



Gang-gang

NOVEMBER 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 11 November 2020
Virtual meeting including AGM

There will be another virtual meeting at 7:30 pm on 11 November. The following is the webinar link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/67/zkonkh72>

Participants should be 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.

Following the AGM the presentation for the evening will be by long-term COG members **Peter Fullagar** and **Chris Davey** titled "**The Rodent eradication program on Lord Howe Island - the COG contribution**".

After many years of planning and delays, baiting with the rodenticide Brodifacoum was successfully completed on Lord Howe Island during the winter of 2019.

Continued Page 2

Everyone welcome

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

The weather for the 4 weeks from 30 September covered by this column has seen average or above average temperatures, with regular and at least moderate rain events, in keeping with the La Niña event officially declared on 29 September. Based on this I would have expected fewer inland species in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) over the period. However, as detailed below there have been surprising numbers of these, including again a couple of species which I had not alerted readers to look out for in my October column.

The first of these was the **Painted Honeyeater** which COG's 2108-2019 Annual Bird Report lists as a rare, breeding visitor which, after a major influx in (the drought year) 2002-2003, has been recorded in the COG Aoi subsequently only in the years 2007, 2008-2010 and 2013. This does not include the very dry spring/early summer of 2019 in which they were present as could have been expected, but not in this year's very wet spring. Two

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Painted Honeyeater

Robin Eckermann

NOVEMBER MEETING *continued from Page 1*

The Canberra Ornithologists Group has been involved in the program since 2013. The Group has been responsible for the design and coordination of an annual survey of the lowland land birds since that time. The aims of the survey have been to determine the effects of the baiting program on the terrestrial birds after the initial baiting regime and in the long-term.

The talk will discuss the problems associated with introduced rodents on islands, with examples of past successes and failures, how COG became involved, briefly introduce the survey methodology and then present some preliminary results and implications for rodent control on other islands.

REMINDER: Annual General Meeting, 11 November 2020

The COG Annual General Meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Wednesday 11 November 2020, as part of the webinar scheduled for that evening. Information about how to join the webinar will be emailed to members and published here <http://canberrabirds.org.au/category/meetings/>

The AGM agenda and financial papers can be found here <http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/annual-reports/>.

The Minutes of the 2019 AGM are linked from the same page.

Please advise any apologies to cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au.

Please record your attendance by emailing your name to cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au during the AGM.

The audited financial statement for 2019/20 has been loaded onto the COG website at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/annual-reports/>

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

birds were first reported by David Dedenczuk from the Mt Ainslie/Campbell Park eastern forest margin on 5 October, and since then up to 3 birds have been seen there by many viewers.

It's also a surprise that they seem to have stayed there, with on 23 October Alastair Smith reporting that 2 birds appeared to be collecting spiderweb as nesting material. So that is something to look out for, noting that Michael Lenz has previously mentioned they are very surreptitious breeders. In the interim David McDonald heard one calling intermittently over approximately five minutes but could not find it high in the canopy of a group of Yellow Boxes at the Sutton Common on 18 October, and Jenny Bounds observed one at Mulligans Flat during the COG Blitz on 23 October. So it's worth keeping an eye out but especially an ear out for its very characteristic "Geor-gie" call which often gives a clue to its presence.

Also unexpected was the return of the **Common Sandpiper** to the Isabella Pond, first reported by Kym Bradley on 4 October. Assuming it's the same one as was first reported there on 7 October last year, it is remarkable how this small solitary bird can find this tiny spot on the map after having flown from mid to north latitudes in Asia where it breeds (a remarkable feat even if it's a different one). Again it was recorded by a number of observers up to 28 October, but whether it will stay all summer as it did in 2019-2020 is unclear; perhaps there is more suitable alternative habitat in this much wetter year. Interestingly the closest location from where it has been recorded this spring is north of Wollongong over 200 km away.

The third species I did not alert readers to look out for was the **White-throated Needletail** of which 3, circling rapidly and widely overhead in the wind currents, were first reported by Jean Casburn over Mt Taylor on 2 October. Another 3 birds were then reported on 14 October by Deb and Rod Ralph on Tharwa Drive opposite Lanyon Homestead. The reason I had not yet alerted readers to look out for this species is that few are usually seen until their return northward migration in the New Year, which is generally accepted as a much more inland one. However, there may be more around in this much wetter year, so please keep a lookout for this and the related **Fork-tailed Swift**.

The **Masked Woodswallow**, a species I had asked readers to look out for but wasn't confident it would be observed in the COG Aol this spring, has been reported from 4 locations, first a single bird over the Pinnacle NR by Jeb Kent on 1 October, 25 by Liam Manderson over Macarthur on 8 October and 20 by Luke Downey over Wamboin on 11 October, respectively. The latter were accompanied by 25 and 60 **White-browed Woodswallows**, respectively. Nicki Taws also reported a mixed flock heading NW over Cook on 4 October, while Michael Lenz reported 16 **White-browed** over Gundaroo that same morning, and Viv Rolland/Angus Rae saw a single one at Campbell Park on 10 October.

The **Horsfield's Bushlark** also seems to be present both earlier and in greater numbers than expected, with records from 6 locations between 14 and 23 October. This also applies to the **Rufous Songlark** recorded from a surprising 25 locations, including some in the southern part of the ACT. In fact, there seem to be more present in the COG Aol than in the dry 2019 spring. The **White-winged Triller** also seems to be present in surprising numbers as it has been recorded from around 35 locations, though perhaps not as common as last spring. In contrast the **Brown Songlark** has only been recorded from one additional location, West Belconnen Pond, but by a number of observers, initially by Michael Lenz on 16 October.

Of the species which had yet to arrive by 30 September, the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was first reported from Ainslie by Steve Holliday on 23



Plumed Whistling Ducks

Geoffrey Dabb



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October, though there were 2 earlier reports from east of the COG Aol on 19 and 20 October. The **Brush Cuckoo** was first reported by Sandra Henderson from the Murrumbidgee Discovery Track between Kambah Pool and Red Rocks Gorge on 18 October, and then by Sandra and several other observers at Kambah Pool from 19 October.

In respect of the passage migrants, one or two **Satin Flycatchers** have been recorded from 3 locations, two of these from peri-urban locations, the first being 2 birds at Bluetts Block by Peter Morris on 14 October. The **Rufous Fantail** has been reported from 2 locations, the first being the only peri-urban one at Campbell Park by Beck Redden on 18 October. The **Cicadabird**, which often passes through unnoticed, has been reported from 3 peri-urban locations, first a male at Shepherd's Lookout by Adrian Brooks on 22 October, the second a pair on Mt Ainslie by Michael Lenz on 25 October, and the third an immature by Alastair Smith at Callum Brae on 27 October..

Of the species for which there had only been a few reports in my October column, **Dollarbirds** have now been reported from around 17 locations, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** from well over 30 locations and **Leaden Flycatchers** from close to 45 locations, so all 3 species are well established by now. The **Eastern Koel** also arrived early and in big numbers. The second report for one was of a male heard in Campbell by Joan Lipscombe on 30 September, and by 12 October they had been reported from 20 suburbs (compared with only 3 last year), and by the end of the month from over 45 locations compared with 28 last season. This includes some quite rural locations such as Gigerline NR and Molonglo Gorge.

So all spring/summer species that might be expected to come the COG Aol in any given have now arrived and many are well established. I am reluctant to nominate any additional species which might still arrive, as it would take a brave person to bet against other species still being reported, but please keep an eye and ear out for them.

For the three most common winter altitudinal migrant species, there were reports from around 30 compared with just 6 urban and 7 peri-urban locations for the **Golden Whistler**, **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Scarlet Robin**, respectively, in the period, again an indication that the **Golden Whistler** is the slowest to move away. The **Flame Robin** has clearly moved away, being reported from only 1 such location (Bibaringa) in the period, with all the others being to the west and south in the ranges where it breeds. The **Rose Robin** was reported from 5 locations, all in the ranges, but there have still been no reports of the **Pink Robin** in the COG Aol in 2020. The **Crescent Honeyeater** was reported from 8 locations over the period, all being on, or West of, the Murrumbidgee River. There have been no reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** or of the **Swift Parrot** for the period, meaning that there has been just the single observation in the ACT Aol for the latter over their winter migration period, with the eBird Australia map indicating no other sightings within about 150 km.

The **Bassian Thrush** has also moved west to the ranges to breed with reports from 5 locations there. The **Restless Flycatcher** has been reported from just a single known location to the north of Gundaroo, but the great news is that there has been a successful breeding record. Michael Lenz first alerted me to it, and then on 3 October Shorty reported that at least two young could be heard in the nest; he also noted a faecal sac being removed from it. On 11 October Shorty reported that the young had fledged, and on 17 October a number of COG observers reported the fledged young being fed. The importance of this record is underlined by the BIRD INFO on the COG website indicating just 18 individual breeding records over the 35 years to 2017.

The new "unusual" species, at least for the ACT for 2020, observed in the period was the up to 12 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** reported and photographed by several observers on just the single day (19 October) at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. Where they may have gone to is unclear as only 2 ducks were reported on 2 occasions from the COG Aol during the period, both from their usual spot at Trucking Yard Lane in Bungendore. A single **Blue-billed Duck** has been regularly reported from Jerrabomberra Wetland NR or Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Pond across the road, with one then being reported from Isabella Pond by Kim Larmour on 21 October. Lia Battisson then reported a pair across the road on Upper Stranger Pond on the afternoon of 25 October, and Alison Mackerras 4 ducks back at Isabella Pond about 22 hours later. There were still 2 there the next morning.

A single **Musk Duck** was reported from Fyshwick Sewage Treatment plant on only 2 occasions, last on 12 October. Two 2 days earlier 4 were reported from Baroona Wetlands south of Michelago, and 2 on the large dam at Ingelara the day after. Following that, up to 6 ducks have been reported on Rows Lagoon northeast of Collector, and 2 ducks from Wet Lagoon at Breadalbane. A late record was a female at West Belconnen Pond on 27 October. An **Australian Shelduck** was reported from Wet Lagoon at Breadalbane on 17 October, with more at the Trucking Yard Lane and 5 locations to the north and northeast of there, the maximum being 70 at Lake George East by Michael Lenz on 14 October.

Up to 10 **Great Crested Grebe** have been reported from 4 locations around the Cotter Dam, as well as a single bird on West Belconnen Pond. A **Whiskered Tern** was reported from Isabella Pond by Peter Milburn on 19 October. A flock of 16 **Glossy Ibis** were reported by a number of observers at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 15 October, the only sightings of this species over the period. A grey morph **Grey Goshawk** was reported from East Uriarra Reserve by Tony Nairn on 4 October, and a single **Black Kite** drifting slowly east over Ainslie by Steve Holliday on 20 October.

Two **White-headed Pigeons** were photographed at a water bath by Phil in Theodore on 17 October. Two **Cockatiels** were reported by Shoshana Rapley at Mulligans Flat on 17 October, then a pair together (with possibly a third bird also present, with the female inspecting hollows) by Chris Davey at Huntly on 20 October, followed by a single bird at Kama NR by Jeb Kent on 22 October.

Two **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from the National Museum of Australia, Acton on 12 October, and there was a report of them shortly after from Yarralumla followed by 2 at the National Zoo and Aquarium on 19 October. This is further evidence that they may fly over LBG, having been observed on Acton Peninsula in July. Probably the most exciting “unusual” find was the up to 3 **Scarlet Honeyeaters** first photographed by Alastair Smith at Stony Creek NR on 26 October. These birds were then seen by a number of observers up to at least 28 October. In addition Steve Holliday heard a couple at the ANBG on 27 October.

Of the special birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for, the **Jacky Winter** has been mainly reported by a number of observers from the Namadgi NP Visitors Centre. On 17 October Steve and Lach Read reported two pairs separated by about 200 m, one of which was flying high into the sky and circling, before returning – possibly a display flight. This follows a report on 12 October that they were possibly nesting there. The only other report was of a single bird by a number of observers at Dicks Creek Rd, Yass River, a new spot, making it now 13 locations for 2020.

The **Hooded Robin** has been reported from 3 locations, one a new one (so now 7 different ones for 2020) at Vanity Crossing Road in Pierces Creek Forest where Shorty and Christine D observed a male on 2 October. There were 3 reports from the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads with on 4 October Patrick Cox photographing a male gathering food and moving back and forth across the road. On 12 October Stan Jarzynski also photographed a male bird carrying food there; both follow up from the report of this on 19 September. The other location was the nearby Apollo Road with a male photographed there by Alastair Smith on 19 October.

Please continue to look out for the two above species, and also the **Crested Shrike-tit**, which again has been reported from just 3 locations in the past 4 weeks. However, two were new, one of them again in a different spot near Tidbinbilla NR. The other new spot was a single bird at Bendora Arboretum, making it 11 different locations this year. However, most exciting was the report of them nest building high in a very large gum tree north of Gundaroo.

The **Brown** and **Stubble Quail** were recorded from just four (three of which were new) and six (all new and mostly aural records!) locations, respectively, during the period. Therefore, so far in 2020 they have been recorded from 11 and 13 locations, respectively. Perhaps it will be a good year for them, especially the latter. **Painted Buttonquail** have been reported from 3 new locations during the past month, compared with just 2 previously for 2020. On 14 October John Leonard reported flushing a **Little Buttonquail** from the grassland at the top of the hill at Bluetts Block but no-one else has since reported one there since despite the popularity of this location. The 2018-2019 ABR notes it as a rare non-breeding visitor with 1-4 birds regularly reported from 2009-2014, and with most records for 2017.

As might be expected based on the much better conditions there has been significant breeding activity reported. Many of these were the expected species but apart from the **Restless, Flycatcher, Jacky Winter, Hooded Robin** and **Crested Shrike-tit** mentioned above, a few are worthy of special mention:

On 3 October Tyrie Starrs photographed a pair of fledgling **Powerful Owls** being fed a Greater Glider. This was taken in the Brindabella Ranges and later uploaded on Canberra Nature Map, but understandably the exact location was suppressed. The importance of this record is underlined by the BIRD INFO data on the COG website containing just a single breeding record of dependent young in November over the 35 years to 2017.

On 24 October Shorty photographed **Pied Stilts** copulating and nest building at Kelly Swamp. Alastair Smith then photographed one on the nest on 28 October. Nicki Taws, COG's records officer, noted this to be a first for the ACT. While the 2018-2019 ABR states that previous breeding was reported in 1994, 1997, 2006, 2012, 2015 and 2017, I expect this were from Lake Bathurst and Lake George where this species is mostly recorded.

On 25 October John Hurrell photographed a **Pied Butcherbird** feeding four chicks in a nest at East Uriarra Reserve. Earlier on 16 October Tonya Haff noted at least one adult with two young fully out of nest at Sherwood Forest. On 27 October Cedric Bear photographed a recent fledgling with a still yellow gape and very short tail at the Hall Cemetery. Again, these are very important records with the BIRD Info data on the COG website indicating just 4 individual breeding records to 2017. However, there have been more since as I have mentioned in recent versions of this column.

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 25 October Sandra Henderson estimating 80 birds still there with birds still on eggs, nests with young, and recently fledged young. I understand from Chris Davey that this year for the first time **Silver Gulls** are also breeding on Springbank Island in LBG as well as usual on Spinnaker Island, but does not have an indication of numbers.

On 6 October Geoffrey Dabb informed me that his **Tawny Frogmouth** chicks in Narrabundah had vacated the nest by that morning. He noted they seemed very small, but the same early fledging had happened last season. Unfortunately, mine at the northwest end of Chapman built relatively early but then took a fortnight to sit on the nest, which was vacated shortly after.

Tawny Frogmouth expert Stuart Rae informed me that there were many more cases like mine this year which he attributed to there being very few insects about in autumn, especially large moths which these birds need to eat in large quantities to put on fat for the winter. He also noted suburban birds were likely to be earlier and more successful as there was a better food supply. This supports the reports of successful breeding in the suburbs posted on the COG chatline.



Silver Gulls, Parliament House Brian Slee

So please watch out for any of the remaining returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, and in particular for further breeding activity; with the wetter conditions it is already proving to be a very good season. Please continue a special look out, including for breeding records, for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter**, **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 e-mail Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

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

Superb Fairy-wren, Yass River field trip
Peter Higgins



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 1 November – Red Rocks Gorge

Description: Red Rocks Gorge has been a **Peregrine Falcon** nesting site for many years. The current pair of falcons have an excellent record of raising three chicks each year. The walk is timed to give participants a look across the gorge at the nest site and hopefully the chicks, which will be about four weeks from fledging. There are usually plenty of birds to see along the way. The gorge is a little over 3km from Kambah Pool, so the walk is about 6km, on a narrow track on undulating ground. Please wear sturdy shoes, and bring water, sunscreen and a hat.

End Time: Between 11 am and 12 pm. Please remember to take morning tea which we will have out in the field.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at the Kambah Pool carpark. At the end of Kambah Pool Rd, take the turn to the left to the main carpark.

Name of leader and contact details: To register, please contact Sandra Henderson shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and emergency contact details.

Sunday 8 November – mystery outing from Uriarra Crossing

In the absence of our usual mystery bus tour this year due to Covid restrictions, we have decided to stage a mystery walk instead.

Directions: travel west from Canberra on Uriarra Road, cross over the Murrumbidgee River and turn left as Uriarra Road then turns south. Then turn immediately left again into the carpark. Meet at 8.30am at the carpark with binoculars and morning tea. We will then drive to a locked gate, leave the cars and walk 1.7km slightly down hill on a dirt road. There will be a good variety of bush birds along the way and a very special treat at the end. Here you can enjoy morning tea while feasting your eyes before we walk back up the hill.

Name of leader and contact details: To register, please contact Sandra Henderson shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and emergency contact details.

Sunday 15 November – Campbell Park nest workshop

Description: This outing will be a repeat of the very popular and practical nest workshops held over the past seventeen years. As usual it will be a very informal outing which has been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual very short presentation, including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, with participants looking for breeding behaviour, signs of nests etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunities for bird watching. The workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also very welcome.

Walking distance: While every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs around 500 m from where we park. Maximum distance = 2.5 km of easy flat walking.

End Time: Between 11 am and 12 pm. Please remember to take morning tea which we will have out in the field.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the Campbell Park map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840) or preferably by E-mail on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your mobile and emergency contact numbers.

Sunday 22 November – Mt Majura NR

The walk starts at 8am and will last for approximately 3 hours. We meet at the McKenzie St entrance in Hackett. Mt Majura is a big hill, at 888m the highest in metropolitan Canberra, with a variety of habitats. Many interesting birds have been seen here in recent years, including **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** (though not by me). There are sure to be a good variety of woodland birds in attendance, and some summer migrants may well be present among them. If we are feeling energetic, we may make it to the top of the hill. Please bring a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses and some morning tea.

To register: email David Dedenczuk with your name, mobile number and an emergency contact number at david.dedenczuk@gmail.com or at 0417 222 154

Sunday 29 November 2020 - Jerrabomberra West Grasslands Nature Reserve

Description: Bordered by rural land and the Monaro Highway, the reserve is a mixture of lowland native grassland and scattered box-gum woodland. It is a good example of a treeless plain and woodland transition area which supports a variety of grassland reptile fauna and flora.

Possible birds include **Varied Sittella**, **Australasian Pipit** and **Speckled Warbler**.

Meeting time and place: 8.30am Monaro Highway adjacent to the Canberra Model Aircraft Club flying field

Walking distance: 5-6km

Degree of difficulty: easy

End time (approx.): 11.30am

What to bring: water, morning tea

Need to register: Yes, by email or text, giving name, mobile number, and emergency contact

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Prue Watters prue.watters@gmail.com 0414 357 456

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 4 October - The less visited TSRs of the Bungendore area

David McDonald led this very interesting excursion to two travelling stock reserves most of us had not visited previously.

We started at Duck Flat TSR, which is on both sides of the road. This was a nostalgic outing for Jean, who lived on the adjacent property many years ago.

The TSR was very wet underfoot in places. This was no doubt responsible for the wonderful flowering of the Large Golden Moth orchids which soon attracted our attention. The most interesting birds were the **Grey Currawongs**, but others of note included a **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, a **White-faced Heron** and **Australian Wood Ducks** with new ducklings.

We moved on to Sweeneys TSR, where we managed 20 species.

Again, there was interest in the variety of flowering plants, something not seen in the past couple of years. A flock of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** was feeding in an adjacent paddock, and other birds included both pardalotes, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Grey Teal** and **Red Wattlebirds**.

Sandra Henderson



Grey Currawong

John Martin

Saturday 17 Oct 8:30am – ‘Gang-gang’ at Yass River

Twelve participants, including some newcomers, gathered on what turned out to be a beautiful sunny morning in between rainfall events at a Yass Valley property which is managed for conservation. We enjoyed learning about the vegetation and management on the property from our hosts, as well as observing several species of orchids. The forest was awash with the calls of **Rufous Whistlers**, and all participants got exceptional views of a male **Scarlet Robin**. The full bird list from the morning can be viewed at <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S74914799>

The morning was wrapped up with a brilliant morning tea prepared by our hosts which gave us an opportunity to socialise and discuss all things birdy. Everyone went home having learnt something new and with a smile on their face.

Ryu



Rufous Whistler

Vinay Mote



Scarlet Robin

Peter Higgins

Wednesday 21 October, 9:00am – West Belconnen Pond

Twenty-one members gathered at the West Belconnen Ponds on a perfect spring day. We walked the 'normal' walk around the pond in an anti-clockwise direction, encountering 33 species over the course of 2 hours. We began with a **Nankeen Kestrel** sitting on a pole across the pond at the water's edge, then moving on to a high vantage at the very top of a casuarina tree before descending to another lower vantage point on a pole; we didn't see it descend on any prey.

There were a few **Pacific Black Duck** families with ducklings of varying ages. A family of **Eurasian Coots** had a brood of 10 chicks with their spiky little red heads darting busily around demanding food. Further along the path we heard at least 10 different **Australian Reed - Warblers** calling, and more were seen flying across the water and back to the reeds. Then a family of **Black Swans** with 3 small cygnets came into view.



Eurasian Coot family

Lindell Emerton

At the far eastern end of the pond, at the water's edge, we flushed a couple of **Latham's** that flew across to the island, followed by another, then another and they kept coming until we had counted 11. The grass on the island was too long to see them again when they landed. There were lots of **Superb Fairy-wrens**, including some young ones being fed, and we had a great view of a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. There were plenty of **Welcome Swallows** and **Crested Pigeons** and a large flock of more than 60 **Common Starlings** taking advantage of the powerlines to the north-west.

Thanks to Matthew Larkin for the photographic records.

Lindell Emerton



Black Swan family

Lindell Emerton

Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 October – Green Cape, Ben Boyd NP

This was the tenth COG visit to Green Cape. For the first, in October 1977, we camped at nearby Bittangabee Creek, but since 2004 we have used the decommissioned light-station cottages. After the lighthouse was converted to automatic operation the historic buildings were transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the peninsula incorporated in the Ben Boyd National Park. The three very comfortable and well-equipped cottages have fabulous views from their east facing verandas – much appreciated in wet and windy conditions when observations of passing whales and seabirds can be continued in reasonable comfort! COG has scheduled trips to Green Cape mostly at two year intervals but with the prospect of not being able to continue these into the future (because the cottages are being ‘repurposed’) the trip this year was likely to be our last.

Fourteen COG members made up our party with preference given to those who had not been before. On arrival and for the next two days the wind was southerly and light with mostly clear sky and warm conditions. Our daily routine followed the now customary pattern with a seabird watch at the point to start the day. We do this ‘seawatch’ for about an hour or so from the platform, starting as soon as light is good enough. This year seabird variety was a bit disappointing with very few albatross (only one species seen a few times) although movements south of **Short-tailed Shearwater** occurred most days and **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** were seen reasonably often and in good numbers. As usual, identification of these two shearwaters proved challenging at first but the group soon got to their distinguishing characteristics of flight and became comfortable with separating them with reasonable confidence. Both species occasionally gathered in feeding rafts but these were well out from the point. A few **Fluttering/Hutton’s Shearwaters** were seen on Friday afternoon. **Australasian Gannets** were present most of the time, with a good proportion of immature birds (occasionally up to a third of those visible) and four species of cormorant, including **Black-faced Cormorant** were seen but no **Little Pied Cormorant**. **Crested Terns** often passed the point in reasonable numbers with rather fewer **Silver Gulls**, and a couple of **Caspian Tern** were seen most days near the point but we saw no Pacific Gulls. However, we did see a few **Arctic Jaegers** moving south purposefully.

Following breakfast on the verandas we spent time visiting various areas for specialist coastal heathland species such as **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, **Southern Emu-wren** and **Striated Fieldwren**. We made several visits to the Pulpit Rock track and once to City Rock track and, on the Wednesday morning, walked in perfect weather from Bittangabee Creek back to the cottages. On Thursday evening we had ‘nibbles and wine’ at a spot along the Pulpit Rock track that looked good for **Ground Parrots**. We were duly rewarded with at least four birds calling nearby once the sun set and the troublesome **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** had stopped calling!



Southern Emu-wren

Fred Allsopp

Over the years we have recorded 150 species on these COG trips.

This year we added **Spotted Dove**, **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, **Barking Owl** and **Little Corella**.

We completed 23 eBird lists and saw in total 78 species – the third highest list behind an 81 in October 2015 and an 80 in October 2007. A few regulars were not seen. In addition to those already mentioned, we did not see any **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Little Pied Cormorant** or **Australian Pipit**. Humpback Whales were constantly passing south in good numbers and most were cows with a dependant young close by. A group of about 25 seals, presumed to be Australian Fur Seal, were invariably loafing close to the point but were never seen ashore, thus preventing any chance of a positive identification to species. Few other mammals were noted, except at least 6 adult Wombats, including two females, each with an attendant large young alongside. A Long-nosed Bandicoot was spotted after dark, just one Eastern Grey Kangaroo seen at Bittangabee and no Rabbits were noted. We added Caper White and Imperial Jazebel to our meagre Green Cape butterfly list.

Weather conditions deteriorated from Friday late afternoon with a switch to northerly stronger winds and rain overnight, although we did manage a final dawn seawatch on the Saturday but it was disappointing with few birds.

Another most successful and enjoyable time at Green Cape. Thanks to Sue for planning and generally organising the trip and to Lia, Sandra and Steve for their eBird listing efforts shared with the group.

Peter Fullagar



COG members at Green Cape

Steve Reed



Wombats
Sandra Henderson

Xanthorrhoea
Fred Allsopp,

Whale *Alison Milton*

Large Duck Orchid
Sandra Henderson





Welcome Swallow sequence, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Southern Emu-wren, Little Corella

Alison Milton

New Places: October 2020

Sandra Henderson

Duck Flat Travelling Stock Reserve

Duck Flat was one of the TSRs we were introduced to by David McDonald on a COG outing. When we visited, the most memorable sight was the hundreds of Golden Moth Orchids. The birds seen included two **Grey Currawongs**, and at least two **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. Some very friendly horses kept us company for part of the walk, although the resident sheep was not as friendly.

Smokers Trail (Corin Road)

I visited this track by accident, while looking for another, but it has proved interesting. It is a marked track off Corin Road, quite close to Punchbowl Swamp and the Gibraltar Pines. On my first visit there the very first birds were a couple of **Bassian Thrush**, calling constantly from the remnant pine forest area. Further along the trail, a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** were noisily feeding on the edge of the track. This is part of a maze of logging tracks, so I didn't venture too far. On my next visit, apart from several **Grey Currawongs**, three pairs of **Flame Robins** were seen, including one male collecting insects and carrying them into the pines.

Concrete Road, Pierces Creek Forest.

This was part of an exploratory morning with some regular birding companions. The road follows the far end of the Cotter Dam, across the water from another area I've visited a few times recently. One of the targets were the **Great Crested Grebes** seen from the other side of the dam, and we did find a pair on the water. We could see **Australasian Darters** building a nest in dead trees in the water, and a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** glided past. Well worth the walk!

Stonehouse (private property)

This property on the Monaro Highway towards Michelago is one of the properties surveyed regularly by COG members as part of the K2C project. It was the first time I had the chance to visit. One of the first birds sighted after Jack and I had negotiated the fence was a **Diamond Firetail**. We managed to find 40 species on the property, including **Southern Whiteface**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Brown Treecreepers**, **Varied Sittellas**, a **Pied Butcherbird** and **Dusky Woodswallows**. Towards the end of the survey, a single strange call had us puzzled, but then I realised it was an **Australian Owlet-Nightjar**. A quick look around the tree revealed the perfect roost hole.



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White-throated Treecreeper, Yass River field trip

Peter Higgins

Woodland Surveys- spring 2020 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

The late September/early October spring survey round had mixed weather, featured a short cold snap, some rain days, and variable temperatures for the surveys. Overall, this meant mixed results for the sites.

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 27 September, a fine sunny morning after a cold snap. There was a light cold breeze early on, but this dropped and it was lovely and sunny for morning tea. The total species count was 48, the low side of average for spring, but several spring species which should be around were not recorded (no cuckoos, no small migrating honeyeaters). However, there was a reasonable mix of small bird species, including both gerygones, both pardalotes, **Grey Fantail** and **Weebill**, but most sites reported small birds numbers on the low side. **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Olive-backed Orioles** and **Noisy Friarbirds** were around, both **Rufous** and **Golden** calling, several **Mistletoebirds** were seen (not common in recent years), and one **Leaden Flycatcher** was recorded. **Varied Sittellas** (a group of six birds, and two pairs) were recorded at three sites. At the large dam, two **Latham's Snipe** and a pair of **Pink-eared Ducks** were recorded, amongst a few other common waterbirds. A male **Australasian Shoveler** was seen on the small dam upstream of the large dam. A **Collared Sparrowhawk** was the only raptor recorded. The survey highlight was a pair of **Scarlet Robins** feeding a young bird, the only robin sighting on the survey. The dams were full and areas of standing water were still draining from recent rain, a complete contrast to last year's very dry winter/spring/early summer conditions.

Gooroo NR (south)

The spring survey in the southern half of Goorooyarroo was done by Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook on Sunday 4 October. It was humid, mild to warm and mostly sunny. The wind was starting to pick up by the time they finished. The reserve was looking green with lots of native and introduced forbs in flower, dams were full and there was water in the creeks, a stark contrast to the equivalent survey last year! They recorded a total of 55 species during the morning, with 46 of those during the 10 minute site counts, compared to 54 and 47 in the last 2 years.

Amongst the interesting species recorded were a **Rainbow Bee-eater** heard at site 9, **Speckled Warbler** also at site 9, a **Brown Goshawk** at site 4, and **Sacred Kingfisher** at site 5. There were good numbers of summer migrants such as **Mistletoebird**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, and **Rufous Whistler**. The complete absence of cuckoos was a surprise. Small numbers of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and a couple of **White-naped Honeyeaters** were heard and seen passing through. Breeding was noted for **White-winged Choughs** (4 chicks in a nest), **Tawny Frogmouth**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Striated Pardalote** and **Crimson Rosella**.

Majura Training Area (formerly Majura Field Firing Range)

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan surveyed on Monday 28 September, starting at 7.30am. It was a beautiful spring morning, with bright sunshine and no wind, although a little cool early on at 3 degrees. The range was lush, with all water storages full, and some areas still pretty soggy. The ground cover at most sites was well cropped, although they did not see a lot of kangaroos during the morning. Native flowers were in abundance, but the dominant ground covers in many parts were Capeweed and Paterson's Curse, quite attractive from a distance.

It was a reasonably quiet morning with not much excitement. They recorded 37 species on or around the sites, including four species in between sites: **Crested Pigeon**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Collared Sparrowhawk** and **White-winged Chough**. There were a few summer migrants including **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Grey Fantail**, and a single sighting of a **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**. However, apart from whistlers and gerygones, the numbers were low. **Speckled Warbler** was observed at one site, and a few thornbills were spotted here and there - **Brown**, **Buff-rumped**, **Striated**, and **Yellow-rumped** (with dependent young). **Weebill** and **Striated Pardalote** were evident at many sites, but there was only one sighting of **Silvereye**.

As usual there were a few **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Galaks** about, with **Crimson Rosella** at some sites, together with **Red-rumped Parrots**. **Australian Magpie** and **Australian Raven** were present, but there were very few **Pied Currawongs**. **Laughing Kookaburra** was heard at a couple of sites, and a single observation of **White-throated Treecreeper** was unusual as there are generally more about. At Mick's Dam (overflowing after being almost empty in June), there were a few species - **Grey Teal** with dependent young, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Eurasian Coot** and **Australian Wood Duck**.

Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill surveyed on Thursday 24 September in cool, overcast conditions, but not as cold and wet as it would become the next day. The sites were quieter than usual, with hardly any small birds. **Noisy Miners** were at most sites, with the addition of **Common Myna** near a couple of sites. A pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** quietly feeding at one site was a welcome sight, as were a pair of **Speckled Warblers** at site 4 (which often has them). A **Noisy Friarbird** or two were around a few sites. A **Brown Goshawk** was hunting over a couple of sites, causing much noisy angst to the **Noisy Miners**. **Golden Whistler**, **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Common Bronzewing** were recorded, in addition to the usual cockatoos, rosellas, and **Australian King Parrots**. The total species count was 27.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz did the spring survey at the 9 sites on the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 21 September. Conditions were fine, with overcast at first, gradually clearing and with only light winds. The most widespread species were **Crimson Rosella** and **Noisy Miner** (each at 6 sites) and **Weebill** (5 sites). Species of note/spring arrivals included **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Mistletoebird**. A pair of **Australian Ravens** were feeding 2 recently fledged young. Both a **Pacific Black Duck** and a **Wood Duck** were seen in large eucalypts near respective nest hollows. A **Varied Sittella** was seen carrying food.

The number of species per site ranged from 5 to 13. In total 47 species were recorded, 27 at sites and another 20 off sites.

Red Hill NR

Harvey Perkins and Stuart Harris surveyed on a day when it was always going to be a low count; the wind off the snow-covered Brindabellas was biting cold and the sun, which appeared only occasionally through the 80% cloud cover, was ineffectual in warming things up. The total tally of 28 species ranks with the lowest for a Red Hill spring survey, along with 2004, 2012 and 2015, and 6 species below the average over 89 surveys. Total numbers were also below average; there must have been many more hunkered down out of the wind and avoiding detection, especially the smaller birds. The counts would have been even lower were it not for one site, in a small gully comparatively sheltered from the westerly winds, which added several species not recorded anywhere else, including a young **Golden Whistler**, 9 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, several **Grey Fantails**, a **Noisy Friarbird**, and a silently foraging **White-throated Gerygone**. The gerygone was the highlight of the morning, being only the fourth time in 89 surveys that the species has been recorded. Only indications of breeding were a family of **Australian Ravens** (parents plus three fledged young), and a couple of **White-winged Choughs** on a nest.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on Monday 5 October, a perfect spring morning with clear skies and no breeze. Most dams were full but water quality was poor due to the ash from the January fires; one, near the burnt pines next to the quarry, was covered in a grey-green sludge. Sites 3,4,5 and 6 were sorry sights with several trees in each apparently dead and the remainder showing very slow signs of recovery. Weeds were evident, clover out-competing the African lovegrass, plenty of capeweed and blue crowfoot, with some Paterson's curse on the western side of the track. In the total of 46 species, some migrants were present including **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. As usual, parrots dominated and **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Little Corellas** continue to spread to more sites. It was a good morning for raptors with **Little Eagle** and **Whistling Kite**, as well as an adult **Brown Goshawk** giving an immature bird a hunting lesson, which was spectacularly unsuccessful with the youngster crash landing in a bare shrub when trying to catch **Common Starlings** perched there. Apart from **Superb Fairy-wrens**, there were few small birds and no **Speckled Warbler**, **Southern Whiteface**, or **Double-barred** or **Red-browed Finches**. The biggest surprise of the morning was a single **Diamond Firetail** calling from the top of a dead eucalypt in the badly-burnt Site 6.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French had a reasonably good weather day on Monday 28 September for the spring survey, a little cool early (minus 1), but sunny and still. The rain over winter and early spring was evident from the drive in on the track through the grasslands, with various weeds species evident, eg Paterson's Curse, Scotch Thistles, and one not noticed there before, an introduced *Erodium* (Stork's Bill) in large patches by the track.

The species count of 37 was about average for a spring survey, but there were several common species missing (no cuckoos, no Gerygones, no migrating honeyeaters, no Red Wattlebirds and no raptors). Sites 1 and 2 in the open Blakely's Red Gum

woodland on the edge of the grasslands were the most birdy, and again a lot of green weeds had come up there. A pair of **White-winged Trillers** in site 1, and another pair near site 2, and **Tree Martins** at both sites was a good start for the survey. **Dusky Woodswallows** were not in their usual spots on the way in, but later a pair was seen hawking for insects along the kangaroo enclosure fence abutting the grasslands' edge. Deeper in the woodland, which is more diverse habitat, it was good to record several **Mistletoebirds**, as well as a few small birds including **Striated Pardalotes** at most sites, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Weebill** and **Superb Fairy-wren**, and several **Rufous Whistlers** calling. Apart from a few **Noisy Miners**, the only honeyeater was **Brown-headed Honeyeater** heard at two sites. A highlight was 3 **Southern Whiteface** feeding on the grasslands' edge, seen on the way out, in the general area of a rocky hill slope where this species is recorded on some surveys – it is good to see there are still a few of these birds around there.

Symonston (Callum Brae & Isaacs Ridge NR)

The Callum Brae survey was conducted on the morning of 22 September by Sandra Henderson. The day was sunny, but the storm the previous evening left plenty of water running through the reserve. It's been many years since Sandra had seen site 2 under inches of water, and most dams were full to overflowing. Plant growth was lush - a bumper year for various thistles and St John's Wort. Native species, Creamy Candles, Bulbine Lilies and Early Nancies were flowering in abundance. Rabbit warrens have been ripped recently and only one rabbit was seen in the reserve. A total of 41 species was encountered, with **Australian Ravens** and **Australian Magpies** on nests, **Pied Currawongs** nest building, and **Crimson Rosellas**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Red-rumped Parrots** seen at hollows. **Striated Pardalotes** were calling from several known nest trees. A **Pacific Black Duck** had seven tiny ducklings, and was sharing one of the reserve dams with another pair of **Black Ducks** as well as four **Grey Teal**. Some of the migrants were making their presence known - **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Sacred Kingfishers** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were all very vocal, but only a single **White-throated Gerygone**.

The Isaacs Ridge (Mugga Lane) sites were surveyed on 24 September. The most obvious species were the **Mistletoebirds**, calling loudly from treetops, and foraging in mistletoe clumps. **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers** were seen, and a **Spotted Pardalote** flew up close from the gully at Site 3. After very poor results in the winter surveys, it was pleasing to see good numbers of most expected species, with 24 species recorded.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Sunday 20 September. **Noisy Friarbirds** were observed in several locations, as were **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, in small numbers. Breeding observations in sites were an **Australian Magpie** carrying food, an **Australian Raven** on a nest and a pair of **Rainbow Lorikeets** sitting by a hollow. Elsewhere, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were feeding young, a **Galah** was in a hollow and **Australian Magpies** were feeding young. Three sites had 10 or 11 species. In all, 21 species were recorded during the survey periods, with a further 10 species seen or heard elsewhere on the Hill, which is a little less than the average for spring.

Leasehold near Tharwa

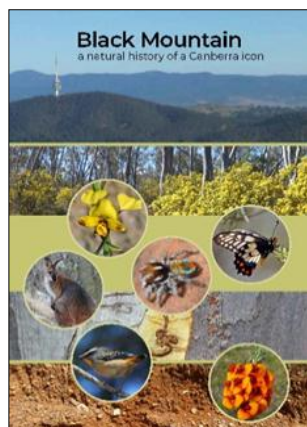
With the kind permission of the land-holder, David McDonald conducted the survey on 1 October, in perfect spring weather. The site continued to be damp underfoot, and carpeted by Early Nancies. The dams were over-flowing. In all, 27 species were observed at the nine sites, fewer than would normally be recorded in spring, and abundance was fairly low as well. This probably reflects the facts that: 1) the small insectivorous birds, and their habitats, were hammered in the drought, and 2) some hoped-for spring migrants (such as songlarks and trillers) were not observed. The tea-trees on the site were killed by the drought, and have not regenerated, and little regrowth has occurred in the blackberries, sweet briars and hawthorns. The dominant sounds in the woodland came from **White-throated Gerygones** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters**. Two cuckoos were observed: a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** within a site, and a **Pallid Cuckoo** between sites. Sadly, no **Brown Treecreepers** were observed, but another vulnerable species, the **Speckled Warbler**, was recorded within a site.



COG Members, Yass River field trip.
Vinay Mote

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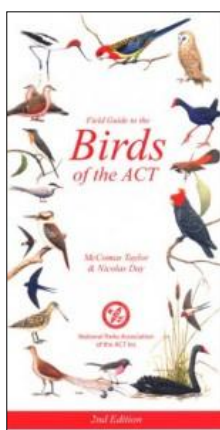
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Ian Fraser and Rosemary Purdie with Friends of Black Mountain

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- Institution: \$50
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COG welcomes the following new members:

M Painter
R Geraghty
P Lawler
R Weaver
J Pyne

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Wednesday 25 November 2020

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or

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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