winged Triller**.

Spring Creek Reservoir, Orange (marked on some maps as Gosling Creek Dam)

Where is it? Lone Pine Ave, Orange.

A rather confusing sign at the obvious walk-through entrance was puzzling, saying 'No Entry' at the start of the well-used path, then stressing 'No Swimming'. The water levels were obviously down a little, as we made our way across a wide area of soggy ground. We spent an hour looking out at the large numbers of ducks and other birds. Most numerous were **Hardhead** (est. 400) and **Eurasian Coots** (est. 200). A pair of **Whistling Kites** flew over, putting hundreds of birds into the air. Other birds of interest included a **White-necked Heron**, **Australasian Shoveler** with young, and a **Hoary-headed Grebe**.

Jugiong Creek Travelling Stock Reserve

Where is it? Riverside Drive, Jugiong.

On a recent visit to Tumut Wetlands, Sue, Lia and I stopped at this TSR which I've not visited before, despite going through Jugiong several times a year. We did need to climb the locked gate to access the TSR (there were some stock grazing the very lush grass). It was a really pleasant location, with a mix of water birds and bush birds. **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were completing a nest, and we also found good numbers of **Yellow** and **Striated Thornbills**. A brown raptor creating panic among birds on the other side of the creek was finally identified as a **Brown Goshawk**, and a **Whistling Kite** flew over as we neared the exit. In less than an hour we saw 33 species.

Woodland Surveys- winter 2020 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Gold Creek/Hall

The seven sites for Gold Creek/Hall were surveyed on 28 June by Alison Rowell and Matt Mullaney in fine, cool weather. The soil was dry and little grass growth had occurred since autumn, despite stock having been removed about five months ago. Low to moderate numbers of kangaroos graze the site. Eucalypts of various ages were showing signs of drought stress, with leaf thinning and dead branches common. Seventeen bird species were seen on the survey sites, with a further 4 recorded outside the sites. A notable observation was three **Double-barred Finches** at the most southerly site, a species rarely seen at Gold Creek. Some Red Stringybarks were flowering, attracting small numbers of **Red Wattlebirds**, **White-eared Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills**. Two mixed feeding flocks were encountered, containing **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Weebills**, **Striated Pardalotes** and **Grey Fantails**.

Mulligans Flat NR

Following Covid-safe protocols, a small team did the survey at Mulligans Flat on Sunday 28 June. It turned out to be very good weather, clear, sunny and still, although a little on the cold side initially. The fine winter weather may have influenced the total species at 47, which is on the high end of a winter survey there. In June 2019, only 30 species were recorded on a cold and breezy winter day. Among the highlights, site 23 on the eastern side of the central quartz ridge proved the most abundant, with 14 species recorded in the site and 6 others outside the 50 metres radius plot; these included a **Western Gerygone**, **Varied Sittellas**, **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Scarlet Robin**. The Woolshed area and sites 1-5 on the flat area nearby were also quite good with a flock of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, a few **White-naped Honeyeaters** which seemed to be part of the same flock moving around, **Scarlet Robin**, **Eastern Spinebill**, a **Grey Fantail**, 3 **Rainbow Lorikeets** and 5 **Varied Sittellas**. At other sites, there was a mix of the usual species, with **Weebills**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, a few **Golden Whistlers**, **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, and 1 **Grey Shrike-thrush**. **Scarlet Robins** were recorded at five sites. There were a couple of **Red Wattlebirds** and **Little Ravens**, and a small number of **Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos** on the eastern side of the reserve. Three species of ducks were recorded, including 2 **Chestnut Teal** on the large dam, with **Dusky Moorhen** and 20 **Eurasian Coots** also on the large dam. A **Yellow Thornbill** was heard at site 10, on the very northern edge of the reserve where there are some wattles nearby. No **Superb Parrots** were recorded this survey, although they are usually seen or heard on most surveys, particularly on the reserve edge with Forde.

Goorooyarroo NR (north)

Nicki Taws did the winter survey for Goorooyarroo north sites on 19 June, on a fine, mild morning. The reserve was looking green with water in the dams and patches of soggy ground, and many wildflowers already sprouting with the promise of a good spring. The results showed the usual winter pattern with most sites recording the larger birds (rosellas, magpies, etc) with small birds restricted to large flocks at one or two sites. The best mixed feeding flock contained **Striated**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Weebill**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalote**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **White-eared Honeyeater**, and the highlights - **Scarlet Robin**, **Red-capped Robin** and **Western Gerygone**. **White-eared** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater** were recorded at several sites. The only other honeyeater (apart from many Noisy Miners) was one **Red Wattlebird**. One **Grey Fantail** was recorded. No raptors were seen.

Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook did the winter survey on 21 June, in fairly mild conditions. After the heavy rain overnight there was a lot of water around, with some creeks flowing strongly. The 39 species recorded was a decent total for winter, with 34 of these during 10 minute counts. Last year's winter survey yielded 28 species. The species recorded were fairly standard for Canberra in winter, with a couple of mixed flocks encountered at sites 2 and 8; these had such species as **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped**, **Brown** and **Striated Thornbills**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**, a **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Fantails**, a **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Varied Sittellas**, **Scarlet Robins**, **Weebills** and **Speckled Warblers**. A **Grey Currawong** was heard at site 2, and up to 8 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** were seen, with 6 in one group. **Wedge-tailed Eagle** was the only raptor recorded.

Majura Training Area (formerly Majura Field Firing Range)

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan carried out the survey on Tuesday 30 June on a lovely morning, after some fog, mostly sunny with little wind, and relatively warm (thanks to thermal under layers). The first site was a little foggy, but the rest were clear. There were not too many birds about though, with only 23 species observed in or near the sites, with only four

species seen in between sites: a mob of 30 or so **White-winged Choughs**, a **Willie Wagtail**, an **Australian Pipit**, and a couple of **Welcome Swallows**. There was some hollow inspection by a pair of **Galahs**, a couple of **Pacific Black Ducks** and **Grey Teal** on Mick's Dam with a lone **Australasian Grebe** at the other end. Very few small birds were around, and the species heard most frequently, but generally at a distance, was the **White-eared Honeyeater**.

The scrub at quite a number of sites appears to be deteriorating. This includes large eucalypts dying at the Grenade Range (Site 2), but also smaller trees and bushes at a number of sites. Many of the sites appear to be much clearer than in the past, with fewer lower storey species to provide habitat for smaller birds. One brighter note was the almost total lack of air traffic, probably due both to reduced flights, but also the fog. For the whole morning there were only two flights. However, the new Majura highway provides a new and close source of traffic noise.

Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill had to do the survey this round a little earlier than usual on Saturday 13 June. As has been the case for most recent surveys, the area was fairly quiet with not many birds around. There were no mixed feeding flocks. One site did have a couple of **Striated Thornbills** and a brown **Flame Robin**. Another site, which covers a small gully, was the richest site with a male **Rose Robin**, a couple of **Speckled Warblers**, **Superb Fairy-wrens**, **Grey Fantails** and a **Brown Thornbill**. Both species of pardalote were recorded on or near several sites. The ground dwelling **Thornbills** (**Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped**) were not observed anywhere. The usual common large birds were around like **Noisy Miner**, both **rosellas**, **King Parrots**, cockatoos and magpies. A total of 31 species was recorded.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz and Robin Hide carried out the woodland survey at the 9 sites on the lower eastern slope of Mt Ainslie on Tuesday 23 June. It was quite a pleasant, cool, winter morning with a light, at times fresh, wind. Birdlife was very quiet with only 15 species at sites and another 11 in between sites. They did not encounter any mixed feeding flocks. The most widespread species were **Weebill** (7 sites) and **Crimson Rosella** (6 sites). Of note were 3 brown **Flame Robins** (not at a site), and **Noisy Miners** were present in only small numbers and at few sites, similar to the situation in autumn.

Newline

The survey was carried out by Sue Lashko on Friday 26 June, a cold and foggy morning. As usual, **rosellas** and cockatoos were plentiful but **Rainbow Lorikeets** were notable absentees from the list of parrots. An unusual record for Newline was 6 **Common Bronzewing**s feeding on the ground among weeds which have proliferated in the bare soil following the fire earlier in the year. In some paddocks that were severely burned, exotic shrubs beloved of small birds have been completely incinerated, but in other areas where the fire wasn't so intense, the shrubs were defoliated but are reshooting from the base and are a haven for **Superb Fairy-wren**, **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Double-barred** and **Red-browed Finch**, **Speckled Warbler**, and **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**. The cold conditions and the fire damage from the January fire no doubt contributed to the low total of 31 species and the absence of raptors.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey in the woodland patch on Saturday 27 June, an overcast but still morning, with no fog or frost. There were the usual conspicuous species for a winter survey, both **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, **Common Starlings** and **Crested Pigeons**. Only one mixed flock of small birds with four species was in and around site 5, deep in the woodland where there is *Bursaria* and eucalypt re-growth: **Superb-Fairy-wren**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, and a **Speckled Warbler** calling. A **Grey Fantail** was heard at site 2 in mostly Blakely's Red Gum woodland, and there were a few **Little Ravens** around, including a flock of twelve in the adjacent grasslands. There were at least three pairs of **Australian Wood Ducks** calling, preparing for nesting, including one pair in a dead tree at site 4. Only one honeyeater, a **Red Wattlebird**, was recorded, (except for the usual **Noisy Miners**). A pair of **Brown Falcons** was seen near the grasslands edge. No wintering **Flame Robins** were found in the usual places, although ground conditions/short grass layer, looked reasonably good for that species. A total of 28 species was recorded, about the average for a winter survey which can range from 22 to 36 species. This was an improvement on the lowest autumn count ever last March, at 22 species.

Symonston (Callum Brae NR & Isaacs Ridge NR)

Sandra Henderson did the surveys on Saturday 20 June, in very pleasant conditions, with Liam M. accompanying her. The most obvious species of the morning was **Australian Wood Duck**, with the birds exploring hollows and chattering all over the reserve. The fourth site, near the pylons along the side fence, was the most productive area, with 16 species, while the final two sites were very quiet. Good-sized flocks of **Little Corellas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were seen, but they did not encounter a mixed feeding flock until right at the end of the survey - it was worth the wait, with **Flame Robins**, **Speckled**

Warblers, Southern Whiteface, Varied Sittellas, a Golden Whistler and Brown-headed Honeyeaters among the flock. A total of 41 species was recorded.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson did the survey on Wednesday 24 June. It was an overcast, cool and still morning. It was nice to see water flowing in several of the little streams, a rare occurrence. The morning was certainly more active than the same time last year. Three of the seven sites had eight or more species. The northern side of the hill was the most active, perhaps because it was later in the morning by the time that side was surveyed. The highlights for the morning were two **Australian King Parrots** and a **Scarlet Robin** during surveys and a mixed feeding flock comprising small numbers each of **Buff-rumped, Striated, Yellow-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills, Speckled Warblers, Grey Fantails, Spotted Pardalotes** and **Weebills**, albeit between sites. The tally for the day was 22 species at sites and a further 14 species elsewhere on the Hill.



Northern Shoveler

Geoffrey Dabb

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