



Gang-gang

DECEMBER 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JANUARY MEETING

COG MEMBERS' NIGHT
7:30 pm, 13 January 2021

The traditional COG Members' Night will again be held at:

St James Uniting Church Hall, off Gillies St, Curtin

COG is planning to hold our January Members' Night as a face-to-face meeting as usual, subject to approval of our COVID-safe plan by the church.

In anticipation of the ACT government relaxing the 4 sq m per person rule to 2 sq m per person, it is expected members and guests will only need to sign-in on arrival and keep our social distance.

However, if this does not happen in sufficient time before the meeting, the venue will only allow 36 rather than 72 attendees to be present, and members and guests will likely need to register beforehand.

If this turns out to be the case, members will be informed by email of the changed arrangements.

Please also check the COG website and chatline for information about how to

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Everyone welcome



COG Christmas Get-together

Black Mountain Peninsula
(John Cardiff Close)

6.00 pm Wednesday 9 December 2020

The COG get-together will be held under the ACT COVID-safe protocols, so we will need to sign-in on arrival and keep our social distance.

COG will provide hand sanitiser. Please stay at home if feeling unwell or you have any flu-like symptoms.

Because of the COVID-risks associated with communal food, COG will not be cooking sausages this year, and there will be no general buffet.

So please BYO picnic food, plates, cutlery, glasses, table and chairs

Beer, wine, soft drink and individual desserts will be provided

There will be the usual monthly raffle, and a lucky door prize.

Please bring your completed 2019-2020 GBS charts.



register, and the particular arrangements for the evening, including whether or not we will be able to offer tea/coffee/biscuits, and any other requirements.

There will be the usual monthly raffle.

Parking and entry details

There is parking for at least 30 cars in the car park off Gillies Street, and further parking in Gillies St itself, or across the road at the Curtin shops.

Please use the entrance on the Eastern side next to the Good Shepherd Anglican Church and by going under the Chocolate Bear Playgroup sign.

The program

A program will be drawn up allowing COG members to contribute short presentations (about 10-15 minutes long) on a range of bird related topics.

So if you have a favourite birding moment for 2020, some special photos to share with members, a birding story to tell, or anything that you think might be of interest to other members, **please contact Jack Holland by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com** as soon as possible.

Members who have not presented to COG before are especially encouraged.

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

The weather warmed up for the 4 weeks from October covered by this column and, except for storms late in the period, dried out compared with the record rainfall for October. Based on my Nest Workshop (see my report elsewhere in this issue) and my local area, my impression was that there had been a redistribution of birds within the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) over the period, with many of them moving to the now much wetter inland. However, this has not been borne out by my closer analysis below, with many inland species seeming to be present in larger numbers than you would expect for the conditions. In addition, there also seem to be larger numbers of some of the more coastal migrant species present this year.

In respect of the arrivals which I least expected would be present in the COG Aoi this wet spring, a single **Painted Honeyeater** was still reported on 4 occasions from Mt Ainslie/Campbell Park eastern forest margin, and then most recently 2 birds seen on 20 November. Unfortunately there has been no further confirmation of the possible nest building attempt. The only other report was by Sandra Henderson who heard one calling in the wooded paddock across the road from Namadgi Visitors Centre on 1 November, but there have been no further sightings reported from there.

The only reports of **White-browed Woodswallows** have been of up to 14 birds to the north of Gundaroo by 3 observers between 21 and 22 November. Interestingly they were reported as nest building which could indicate they were planning to stay, though this species is well known for abandoning at any stage of breeding and moving on. No reports of the related **Masked Woodswallow** seem to have been made during the period, as you might expect from a wet spring.

In contrast the **Brown Songlark** has been reported from around 15 locations, including many on the north and east edges of Canberra, a surprisingly large number given the conditions, and compares with just a few locations in October. The **Rufous Songlark** was reported from a surprising 45 locations, compared with 25 in October; again more birds seem to have arrived during the period and surprisingly there do seem to be more present in the COG Aoi than in the dry 2019 spring. The **Horsfield's Bushlark** has been reported from around 5 locations compared with 6 in October, so perhaps few new birds of this species have arrived. The **White-winged Triller** has been reported from about 40 locations, only slightly up from

October, and more than I had expected though not as common as last spring.

Of the passage migrants, there have also been more reports of **Satin Flycatchers** than is often the case, with 5 of them in late October/early November being from urban or peri-urban locations, and another 4 in the mountains where on 15 November both sexes were reported as already sharing the nest sitting duties. The **Rufous Fantail** was reported from 13 locations, a sharp increase from October, with just 2 being urban ones around the start of November. The **Cicadabird**, for which there are often limited reports, has been reported from 7 locations, 4 from the mountains where they breed, but also two birds calling at Wamboin on 9 November, and a late record of 2 on Cotter Rd on 24 November. The **Brush Cuckoo** has also been reported from a remarkable 22 locations, 4 of these being peri-urban or rural locations around Canberra.

More **Eastern Koel** also seem to have arrived during the period, and they have now reported from around 65 locations compared with 45 in October. This includes rural/peri-urban reports from Uriarra Woodland and Bibaringa, respectively. Numbers seem to have been pretty stable in my local area of Chapman/Rivett with up to 4 birds present, often calling, but as yet I have observed none of their typical noisy multiple bird interactions/associations characteristic of spring/early summer. There have been reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** from 3 locations, including another from Ainslie by Steve Holliday on 8 November.

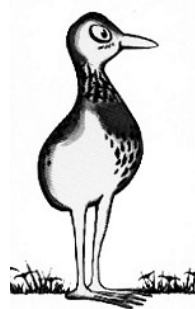
There have been no further reports of the **White-throated Needletail** or the related **Fork-tailed Swift** during the period, so they are a species to look out for during December and particularly January as they are usually seen after the New Year on their return northward migration. Look out also for the usually less common spring/summer migrants mentioned above.

In respect of “unusual” species, Michael Lenz informed me of the **Red-chested Buttonquail** he observed to the north of Gundaroo on 5 October, which has now been accepted by the COG Rarities Panel.



Brush Cuckoo

David Cook



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

Good birding, good food

Top End birding tour

10 — 24 May 2021
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine,
Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau

Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range NP

Cairns & Atherton
31 May — 5 June 2021

Julatten to Iron Range NP

5 June — 13 June 2021

The Pilbara birding tours NW WA

29 June—8 July 2021

12 July—21 July 2021

Central Australia

6 — 16 August 2021
Alice Springs, West MacDonnell
Ranges, Glen Helen, Yulara,
Erdunda, Marla

Nullarbor Plain birding tour

5 - 20 September 2021

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2021

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

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While this species is not included in the 2018-2019 COG Annual Bird Report, there are a couple of reports for November 2012 and January 2013 under the BIRD INFO information on the COG website. Steve Wilson's book 'Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change' also notes it was reported by Gregory Matthews in 1943 as "occasional – country" and there are also a number of reports of it from September 1968 to February 1969. So it is indeed rare in the COG Aol.

Single **Blue-billed Ducks** have been regularly reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR or Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Works across the road, and less regularly from West Belconnen Pond and Isabella Pond. Single **Musk Ducks** have been reported from the West Belconnen Pond, Rowes Lagoon and the large dam on Uriarra Station. Close to the ACT, up to 2 **Australian Shelducks** were reported from Parkwood Rd, Wallaroo, whereas at their favoured areas to the east the maximum reported was 160 ducks at Lake Bathurst East Basin on 28 October.

Great Crested Grebe have been reported from 4 locations, at the Corin Dam and from 3 locations around the Cotter Dam, where a maximum of 17 birds was reported from Bracks Hole Road, Coree, from where they have also been reported breeding (see below). The **Common Sandpiper** has continued to be reported from Isabella Pond; while there was a gap in reporting between 6 and 21 November, I suspect it was not being looked for rather than absent for a period. Shorty alerted me to a Facebook post of a **Caspian Tern** at Diddams Close Park, Lake Ginninderra on 22 November, the only location in the COG Aol this species has been reported previously in 2020 (in January).

An **Intermediate Egret** was first reported in breeding plumage by Christine D at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 16 November. Following this, up to 4 have been reported from there, with breeding plumes on two of them. A **Grey Goshawk** was reported from Mt Clear campground in Namadgi NP by Viv Rolland on 15 November. The rarer raptors have otherwise not been reported. Amazingly there have been no **Black-shouldered Kites** reported in the COG Aol since early October, suggesting there are very few mice around on which to prey.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was reported from Cotter Reserve by Zebedee Muller on 9 November, the first sighting of this species along the Murrumbidgee River since July. Unfortunately, the courtship display given then by two birds on the Molonglo River just upstream of the confluence has not been confirmed as a clearer breeding record. A **Little Lorikeet** was observed by Liam Manderson in MacArthur on 4 November.

The **Scarlet Honeyeaters** at Stony Creek NR were last observed on 29 October, so it appears they moved on quickly as this has been a very popular birding spot this past month. Sandra Lauer did observe one at Illilanga south of Michelago that same day. On 24 November Steve Wallace posted that his son saw a good number of **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** (estimated 8-10 birds) at the river in Yass that afternoon. The nearby Yass Gorge is a known spot for them, with Benjamin Serafin reporting 6 birds on eBird from there on 29 May 2020, and he has also reported them, including a breeding pair, from Yass in previous years. Finally, Lia Battisson reported a **Little Friarbird** from East Uriarra Reserve on 29 October.

Of the special birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for, the **Jacky Winter** has only been reported on a single occasion by Alastair Smith from Namadgi NP Visitors Centre during the period. Again, the suggestions that it might be breeding there have not been confirmed. Likewise the **Hooded Robin** was reported from only 1 location, but a new one (so now 8 different ones for 2020) at Kelly Rd where Tony Willis observed 3 birds, all at the north end of the road, on 7 November. The **Restless Flycatcher** has been reported from just two locations, one being 4 birds, likely the family party that

bred there, at the known location to the north of Gundaroo, and the other being the large dam at Uriarra Station, where Steve Read saw 2, possibly 3, birds on 7 November. This now makes it 15 different locations for 2020.

Other than that the last-named species does seem to be reported more in the colder months, it is not clear to me why there should be fewer records of the above 3 species in late spring, so please continue to look out for them. Please also look out for the **Crested Shrike-tit**, which has been reported from 5 locations in the past 4 weeks. However, two were new, with Kim Larmour reporting single birds at Warks Rd at New Chums Rd, and at Mt Franklin on 21 November. This now makes it 13 different



Channel-billed Cuckoo, Pied Currawong

Harvey Perkins

locations this year, all but one from forested mountain spots. Unfortunately, there does not seem to have been any follow up of the report of them nest building north of Gundaroo.

The **Brown** and **Stubble Quail** were recorded from just four (three of which were new, so now 14 for 2020) and around 30 (many aural records!) locations, respectively, during the period. The long grass conditions have clearly favoured the latter species. **Painted Buttonquail** have been reported from 2 locations during the past month, one of them new (The Pinnacle NR), with now just 5 locations for 2020. No **Little Buttonquail** were reported during the period, but note the report of a **Red-chested Buttonquail** above.

As might be expected based on the conditions, there has been significant breeding activity reported. Apart from that reported separately on my Nest Workshop, and the above **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Satin Flycatchers**, a few are worthy of special mention:

Most remarkable has been the report by Ruth of Theodore of an **Eastern Koel** fledgling, at first small enough to hold in the hand, in her Theodore garden from 31 October, 5 weeks earlier than any previous fledgling that I am aware of. A female came at the same time but did not stay. Shortly afterwards the male Koel came in and was feeding himself on mixed fruits at their double storey feeding stand, as he has for the past 5 years. The young Koel was attempting to feed itself but took food from the bill of the male Koel. This behaviour has continued with the birds now coming in at 5 am and late pm to feed from the stand, and the male driving all other birds from the feeding table except the young Koel. Interestingly there have been no Red Wattlebirds, the most likely host, present in the garden during this time. While there are a number of recent local observations of **Eastern Koel** fledglings being fed or taking food themselves from feeding areas, there are very few I'm aware of adults doing so, and certainly none of adult Koels feeding their own fledglings. Steve Read alerted me to a couple of examples in the literature of **Asian Koels** (a different species or at least sub-species) doing so, as well as other cuckoos, in particular the **Pallid Cuckoo**. So there is some precedent, though I suspect this may be the first observation for an **Eastern Koel**.

On 22 November Sandra Henderson and Liam Manderson reported three **Great-crested Grebes** on nests in the upper reaches of the Cotter Dam. I can recall no major breeding event for them ever in the ACT, with the BIRD INFO data on the COG website containing only 6 breeding records in the 35 years to 2017, just a few displays in October and dependent young from February to April. There are no nest records at all, underlining the significance of this observation.

On 22 November Merarth Tarrant posted a photo of a female **Satin Bowerbird** with a bill full of nest material for the nest she had enjoyed watching being built from her study window in Fisher. She has indeed been fortunate to be able to watch the **Satin Bowerbird's** nest building progress as, in my experience, they are very "surreptitious" breeders, possibly because females do all the building, sitting and feeding of young on their own without the protection of the males, who remain at the bowers trying to entice other females. Whether it will be successful is unclear, as a couple of days later Merarth posted that the nest had caught the attention of the local **Pied Currawong**, who paid it a visit.



As a follow up to the **Pied Stilts** copulating and nest building at Kelly Swamp in my November column, on 20 November Shorty reported 2 pairs still on nests, and one pair with 3 young. Early on the morning of 24 November Shorty went to check on them but could only find one juvenile. They were feeding in the tall grass area on the western side so there may have been more not seen. The second nest appeared to be abandoned, but the third was still active with the adults swapping sitting duties.

Shorty's eBird list of 20 November contained the following examples of breeding there: **Pacific Black Duck** with 7 largish ducklings, **Grey Teal** with 11 tiny ducklings, two **Pink-eared Ducks** photographed on the nest (the BIRD INFO data shows only dependent young records to 2017), **Dusky Moorhen** and **Purple Swamphen** on nests, and **Eurasian Coot** feeding young. This underlines the excellent breeding conditions currently at Kelly Swamp.

The **Silver Gulls** have continued nesting successfully in the ground cover grevilleas in the slightly raised beds in the ornamental pool on the forecourt of Parliament House, with on 17 November Sandra Henderson estimating 100

birds still there. Many of the young had now fledged, a few young were still in nests, with a couple of birds perhaps still on eggs. Some fledged birds were still begging from adults.

So please watch out for any of the less common spring/summer migrants mentioned above, and in particular for further breeding activity; with the wet conditions it should be a very good extended season. Please continue a special look out, including for breeding records, for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** (this species has the most exquisite small nest), **Hooded Robin** and the **Crested Shrike-tit**, as well as for the **Brown** and **Stubble Quail**.

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.

And again to all readers please remain safe and remember to maintain your social distancing when birding during the continuing COVID-19 crisis restrictions.

Jack Holland

Update on access to the Fyshwick Sewage Ponds

This note is to remind all COG members that access to the Fyshwick Sewage Ponds is not possible without approval from ICON Water.

Since 2012 COG has undertaken quarterly bird surveys at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Fyshwick Sewage Ponds. As part of the survey two members are given special approval by ICON Water to survey the Ponds. Because the area is regarded as a work site the two members have to be accompanied by an ICON Water staff member and wear appropriate work-site clothing such as florescent vests.

It has been emphasised to COG that if any unauthorised people are found on the site it is possible that any future access will be denied.

COG continues to liaise with ICON Water about access to the Ponds but to date without success.

Chris Davey



kingfisher park
birdwatchers lodge

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Future Field Trips

COG Trips

Each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form at the start of each trip and before proceeding on the trip which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An Emergency Contact Name and Number are required.

"I declare that I am capable of undertaking the trip having discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured that I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group."

Changes to trips are notified on the COG chatline <http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/discussion-email-list/> and trips page of COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/category/trips/>.

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give preference to members for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people.

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 13 December – Aranda Bushland NR

Meet at 8.00 am at the main entrance on Bindubi Street (where the power pylons go through the NR). We will amble for about 2 hours through the western and southern part of the reserve and possibly into the adjacent Snow Gums NR.

Register at smlashko@gmail.com

Wednesday December 16 - Lyrebird Trail, Tidbinbilla NR

The December Wednesday Walk will be the Lyrebird Trail at Tidbinbilla, which should offer some shady sections. Meet at the Mountain Creek carpark at 8.30am. To get to the carpark, follow the Tidbinbilla Ring Road and turn up Mountain Creek Rd. The carpark is at the end of this road. The walk is 2km.

Sandra Henderson

There is no January 2021 Gang-gang, so trips for January and February are as follows:

Sunday 17 January 2021 – Uriarra – morning outing

The meeting point for COG's annual outing will again be next to Uriarra Homestead big dam, close to the T-intersection of Uriarra and Brindabella Roads meeting at 8.00 am. We will spend some time looking at birds on and around the dam, then come back to Uriarra Crossing and then Uriarra East. We are likely to see quite a few unusual birds and migrants including **Nankeen Night-Heron**, woodswallows, **Dollarbird** and **Rainbow Bee-eater**. There are good picnic and toilet facilities at both Uriarra Crossing venues. Please bring morning tea and water. Register at smlashko@gmail.com

Sunday 31 January 2021– Jerrabomberra Wetlands – morning outing

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope. Meet at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

Register at smlashko@gmail.com

NB: this walk is flat and is wheelchair-friendly.

Sunday 7 February – Warks Road/Blundells Creek Road

Meet at 7.30am at the corner of Cotter Road and Uriarra Road (opposite Uriarra Homestead). The walk will involve a car shuffle to allow us to walk slowly down Blundells Creek Road and along part of Warks Road. Bring hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, morning tea and lunch. The walk will end early in the afternoon but may end earlier if the weather is very hot.

Register at liabattisson@grapevine.com.au

Tuesday 9 — Friday 12 February 2021— Shoalhaven Heads

This mid-week trip is designed to give participants the opportunity to visit several birding spots in the Shoalhaven area. This is a chance to improve your wader skills with visits to Shoalhaven Heads and Lake Wollumboola. We will also do some forest walks in the Nowra and Bomaderry areas.

Registration is essential at smlashko@gmail.com by **Wednesday 9 December**. The trip will be limited to 14 people and accommodation or camping will be at Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Park, located between the Shoalhaven River and Seven Mile Beach – see <http://www.shoalhaventouristpark.com.au/>. Participants will be asked to book their own accommodation, but any wishing to share cabins will be matched up if possible. **Please do not book accommodation until your registration is confirmed.**

Sunday 14 February – Molonglo Reach boat trip

This outing will be held under the ACT COVID-safe protocols, so will only go ahead if, as anticipated, the ACT Government relaxes its current COVID-19 restrictions from 4 sq m per person to 2 sq m per person.

Description: This outing/cruise will be on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo Reach, where late summer/early autumn is historically the peak time for breeding of darters as well as three species of cormorant there. The area also has a variety of water birds, and a range of land birds can be seen on the banks.

We will again be travelling in the electric boat “MV Gull” which, based on relaxed COVID-restrictions, can hold up to 20 people. The boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas difficult to get to from the land.

Meeting time: The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8:00 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding.

Meeting place: Kingston Boat Harbour at Trevillian Quay. Participants will need to leave their cars in Eastlake Parade, where there is free all-day weekend street parking, or in the Glass Works/Bus Depot Markets car park and walk across Eastlake Parade and down Trevillian Quay. Once you have crossed the canal keep going straight ahead for around 50 m till you reach a gap between the buildings. Turn right, Wharf 6 and the boat should be clearly visible after 20 m once when you reach the harbour.

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your mobile and emergency contact name and number.

Sunday 21 February – Uriarra TSR

Details will appear on the website once final arrangements have been made. In the meantime, you can **register** with Sandra Henderson at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 1 November – Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge

After admiring the **Tawny Frogmouth** with two chicks at the carpark, 15 COG members walked along the Murrumbidgee Discovery Track to Red Rocks Gorge. The **Brush Cuckoo** often encountered close to the carpark at this time of year called as we walked along the first few hundred metres. The walk was planned to show off the **Peregrine Falcons**, which breed each year at Red Rocks Gorge. The three youngsters were at the fluffy white stage, and the very attentive parents were around, with a few close fly-bys, and landing on the nest ledge with food. Other raptors for the day were **Nankeen Kestrels**, **Brown Goshawks**, a **Brown Falcon** and **Wedge-tailed Eagles**.

(On 19 November I walked to the Gorge again, but all three Peregrine chicks had fledged. One juvenile was seen close to nest, and another was calling further away. The parents were still close by.)

Sandra Henderson



Tawny Frogmouth

Sandra Henderson



Peregrine Falcon chicks

Geoff McVeigh



Murrumbidgee River

Peter Higgins

Sunday 8 November - Mystery outing from Uriarra Crossing

In lieu of the usual mystery bus tour, due to Covid restrictions, Sandra Henderson conducted a mystery walk instead. Eighteen people met at Uriarra Crossing and then proceeded along Brindabella Road for a short distance before turning off on Bullock Paddock Road, one of numerous forestry tracks in the former pine forest. We then walked along Bracks Hole Road until we arrived at the upper reaches of the Cotter Dam, about 2 kilometres from where the Cotter flows into the dam. The regrowth along the way provided habitat for many birds and we observed or heard numerous thornbills, **Weebills**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and a **Scarlet Robin**. Once near the water we saw a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** and a **Nankeen Kestrel**. An **Australasian Pipit** displayed beautifully on a log and a **Dusky Woodswallow** was seen carrying nesting material. However, the dam provided the biggest surprise of all. Not only were we rewarded with a clear view of a couple of **Great Crested Grebes**, as we rounded the inlet there were many more to be seen, some close enough to the shore to get an excellent view, and some displaying. We counted a total of 17. The mystery was revealed and we were a very happy group of birders. A total of 38 species was recorded.

Prue Watters



Great Crested Grebe

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 15 November – Campbell Park nest workshop

Thirty-three members and guests joined Sue Lashko and me on a clear, calm but warmish morning for the eighteenth running of this annual event. Sue had kindly offered to help lead once it became clear that numbers were too large for a single person to do so. Again, the emailing of the notes beforehand allowed me to largely dispense with the short spiel at the start, and the two groups soon headed separately towards the horse gate. I had expected things to be very active given the much better breeding conditions compared with the severe drought of 2019, but bird activity was in fact quite muted, confirming what I had found during the reccie a couple of days before.

In fact, I found the going about as hard as I've ever experienced over the eighteen years. After the early finding of a dependent young **Noisy Miner** being fed, we had to move well beyond the horse gate and further into the bush than we



White-throated Gerygone *Richard Arculus*

usually do before we found our first co-operative birds. Prior to this, birds either seemed to move on or quieten as we approached where they were calling. We watched a pair of **White-throated Gerygones** flitting around for a while before I noticed one coming from a nest, a typical dome-shaped one with a side entrance, but a much more rufous brown colour (which did make it easier for my group to see) than I have ever seen. All members of my group had excellent views before we moved on close by to try to find the **Leaden Flycatcher's** nest.

We had seen the only occasionally calling pair, which were clearly breeding based on the vigour with which the male attacked a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** which had ventured too close. We found this nest in a typical but fairly well hidden position on a horizontal branch with another sloping up almost directly above it, and again all the group had good views of the female sitting on it, while the male flitted about. Before this a pair of **Australian King-Parrots** flew over and landed in a nearby tree, after which the female disappeared into a hollow in the trunk. As she did not emerge for at least 5 minutes during which the male, which had been sitting sentry, flew off, we assumed she was sitting on eggs. This is the first confirmed breeding record for this species for this workshop, the only previous one being a female sitting near a hollow entrance last year. According to the BIRD INFO data on the

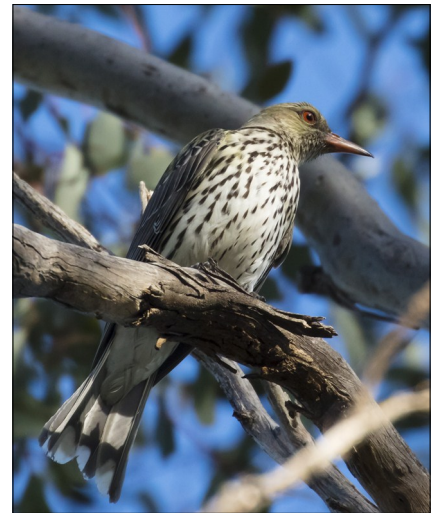
COG website, it is also a rare on/leaving nest record, with the vast majority of them inspecting hollows or dependent young.

We then exchanged notes with the other group, and while they successfully found the above (except for the King-parrots), we found their **Tawny Frogmouth's** but not their **Brown-headed Honeyeater's** nest, the latter having been said to be difficult to find. The former was in a quite exposed position right above the track, with the male on it unusually assuming the cryptic "broken stick" posture for most of the time we watched, perhaps feeling the need to due to the openness of the nest site. Tawny expert Stuart Rae confirmed it was a late nest. He had similarly found several in the past week or so on eggs or even still building, in places where there were no nests earlier. He thought it looked like some birds were not in condition to breed earlier, so were only now going down on eggs.

Following this we moved to the corner past the horse gate, first finding the very deep cup-shaped **Olive-backed Oriole's** nest suspended from the small twigs at the end of a leafy branch. While a bird was around constantly, often calling, it never closely approached this nest. We couldn't see a bird on it either, possibly because it was sitting very low in the deep cup, but we assumed it was this species rather than the similar nest of the **Noisy Friarbird** which, while there were quite a few around calling noisily, did not approach anywhere near this nest. **White-winged Trillers** were flying around sometimes calling there, and by following the birds we found their nest high in a gum tree. Typically, it was very small and difficult to see clearly, with the best indicator being the bird sitting on it, especially when the pair exchanged as they did rather frequently. Another pair about 50 metres away were still nest building, flying repeatedly to the same spot where they were busy preparing the base.

The two groups then came together for morning tea at the horse gate. During this John called out he had seen a **Satin Bowerbird**, which I initially dismissed as more likely an oriole, but others soon saw it too. We followed it to a clump of mistletoe where, to this veteran Satin Bowerbird watcher's delight, it was a female clearly seen nest building in it. This was a most unexpected first record, let alone breeding, in 18 years for this nest workshop, and for me clearly the highlight of the morning. I couldn't help wondering where the bower would be, probably at least 500 m away near the Campbell Park offices. Interestingly, the eBird Australia map shows just a single record for this species there this year on 6 October.

We then moved back towards the oriole/triller breeding site passing the large dam, this year full of water and very overgrown compared with the very dry conditions in 2019. Sue confirmed a couple of young **Australian Wood Duck** with 4 adults there in the long grass which didn't allow others to approach. There were also many **Common Starlings** flying around carrying food to nest holes in this area; Sue's group had earlier seen one taking food into one.



Olive-backed Oriole *Richard Arculus*

Once back we found a pair of **Willie Wagtails** putting the finishing touches to a nest in almost the exact same position as it was for 2019. Behind us a pair of **Grey Fantails** was repeatedly coming back to the same spot, and checking revealed the nest was only just starting to be built. It was then we found our first **Dusky Woodswallows** for the morning, with the few that stayed behind with me able to find them building in a typical loose bark-filled fork of a dead tree. This made 5 species in a small area, the only real concentrated area of breeding.

So despite the lack of calling, with 35 pairs of eyes we did manage to find a significant amount of breeding, quite a lot of it surprisingly still in the nest building stages. A species that called a lot but managed to mainly stay out of sight and was not found breeding was the **Rufous Whistler**. In all we found 5 of the 10 major nest types, with Sue's group finding **White-winged Choughs** still on their mud nest, whereas we found an empty moss-covered one. Closer to the offices we also saw 3 very large nests, two in the same tree, and a slightly smaller one close by. Stuart Rae has clarified that one of the two is an **Australian Raven** nest that had chicks until recently, and there wasn't anything in the other one last time he looked, so it's probably an alternate raven nest. Again, there were no **Varied Sittellas** seen, and the **Mistletoebird**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **Dollarbird**, while present, were quite elusive, having been observed mainly by Sue's group.

Participants continue to enjoy this very popular outing. A total of 47 species was seen on the day, surprisingly only slightly up from the 3 previous dry years. Seventeen species were recorded breeding at some level, a bit above average for the past few years, and included some of the hollow nesters. However, compared with previous years, breeding activity was taking place in a wider area in a 360° arc from the horse gate, possibly due to it being the best conditions for some years. Another factor may have been that the **Noisy Miner** did not seem to be quite as dominant nearly all the way to the horse gate compared with recent years.

My sincere thanks to Sue Lashko for helping lead half the group; it would have otherwise been impossible for me to do it adequately.

Jack Holland

Wednesday 18 November - Stony Creek Nature Reserve

Fifteen members joined the Wednesday walk through Uriarra East and Stony Creek reserves, on a warm, sunny morning. The river was flowing strongly, and although the track had been slashed recently, weeds along the edges were very lush.

The usual Pied Butcherbirds were missing in action, but those arriving early saw a pair of **Dollarbirds** and three **White-faced Herons** from the carpark. A **Leaden Flycatcher** was calling, and Jean spotted the nest close by. The female of the pair was on the nest, while her partner made the rounds of the carpark trees. Soon after setting off, we saw the first of many **Rainbow Bee-eaters** for the morning - they were plentiful in both reserves. In Stony Creek a pair of **Dusky Woodswallows** was carrying grass into a small hollow near the top of a tree. A **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** was seen close by, while a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was calling a short distance away. Flowering mistletoe in the casuarinas had attracted a **New Holland Honeyeater** and several **Crescent Honeyeaters**. We had expected **Mistletoebirds**, but it wasn't until late in the walk that we had some good views of a male. Raptors seen were a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels**, and a **Brown Goshawk**.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 22 November – Mt Majura NR

On a mild, still, cloudy morning in Hackett, 16 COG members and friends gathered at the McKenzie St gate to the Mt Majura reserve. A **Gang-Gang Cockatoo** creaked nearby as a welcome to the group. We proceeded slowly through the bush, entering the gully on the far side of the hill, hearing many birds, and seeing some. **Leaden Flycatchers** and a **Sacred Kingfisher** were variously seen and heard. We marvelled at the fantastic display of wildflowers – including hosts of fringed lilies and bluebells. Wallaby grass too was flourishing and in full flower. The birds were active in the botanical wonderland, with **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds** among the most vocal. A **Tawny Frogmouth** too was heard. Undeterred by a light rain-shower, we continued on to the summit, finding **Yellow-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills**. In total, we heard and saw 32 species for the morning, with **White-throated Treecreeper** being voted Bird du Jour.

David Dedenczuk

Report on visit to Emmaus Christian School, Davenport St Dickson

Bill Graham and Brittany Brockett

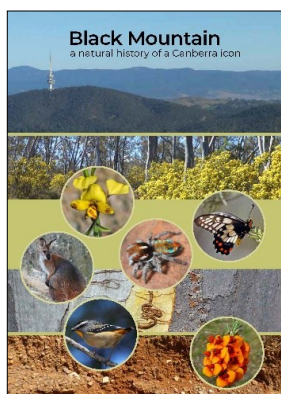
We visited the Pre-school at the request of the teacher Beth, on Tuesday 13 and Friday 19 October. Each visit was for one hour and 22 students aged 3 were present. Beth had been doing a unit of work on birds in the environment and had earlier distributed Birds of Backyard posters to families. She used an A3 copy as part of a display of work.

Brittany gave the talk and Bill took around the display items from COG's nest, feather and wing collection. We collected sticks, twigs, leaves, feathers, etc from the playground and the children made collage nests. We asked them to talk about what they had made. It was evident that the children, although very young, had understood quite a lot, to varying degrees. One child brought in an enormous **Common Myna** nest in a box that had been removed from the roof cavity. The teachers and school administration were happy with our visits. They took photos for the school newsletter, so that will be good publicity for COG.

One problem we discovered was the difficulty with the word 'ornithologists'. It is important to get a title and name that is more easily pronounced and understood by the public. We were impressed with the way that Beth had organized this unit of work. She would like to embed COG visits on an annual basis at the same time of the year. We would be happy to do return visits. The ideal is for two COG members to visit, one to give the talk and the other to display the items.

Publications for Sale

COG provides a range of birdwatching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices (around 10-30% off RRP). **While we aren't having face to face meetings you can still contact Kathy on sales@canberrabirds.org.au if you would like to purchase a publication.**



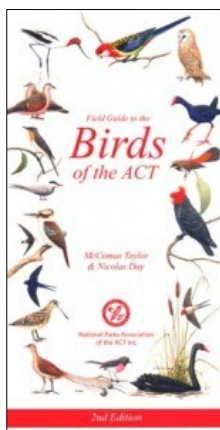
Black Mountain: a natural history of a Canberra icon

Ian Fraser and Rosemary Purdie with Friends of Black Mountain

This book takes us to the ecological heart of Black Mountain, in the heart of Canberra, a conservation reserve since 1970. Find out about the area's geological evolution, its native plants and animals and their habitats, how the biodiversity has changed over the last three decades, and how species survive fires and storms and are affected by invaders. Meet the enthusiastic professional and citizen scientists who have been keenly documenting and studying more than 640 plant species and thousands of insects and other animals living on the mountain, and learn about the challenges for maintaining the area's natural values in the coming decades.

This attractive and richly illustrated book is published to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Black Mountain Nature Reserve. It is a good read for the general public as well as ecologists, conservationists, and senior secondary and tertiary students, with clues to explore and protect this special place, now and into the future.

Members' Price: \$30



Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

McComas Taylor & Nicolas Day

This revised second edition illustrates in colour the 217 birds likely to be seen in and around the ACT. It has easy-to-follow descriptions in a compact format. Only local birds are shown making this Field Guide much simpler to use than comprehensive national guides. McComas Taylor has been watching birds in Canberra for over 30 years and has written, broadcast and lectured on the subject. Nicholas Day is widely recognised as one of Australia's foremost wildlife artists.

Members' price: \$20.

Draft field trips programme for January to June 2021

Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers who led field trips in 2020 and to those who have agreed to lead again in 2021. Their numbers are few and it would be wonderful to have more volunteers from COG's more than 300 members. You do not need to be an expert at identifying birds to lead a trip as there are always plenty of experienced birders on hand to help. Instead I am looking for members who would like to share one or more of their favourite birding spots with other COG members. It is always good to go to new places and you can choose either Saturday or Sunday for a morning or all day outing. Camping trips or trips where accommodation is in caravan parks, etc, are also popular and could be for a long weekend, during the week or for a longer period.

If you are prepared to lead a trip on one the shaded dates, please contact me as soon as possible at smlashko@gmail.com. If you have trip ideas for the July to December period, I would also be pleased to hear from you.

Sue Lashko

	Date	Venue	Duration	Leader
January	17	Uriarra	day	Sue Lashko
	20	Wednesday Walk		
	31	Jerrabomberra Wetlands (World Wetlands Day)	morning	Sue Lashko
February	7	Warks Road	to mid-afternoon	Lia Battisson
	9 to 12	Shoalhaven Heads	mid-week accommodated	Sue Lashko
	14	Molonglo boat trip	morning	Jack Holland
	17	Wednesday Walk		
	21	Uriarra TSR	morning	Sandra Henderson
	28	private property Gundaroo	morning	Sue Lashko
March	7th	venue required		leader required
	14	Scott Nature Reserve, Mulloon,	morning	David McDonald
	17	Wednesday Walk		
	21	Eden pelagics		Tobias Hiyashi
	28	Murrumbidgee River walk from Tharwa		Lia Battisson
April	Sat 3	Narrabundah Hill	morning	Jack Holland
	2 to 6 April	Wanganella Easter camp	shearing quarters, camp	Sandra Henderson
	11	K2C	morning	Nicki Taws
	18	Goorooyarroo NR	morning	Suzi Bond
	21	Wednesday Walk		
	25	venue required		leader required
May	9	Goulburn		Sandra Henderson
	19	Wednesday Walk		
	23	ANBG beginners	morning	Anthony Overs
	30	venue required		leader required
June	13	Superb Lyrebird survey		Chris Davey
	16	Wednesday Walk		
	27	venue required		leader required

New Places: November 2020

Sandra Henderson

Marshalls Break fire trail

Where is it: off Brindabella Road, almost opposite Curries Road.

This is a fire trail behind a locked gate. On the day I tried it, I could only walk about 300m down to the first bend, where Wombat Creek was running across the road, and was too deep after the rain for me to cross. In the 300m I managed to see only ten species, but this included a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and three **Gang-gang Cockatoo**, one of which flew to a branch above the track and looked at me closely. At some other time I'll try it again, because it seemed to go through some nice forest.

Jerilderie Sewage Ponds

Despite travelling many times through Deniliquin I'd not diverted to the Sewage Works. Unfortunately there is no public access. There appeared to be water in several of the ponds. I could see quite a few **Plumed Whistling-Ducks** on the nearest bank, and a **Brown Falcon** was flying between trees on the site. It may be a site where access could be requested at some future time.



Gang-gang Cockatoo

Sandra Henderson

Jellat Rd / Wallagoot Lane, Kalaru

I've gone along Wallagoot Lane in the past, looking at the excellent Jellat Jellat wetlands. We did this, but then stopped at other places.



Glossy Black Cockatoo

Sandra Henderson

Where: North of Tathra. 6.4km from the turnoff at Kalaru (where Wallagoot Lane has apparently become Jellat Rd), the bird route brochure suggests looking around the stockyards or to "wander in opposite the yards", which we did, following a vehicle track into the bush. **Scarlet Honeyeaters** were numerous and very vocal, as were the **Rufous Whistlers**. A little way in we spied a pair of **Glossy Black Cockatoos** feeding in trackside casuarinas. They allowed us to approach to about 15m before flying off. Just after we turned around after walking a few hundred metres, we heard a **Common Cicadabird** calling. We spent some time looking for the bird without success, but it called frequently, and seemed to go in a wide arc around us. Other nice birds along the track included **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, a **Brush Cuckoo** and a **Red-browed Finch**.

North Lagoon, Bermagui

Where: Bermagui, opposite the BP service station. We found it by accident, when Sue looked up as she was refueling the car, to see the boardwalk straight across the road. Easy to find and on the main road in town.

The wetlands area is between the main road and the beach, and is well worth a look if you are passing through Bermagui. After watching a tortoise walk, surprisingly quickly, along the track towards us before heading off into the shrubbery, we walked along the boardwalk to a view of a large area of open water, with **Pacific Black Ducks** as well as the three usual waterhens, some **Masked Lapwings**, **Great Cormorants**, **Little Pied Cormorants**, **Black Swans** with cygnets, and many **Australian Reed Warblers**.

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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:

A Brentnall
H Hall
C Skafte

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for February 2021 edition:

Wednesday 27 January 2021

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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