



Gang-gang

JULY 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

Wednesday 8 July 2020
virtual meeting

There will be another virtual meeting on 8 July. The following is the webinar link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/30/kr73ri25>

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 Leo Joseph** of the CSIRO's Australian National Wildlife Collection (ANWC) on 'Another instalment in the ongoing saga of: "Australian bird names are all sorted out. Yes? No? Maybe?" Some updates from black-cockatoos, lorikeets, quailthrush, and grasswrens.'

In a previous talk to COG Leo tried to show that as ornithologists keep investigating many kinds of scientific questions about birds with new scientific tools for tackling those questions, reasons

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

The weather over the 4-week period from 27 May covered by this column has been variable, with some sunny, cloudy or foggy days, with just a couple of the more severe frosts, and with two moderate rain events in the second half. While the general impression has been that bird activity in the COG area of Interest (Aoi) has remained quiet, there still has been sufficient interesting observations to include in this report. As summarised below several species are overwintering in larger numbers than usual, but others only in small numbers, and there were a couple of unexpected species seen as well.

Probably the most interesting chat line post was Mark Clayton's on 3 June that on the Australian Bird Identification (ABID) Group's Facebook page there

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Shining Bronze-cuckoo

Sandra Henderson

Everyone welcome

frequently pop up as to why we need to change scientific names. Sometimes the reasons boil down to “New data show it is time to break what we can now see was a bad habit”. Also, the questions we ask may or may not be directly concerned with relationships among birds and the names we use to describe those relationships. Yet the results often show us how and why changes to scientific names should be made. So rather than seeing ourselves as being in a time of instability and that that should be seen as a bad thing, Leo always tries to say that we are in an exciting time of learning new things about our birds, and that has to be a good thing.

Leo will give some recent examples of how research at the ANWC and with various colleagues has directed changes in scientific names. Examples will be from lorikeets, black-cockatoos and grasswrens. We have some new genera in lorikeets, a new subspecies of a black-cockatoo, and sorting out the species of grasswrens and new subspecies of one of those grasswrens. If time permits, Leo will try to give a brief summary of how their recent work on the Copperback Quailthrush shines a light on how interesting things can get these days!

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

was a series of photographs taken in Yass township. One of these was clearly of a **Brown Honeyeater**. He noted that to the best of his knowledge this was the first genuine record of this species in COG's AoI. This is largely a coastal species (though it does extend well inland in the warmer areas), and the closest record over the past year I can find on the eBird Australia map is from Nowra, over 150 km from Yass. It is certainly not listed in Steve Wilson's Book, *Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change*, or in COG's November 2017 Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Australian Capital Territory available on the web site.

Barbara Allan clarified that COG's Rarities Panel records show only two claims of a **Brown Honeyeater** in our area, neither of which was able to be endorsed. However, it was then pointed out that eBird has one, and Australian Birdlife's Birddata has four other local records, one of which was subsequently disavowed by the purported observer! It does vividly illustrate the many sources from which COG now draws upon to compile its Annual Bird Report (ABR), and the difficulties in ensuring that such records are properly brought to the attention of the Rarities Panel. In particular, in the past Mark (and I) has had great difficulties in obtaining further information from the ABID site, though he seems to have been more successful this time, and hopefully the record will be able to be properly considered.

This was further illustrated by Ryu Callaway finding a photo of four **Apostlebirds** posted on the Canberra Wildlife Photography Facebook group. He noted that apparently there were 6 or 7 birds, and a few people had asked about the location, but it seemed it wasn't possible to get anything more specific than "just north of the border", so he assumed it was probably on private property. It appears from the 2018-2019 ABR that the Watson bird has now not been seen for over 2 years, and the closest record for this species in the past 12 months, apart from Sandra Henderson's two birds just south of Goulburn in August last year, was from north of Cootamundra, also over 150 km away.

The most interesting overwintering spring/summer migrant sightings were two observations of the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo**. On 27 May Kim Larmour reported one in a casuarina (River Oak) by the river in the Molonglo River Reserve. She noted that after hearing a bit of its call, she had fabulous views for over 10 minutes, during which it typically caught a caterpillar, its favourite food. It was then observed on 17 June on the COG Wednesday Walk on the Murrumbidgee Track-from Casuarina Sands to Bulgar Creek (see report elsewhere in this issue). The photo shows an adult bird with very complete barring and an iridescent green back, again in a casuarina.

Interestingly it was first heard calling from across the river doing the faster rising call, but then it flew across and was seen overhead, from where it gave the descending slow call a few times. This usually occurs at the end of its call. Calling in winter is also unusual for this species, which is one reason why in my view you should always try to locate out of season **Bronze-cuckoo** calling for a proper identification; in particular **Common Starlings** can often give a very similar call. The BIRD INFO

data on the COG web site shows very few records in May, June or July, but I recall around 40 years ago (before the COG database) one seen a number of times in June, also in a River Oak outside my kitchen window at the time.

No other spring/summer migrants absent in May have been reported. Of those still present last month there have been no further reports of the **Noisy Friarbird**, the **White-throated Gerygone** or the **Rufous Fantail**. In contrast the **Western Gerygone** has been reported from 4 locations over the period, most recently from the Namadgi NP Visitors Centre on 24 June. There have also been reports of **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** from 6 locations, most recently from Carwoola on 22 June. These species seem to be overwintering in greater numbers this year. The BIRD INFO data for the latter shows the lowest number of records in June, with more in May and July.

Tree Martins were still reported from 3 locations, most recently at the Cowlshaw and Reed St carpark (Tuggeranong) on 18 June. **Australian Reed-Warblers** were still reported from 2 locations, one at the Jerrabomberra wetlands on 27 May, and on 9 June David Rees saw a very quiet one in the big pond along Horse Park Drive. The **Rufous Whistler** appears not to be overwintering as single birds were last reported from The Pinnacle NR and Campbell Park on 27 May. However, the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** has still been reported from around 19 locations, and **Grey Fantails** from close to 80 locations. These last two species clearly are the most widespread staying over winter this year.

In contrast the **Dusky Woodswallow** has only been reported from only the single location, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, most recently 7 birds on 14 June. The **Olive-backed Oriole** has been reported from 3 locations during the period, all single birds except for 2 in Symonston on 17 June. Interestingly the **Superb Parrot** was reported from just 5 northside locations over the period, the most being 6 birds at North Watson Wetlands on 6 June, so numbers overwintering seem lower this year. Likewise, only the single **Mistletoebird** has been reported from Campbell Park on 19 June.



Western Gerygone

Julian Robinson



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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

The migration season may have well been over but **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** have been reported from well over 30 and 20 locations, respectively, so some are clearly staying over winter as they usually do. **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were still reported from 6 locations, last near Tharwa on 21 June, so it appears they are overwintering in small numbers.

So please keep a look out during July for any of the remaining spring/summer migrant species above still present.

Of the altitudinal migrants species that had not yet significantly moved into urban and peri-urban locations in Canberra during May, the **Flame Robin** does now seem to have, being reported from around 12 such locations (compared with only 5 outside of these) in the period. The **Rose Robin** was still reported from 5 locations, most recently from Bruce on 14 June, 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 8 locations over the period, only 3 of these were urban, all the others being on, or west of, the Murrumbidgee River. Lindell Emerton told me hers in Mawson has been there since March, but no bird has yet appeared in my garden in Chapman, where they are present most winters. **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** were reported from 2 locations for the period, both in the ranges to the west. There have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** during June. The eBird Australia map shows two recent South Coast records only near Moruya and Narooma, with most having stayed in Victoria this winter, thus avoiding the extensive burnt areas of the eastern coast.

The **Bassian Thrush** was reported from 2 locations during the reporting period, again only one of these (the ANBG, where up to 3 birds have been seen) was urban. A single **Restless Flycatcher** was reported only from near Bredbo on 6 June. This is another species whose Conservation Status is listed as secure in all mainland States, but is increasingly less often reported in the COG Aol, from just 6 locations so far in 2020. The coastal **Brown Gerygone**, reported from the ANBG some winters, does not yet seem to have been observed. So please keep an eye out for these winter visitors.

Apart from the **Brown Honeyeater** and **Apostlebird** above, no new “unusual” species for 2020 were reported for the period. In fact, there were fewer such species observed. Ryu Callaway posted on the COG chat line that there was a report of **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** from Mt Majura on the Canberra Nature Map. The sighting date was 2 June, with a poor but recognisable photo of the bird in allocasuarina. He noted there were 3 birds so possibly were the same as those previously at Jerrabomberra. While he provided the co-ordinates, noting the last accepted eBird record for the ACT itself was from 2014, it appears no-one else was able to find these birds. Otherwise there was a report on 6 June of a single bird by Frank Antram from the Pomaderris NR just east of Goulburn and just outside COG’s AOI.

The recently re-opened upper parts of the Namadgi National Park has allowed a number of observers to report the **Powerful Owl** from the Warks/Blundells Creek Roads area. The first on 31 May was by Timothée Bonnet and K D Murray of a silent one was observed perched for 10 minutes. On 6 Jun Mikayla Burke first heard a female calling, then a male, and then a female was photographed while it was observed for 30 minutes, initially calling but later silent and at times preening, before flying to another tree where it recommenced calling.

Interestingly on the same day Libby Keen reported a **Powerful Owl** resting with prey during the day in same conifer near their house as the previous sighting in April this year, this time with a Ringtail Possum; the last time with a Greater Glider. Readers may recall this is at Harold’s Cross just S of the North Black Range fire. The eBird Australia map shows these locations are the only ones for which there are reports so far in 2020.

The male **Musk Duck** at Yerrabi Pond was last reported on 6 June and the female from the Tuggeranong Marsh on 13 June. Both had been present for around 3 months, but now seem to have possibly moved on. It is interesting to speculate why single birds suddenly appear, happily stay for such a long time, and then move on. In the meantime Alastair Smith reported one at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant on 10, 21 and 24 June, but the next closest report was from Goulburn Sewage Maturation Ponds (also just outside COG’s Aol), from where between 10-28 birds have been regularly reported this year.

The only other “unusual” bird reports were of a further **White-headed Pigeon** reported from Downer on 29 May, and single **Cockatiels** reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, Fadden and Fraser on 3, 7 and 17 June, respectively. Michael Lenz reported a **Jacky Winter** from north of Gundaroo on 2 and 10 June, from where he and others had previously reported them in January. Apart from 2 birds observed in the nearby Nanima area in May, I am not aware of any further reports of this species, so please continue to keep a special lookout for the **Jacky Winter**. My experience is that they are most often sighted to the north and south of Canberra, including along the Monaro Highway. They used to be at Campbell Park and Newline, but I can’t recall them being reported from peri-urban Canberra for a number of years.

The special bird to look out for this month is the **Crested Shrike-tit**, which has been reported from only 5 sites on the eBird Australia map so far in 2020, 4 of them in the reporting period. These include again north of Gundaroo, the Blue Range Hut in the Uriarra Forest, and the Tidbinbilla NR, where Jenny Bounds and I saw them on an early rekkie for a COG bus trip several years ago, but could never re-locate them. However, the most interesting sighting was by Kim Larmour who on 16 June found a pair high in a tree on the Lowden Forest Road in the Tallaganda State Forest, in an area of burnt forest where the tree trunks had lots of epicormic growth. She noted tree ferns had re-sprouted, and there was understorey of bracken, with *Blechnum* ferns in the damper areas, but otherwise the thick undergrowth that used to be there had been completely destroyed by the fires. Among the other 9 species she found at this spot were a pair of **Red-browed Treecreepers** together high up on tree with burnt bark and lots of epicormic growth, as well as a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** calling.

So please keep a special lookout the **Crested Shrike-tit**, which like the **Jacky Winter** and **Restless Flycatcher** is another species whose Conservation Status is listed as secure, but in my view also is flying under the radar.

Despite it being the first month of winter, there was still breeding activity reported as follows (observations from this past season are mentioned first):

On 27 May John Hurrell reported a family group of **Pied Butcherbirds** from the Sherwood Forest, with two juveniles being fed by adults. Others had reported 2 juveniles from there in late April/early May, possibly the same birds though they were not noted as being fed, so they were probably relatively advanced. Nevertheless, it is a significant record given that the BIRD INFO data on the COG web site shows only 4 breeding records in total, though one of these is of dependent young in April.

Kym Bradley noted that on 24 April she had posted a link to an image of an adult **Diamond Firetail** with a white feather and a nest in the background, which at that time she was unsure if it was for breeding or roosting. On 3 June she posted that the question was answered as she had sighted 3 juveniles in close proximity to the nest. In this case BIRD INFO shows nest building through to May (but not June or July), and dependent young to June (but not July to September).

Julian Reid informed me that **Australian Wood Ducks** had produced/brought three or four broods to the Dickson Wetlands in April-May. He noted that this was the first autumn breeding event for them on these wetlands since they filled in May 2011. He also noted that most ducklings get cleaned up very quickly - he assumed mainly by foxes. This is also my local experience, possibly because they seem to spend much more time on land than other ducklings, probably when moving between dams.

On 2 June Jean Casburn informed me that all 7 nest locations along the Molonglo River W of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass were now vacant, except for just one adult **Great Cormorant** on a nest with a very small begging young. She noted that the willow leaves had now fallen and the adult bird on the nest appeared to be very anxious. Eight **Little Pied Cormorants** were still around but no **Australasian Darters**. This timing accords with my experience of the finish of the breeding season for Darters/Cormorants on the Molonglo Reach.

The above and my reports in previous columns illustrate what a significant autumn breeding season it has been following the first good rains in early February. And as this comes to a close, reports of the start of the new breeding season have been brought to my attention with three separate incidents of **Pied Currawongs** collecting nest material or nest building and two incidents of **Noisy Miners** first collecting nest material and then separately copulating on 20 June. Sue Lashko, who sent me the last report, also indicated that she saw a **Buff-rumped Thornbill** carrying nesting material at The Pinnacle NR on 19 June.

Red Wattlebirds have also been reported collecting nesting material. Certainly over the past fortnight in my garden they have been pursuing and clearing out the smaller bird species in preparation for breeding.

The above four species are all known early nesters, as are **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Australian Ravens**. Despite this quite a few mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have still been reported in June, as late as last weekend.

Concerning single species flocks, on 6 June Jean Casburn noted a flock of approximately 30 **Rainbow Lorikeets** whirling briefly around the Tullaroop/Renmark St region, saying it was most unusual to see this species in Duffy. I noted that for several weeks up to the previous one they had been visiting a large flowering gum in Kathner St Chapman about a km away, where I

saw up to 18 birds, the most I'd ever seen locally, at least since the 2003 fires. On 7 June Jean indicated she had seen the same flock and the very large gum they came from, which turned out to be covered in bloom. She hoped they would move on after the flowering.

Midway through the reporting period I started to see **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** gathering on the verges, median strips etc, but in still small numbers (not more than 50). The very noisy **Common Myna** roost in Rivett is still active and has now been there for well over a month, usually they last only a week or so before moving to a new site. Interestingly while this is less than 300 m from the edge of my GBS site, I have only recorded a maximum of 3 birds on my GBS chart during this time.

So please watch out for any overwintering spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the altitudinal migrants, for any MFFs still active, for single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any winter breeding activity, as well as a special look out for the **Jacky Winter** and the **Crested Shrike-tit**. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, posting on the COG e-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Finally, to all readers please remain safe and remember to maintain your social distancing when birding during the continuing COVID-19 crisis restrictions, even as they are currently being relaxed. This pandemic is not yet over.

Jack Holland



Jacky Winter

Geoffrey Dabb



Crested Shrike-tit

David Cook

RENEW YOUR COG MEMBERSHIP

Now is the time to renew your COG membership. Fees are \$50 for an individual and \$55 for family membership.

The simplest way to do this is to complete and submit the online membership renewal form (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/joining-cog-and-renewing/>) and pay using electronic funds transfer or you can send your renewal by mail with a cheque.

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 12 July – Point Hutt Pond, Gordon

Point Hut Pond in Gordon is a very large suburban pond which COG has not visited in the past. Meet at the carpark on McGilvray Close in Gordon at 9am (do NOT go to Point Hut Crossing). This is an easy walk of about 2.5km, with waterbirds and some bush birds to be seen.

Registration is essential, to shirmax2931@gmail.com – give your name and phone number.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 19 July - Cuumbeun Nature Reserve

Cuumbeun Nature Reserve is on the corner of Kings Highway and Captains Flat Road. Whilst the Reserve covers an area on both sides of Captains Flat Road, on this occasion we will walk a 5 km loop through the southern side of the Reserve. Meet at 9am at the entrance on Captains Flat Road, just over 1 km from the intersection with the Kings Highway, on the right hand side of the road. Take extreme care when crossing over to the parking area by the gate. We will walk on fire trails, where there is ample room for appropriate physical distancing. Other than a couple of short uphill stretches it is easy walking, but ensure that you have comfortable, sturdy footwear. Bring morning tea with you in case we go over a couple of hours.

Registration is essential, to liabattisson@grapevine.com.au – provide your name and phone number.

Information about the Reserve is at the following website, although it is old: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/cuumbeun-nature-reserve>

Lia Battisson

Sunday 26 July - The Pinnacle Nature Reserve

The Pinnacle NR is one of a chain of Canberra Nature Park reserves in the Belconnen hills. Heavily planted with trees in the 1980s and 1990s, it now offers a lovely mix of woodlands and open areas, including a largely undisturbed patch of remnant Red Stringybark woodland, and expansive views across the Molonglo Valley. July is a good time for mixed feeding flocks.

Please register in advance at johnbrannan@tpg.com.au, giving your name and phone number. Meet at 9 am at the reserve gate at the southern end of Dungowan St, Hawker and feel free to bring something for a spot of morning tea at the Pinnacle summit, weather permitting.

John Brannan

Saturday 1 August – ANBG beginners' outing

This morning walk will be the first for 2020 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours. Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter.

Registration is essential. Please book your place with Anthony, giving your name and phone number (at 0419202155, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), and he will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide. **If you do not have binoculars, please let me know as COG can supply you with a pair to use on the day.**

Anthony Overs

Sunday 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

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

Field Trip Reports

Saturday 13 June - Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve - Superb Lyrebird Survey

The seventeenth annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird**, designed to provide an index of population numbers within the Reserve since the 2003 bushfires, was run under perfect conditions with a cool morning, no wind and clear skies but with fog still lying on the upper slopes.

This year the survey was run under conditions imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions with no car-pooling and a quick get-together at the main car park. The Visitors Centre was still closed with free access to the Reserve to the general public in place. Teams were restricted to two observers and this year participation was not open to the general membership with team allocation determined beforehand. Twelve COG members assembled at the car park by 8.00 am and after breaking up into the allocated teams we soon started to survey the six main walking trails This included the Lyrebird/Cascades trail which was not part of the original five because it was not until sometime after the 2003 fire that the trail was reopened. The 2020 survey was of particular interest for, although the summer bush fires had not burnt the Reserve, the Orroral Valley fire came very close.

Taking a minimum count, 13 individual **Superb Lyrebirds** were recorded within the Reserve (Gibraltar Rocks 1 (1), Devil's Gap 3 (1), Fishing Gap 2 (6), Ashbrook 3 (4), Camel Back 4 (16)). Figures in brackets are numbers reported last year; fifteen less than in 2019; see Figure 1. Three birds were recorded from the Lyrebird/Cascades trail of which one was also recorded from the Camel Back Trail and one from Ashbrook Trail leaving a single sighting allocated to the Lyrebird/Cascades trail and not included in the totals.

Lyrebird numbers from all trails, apart from Camel Back, were similar to the last few years. The number of reported Lyrebirds from the Camel Back Trail was well down and is difficult to explain. Due to the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions the Camel Back Trail was very popular with walkers with a minimum of 37 individuals counted walking the trail during the survey. To check whether the increased activity along the trail had affected the vocal activity of the lyrebirds, the trail was counted again over the same time period and under similar weather conditions three days later. This time six birds were reported, four from similar locations three days earlier, with only two walkers recorded on the trail. The second survey confirmed the low numbers compared with previous years with similar numbers not reported from the trail since 2011.

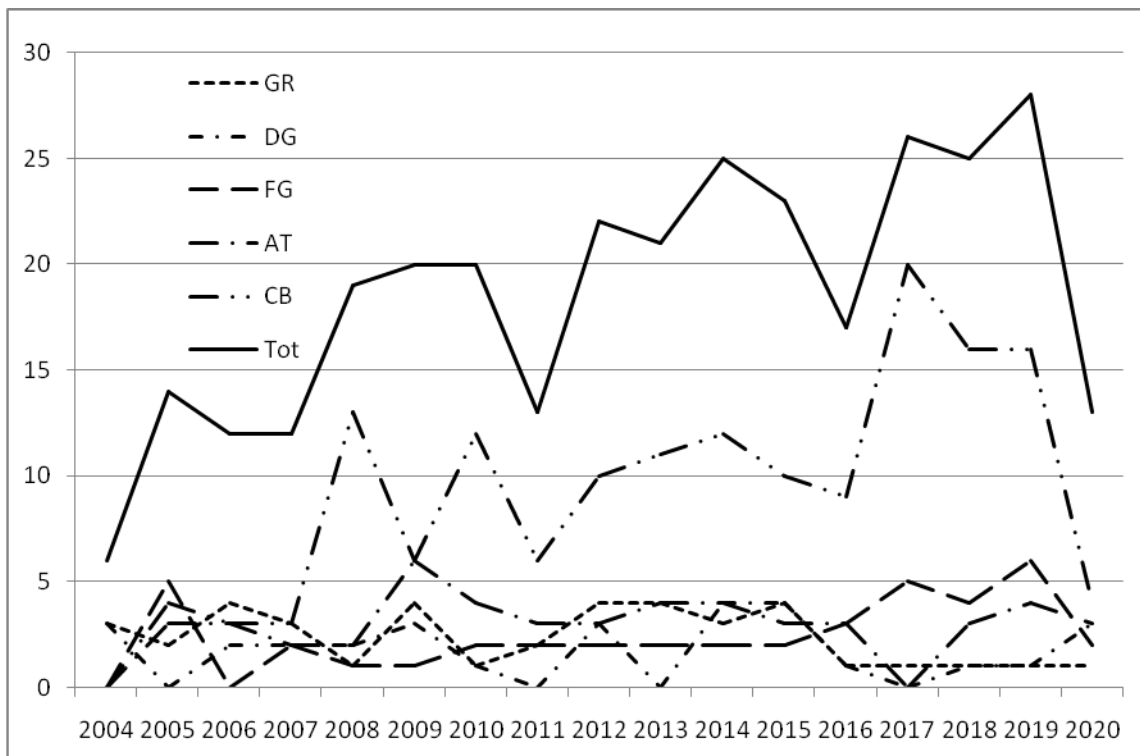


Figure 1. Numbers of Superb Lyrebirds recorded from walking trails at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, 2004-2020. GR-Gibraltar Rocks, DG-Devils Gap, FG-Fishing Gap, AT- Ashbrook Trail, CB-Camel Back, Tot- Total number of birds.

During the survey 39 bird species were recorded with the number seen depending very much on the trail walked; Gibraltar Rocks-33, Devil's Gap-24, Fishing Gap-15, Ashbrook-13, and Camel Back-13 with 13 species reported from the Lyrebird/Cascades Trail. There was an increase in the total number of species from 33 last year with an increase from all trails except Fishing Gap.

There were six species reported from all six trails, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, **Superb Lyrebird**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Striated** and **Brown Thornbill**, and **Grey Shrike-thrush**. **Crimson Rosella**, **White-browed Scrubwren** and **Australian Raven** were reported from five of the trails.

Species seen from one track only included **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **Crescent Honeyeater**, **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Spotted Quail-thrush**, **Varied Sittella**, **Grey Currawong**, **Grey Fantail**, **Magpie-lark**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Silvereye** and **Red-browed Finch**

Many thanks to all of the volunteers.

Chris Davey

Wednesday 17 June - Murrumbidgee Discovery Track

With COVID-19 restrictions in force, the attendees were split into two groups, walking about 15 minutes apart.

It was a beautiful morning, and the river was flowing well. The target species was **Crescent Honeyeater**, seen several times ahead of the outing. All participants had at least brief views of these birds, which were feeding in mistletoe in the casuarinas. One group was surprised by a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, which appeared in the same tree as a **Crescent Honeyeater**. Group One observed three **Emus** across the river in the Cotter Campground, but Group Two encountered three very wet **Emus** which had swum across the river and wandered along the walking track. Other species included **Australian Wood Ducks** exploring hollows in the carpark, **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos**, **Red-browed Finches**, **Eastern Yellow Robins** and a **Speckled Warbler**.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 20 June – Narrabundah Hill

Twenty five members and guests joined Sue Lashko and me on this outing, the first weekend COG field trip since the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions. The weather at the start was cloudy though fine and the sun came out for much of the walk, a stark contrast to the more than 30 mm of rain overnight. In fact none of the registered participants had been put off, the further relaxation of numbers a couple of days earlier allowing slightly more than the 20 maximum advertised. As the road around the reserve is wide and facilitates social distancing, we were able to stay in a loose single group, walking for about 1.5 km along the northern and about one third of the western boundaries, and returning by the same route.

The highlight of the morning's birding was 2, possibly 3, pairs of **Speckled Warblers**, with the last pair on the way back seen exchanging food. While not always particularly co-operative, the 3 different sightings did allow all members to get decent looks. They were among some loose mixed feeding flocks which contained other acanthizids, in particular good numbers of the **Yellow-** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, as well as **Weebills**. Again, while these were quite active, sufficient birds were seen to allow most participants good views. The number and variety of smaller birds was a feature of the morning; in fact around one third of the species were smaller than the **White-eared Honeyeater** seen. These also included a single **Eastern Spinebill**, **Grey Fantail** and **Golden Whistler**, the last-named unfortunately seen by only a few.

In total 35 different species were observed, a pretty good number for the winter solstice morning. Interestingly, however, no pardalotes were observed. Other sightings of note included several flocks of **Red-rumped Parrots**, and a group of 10 **Australian King-Parrots** in a tree above us. However, the real value of the morning was the possibility for participants to enjoy one of the first opportunities to socialise with fellow birders for over 3 months.

The weather had become relatively balmy while we were having morning tea in the sun on the banks of a local dam. Unfortunately, just as we were returning to the cars we got caught in the edge of a shower, with some light hail, which had crept up behind us, thus curtailing activities a little earlier than expected. My thanks once again to Sue Lashko for her help in leading the group, and to Lia Battison for keeping the bird list and entering these into eBird.

Jack Holland

Why do I bird in an industrial area?

We all know birders go to some unexpected places – who else gets excited about swamps and sewage works? I know when I first proposed a COG walk at Hume there were quite a few people who wondered why anyone would go there.

I started going to the west Hume area in mid-2015, when there were lots of open paddocks and only a couple of businesses. The initial interest was the constructed stormwater pond on Couranga Crescent. Over the next few years I expanded my walks in the area to a circuit taking in the Hume horse paddocks, the railway line at the back of Hume, the area around Dog Trap Gully, and the woodland behind the weighbridge on Tralee Street. My first bird list had 18 species on it, now my Hume list has 113 species, and I still visit regularly.

There have been some very special sightings over the years. In March 2016 I stood at the “roundabout pond” on Tralee St while 15 **White-throated Needletails** hawked for insects only a few metres above my head. Several years ago two pairs of **White-fronted Chats** nested on Couranga Crescent, one pair on the edge of the pond, the other pair in a shrub in the front yard of the courier depot opposite the pond. Kim Bradley and I watched and photographed the birds over several weeks. In August 2016 a **Restless Flycatcher** spent several weeks at Dog Trap Gully (which has subsequently been “rehabilitated” with the loss of the various finches which inhabited the blackberries). **Hoary-headed Grebes** raised two broods one year on the pond, which also has **Australasian Grebes** breeding every year. Some years many **Australian White Ibis** roosted at Hume.

Even now, with huge concrete business premises on almost every block, the **Rainbow Bee-eaters** still breed along the railway, **Dollarbirds** nest in the woodland, **Speckled Warblers** are still along the railway, and a **Pallid Cuckoo** turns up each spring. I think the lone **Little Pied Cormorant** has appeared in about 90% of the more than 100 lists I’ve submitted from Hume.

(And for interest – the Couranga Homestead building, now deteriorating and boarded up, and a small slab building, the first home of the family which developed Tralee Station, are still to be found in Hume, with some signage about the history of the area.)

Sandra Henderson

Early morning dog-walk in Narrabundah

On seeing a galah,
quite a common species these days,
I remember someone saying
the crest is like the rising dawn.

So sulphur-crests and rising dawns
crown birds along the way,
while gargling pies and miners shrill
applaud the coming day.

From those dark eucs that limply stand,
the rainbow ‘keet’s harsh shriek,
and then the groan of rusty hinge,
a gang-gang’s grating kreek.

The remaining calm is shattered,
by the true start of the day -
the sound that jolts the burb to life,
a peacock’s piercing bray.

Geoffrey Dabb

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Placenames Puzzle

Avian toponyms Compiled by Jan Tent

The names of birds sometimes feature as an element in our placenames. Can you find them in these toponyms? Example-(NSW, harbour island) a type of parrot: Cockatoo Island

1. (QLD, Channel Country settlement) generic avian
2. (NSW, Sydney suburb) the Australian 'ostrich' on the range
3. (NSW, Sydney suburb) gave its name to an iconic broad-tailed parrot
4. (NT, Kakadu town) black-necked stork
5. (NSW, coastal tourist town) raptor's residence
6. (NSW, town west of Cessnock) this bird is noted for its tintinnabulation
7. (WA, river) large long-necked elegant water fowl
8. (QLD, locality near Port Douglas) this ratite is looking a bit blue
9. (NSW, north Sydney suburb) look out for this corvid's incubator
10. (WA, cove on Cape Naturaliste) large raptor
11. (QLD, cove at Cooktown) a colourful passerine with a stout conical bill
12. (QLD, coral cay north-east of Gladstone) a long-legged coastal bird that flies with its neck retracted
13. (TAS, beach on Bruny Island) a royal piscator
14. (VIC, cove on Lake Victoria) its bill was said to hold more than its belly can
15. (VIC, headland near Cape Everard) an oceanic seabird
16. (TAS, township) ambulatory seabird at home under the water
17. (NSW, peak on the Budawang Range) a home for Columba
18. (QLD, bay at Weipa) the ancient mariner's curse
19. (SA, headland in Spencer Gulf) a wader with a downcurved bill
20. (WA, shoal near Geraldton) a columbid that's not quite tortoise-like

Answers on page 13

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New Places: June 2020

Bullen Range walking track (part of Murrumbidgee Discovery Track) north of Kambah Pool

Where is it: the track is accessed at a step-through near the entrance to Kambah Pool Reserve.

This is near the southern end of the Murrumbidgee Discovery Track, which runs from Casuarina Sands to Point Hut along the river. The Casuarina Sands to Kambah Pool section is noted as “difficult”. This was not apparent at the Casuarina Sands end, but is very apparent at the Kambah Pool end. I walked only the first 2.3km of this section of the track, and there is almost no flat walking, and much is up and down steps. From the small bridge over McQuoids Creek, there are over 150 stone/wooden steps up the hill. There are some spectacular views of the river – some of the best at the point where I turned around. During my walk I encountered three mixed flocks, and possibly missed some honeyeater species in the difficult light conditions (overcast). At one point I disturbed three **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** ripping pieces from the base of a small eucalypt. Many other trees along the track have also been shredded low down. Not a walk for the unfit like me.

Rose Cottage Horse Paddocks

Where : there is a signposted entry road on Mugga Lane, just up from the solar farm.

There was no indication the paddocks are still in use. It appears to be quite a large area, adjacent to Wanniasa Hills Reserve. There was quite a cold wind blowing when I visited. A large group of **Australian Ravens** was flying between trees on the road in, and **White-winged Choughs** were pottering around the horse yards. A small fenced patch of trees not far from the parking area appears to have been visited by someone collecting firewood very recently. There were no unusual species at all in the area I walked.

Illoura Horse Paddocks (Curtin)

Where : I accessed the paddocks from Heysen St, near the corner where it becomes Devonport St.

A very promising start with four **Flame Robins** along the track from the gate. As I neared the main horse yards, a group of **Double-barred Finches** were fossicking in the hay in one of the yards. A group of ten **Straw-necked Ibis** flew over, possibly coming from the oval further down Devonport St, where a much larger group was foraging when I drove past later. There are quite a few paddocks – I avoided the ones currently in use, but wandered to some groups of trees. I covered very little of a very large site, and saw 19 species.

Cuumbeun Nature Reserve (southern area).

I accompanied Lia on a recce for the walk she’s leading in this reserve in July. Those more familiar with Cuumbeun will know it is in two sections, north and south of Captains Flat Road. This southern area is one I visited a few years ago with a native plant group, although I couldn’t recall the route we used on that occasion. There were some very quiet sections, and other areas with quite a few small birds. The various dams were totally devoid of bird life, although frogs were calling. Although we did not see anything particularly special, I note that another COG member has seen some very interesting species there within the past couple of years. There are a number of tracks, so there is more to explore.

Sandra Henderson

Puzzle answers

(from page 12)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Birdsville | 8. Cassowary | 15. Petrel Point |
| 2. Emu Plains | 9. Crows Nest | 16. Penguin |
| 3. Rosehill (> Rosella) | 10. Eagle Bay | 17. Pigeon House |
| 4. Jabiru | 11. Finch Bay | 18. Albatross Bay |
| 5. Hawks Nest | 12. Heron Island | 19. Curlew Point |
| 6. Bellbird | 13. Kingfisher Beach | 20. Turtle Dove Shoal |
| 7. Swan River | 14. Pelican Bay | |

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2020-2021 memberships:

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

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COG welcomes the following new members:

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E Sommer
R Redden
A Coleman
K Wust

NEXT NEWSLETTER

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Wednesday 29 July 2020

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

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c/- The Secretary COG,

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

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

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Gang-gang is published on COG's website in PDF format.

ISSN 2208-018X

