



Gang-gang

OCTOBER 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday 14 October 2020
virtual meeting

There will be another virtual meeting at 7:30 pm on 14 October. The following is the webinar link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/59/6kl2kh0n>

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.

For October there will be two presentations of roughly equal length:

First Rhiannon Kiggins will present on "Do Shy Heathwrens increase during times of drought?".

Rhiannon will be discussing the population dynamics of **Shy Heathwren** at The Charcoal Tank Nature Reserve (TCTNR) near West Wyalong in NSW. Specifically, she will provide a summary of the banding study at the TCTNR and how

Everyone welcome

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

The weather became warmer and much drier very soon after I sent my previous column to the editors on 26 August. It stayed like this for around 3.5 weeks of the 5-week period covered by this column. It first became wetter and then much cooler, with the Friday before the final weekend being around as cold as any day this past winter. However, from the analysis below it would appear that, as may be expected, the warmer, drier weather had the main influence on bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) over the period. In particular many species arrived earlier than usual, including four which I hadn't alerted readers to look out for in my September column. A feature has often been that there has been a gap of a week or more between the first and next sighting of an arriving species.

Around sunrise on 25 September Mark Clayton heard an **Eastern Koel** call once from just outside his GBS area in Kaleen, and 30 minutes later a **Dollarbird** called from the top of a dead tree in a neighbour's yard just

Continued Page 2



Western Gerygone

Julie Clark

Shy Heathwren numbers have changed since the study began in 1986, reflecting on trends with changing rainfall patterns over time.

Then **Michael Mulvaney** of the ACT's Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate will present on "**Canberra residents helping us understand and better conserve the Gang-gang Cockatoo**".

Fifty seven Canberra families and individuals are participating in an ongoing study that has identified and observed Gang-gang breeding hollows. The talk will present findings on hollow choice, breeding ecology and concerns that increased temperatures may be impacting on chick survival.

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

across the road from his house. I hadn't mentioned these two species in my previous column as both usually don't appear until early October, at least in recent years. There have been no further reports since that I can find on the COG chat line, the eBird Australia map, etc.

On 29 August Peter Christian saw a **Horsfield's Bushlark** perched on the ACT-NSW border from the horse paddocks near where Ginninderra Creek crosses the border. Arriving birds of this species usually don't come until late in October, so this was possibly an overwintering bird, which this species does quietly in small numbers in suitable habitat such as occurs there. A further (possibly the same?) bird was seen by Peter in this area on 22 September, but by then it was singing and in display flight, as well as perched on the fences. An early **Brown Songlark** was photographed by Alastair Smith/Peter Milburn at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 20 September, but for both species there have been no further sightings reported.

On 29 August Peter Christian also recorded a **Rufous Songlark** calling at the entrance to the electricity sub-station opposite Belconnen Pony Club in Parkwood Road. This is early for this species too, though in 2019 it was first reported on 8 September. Christine D then reported one calling at Newline on 11 September, and there have been reports from a further 3 locations since, so perhaps it will be present in the COG AoI in reasonable numbers this spring/summer despite it being much wetter inland. Likewise, there were early reports of the **White-winged Triller** on 2 September by both Christine D at Parkwood and Kym Bradley to the south of Canberra. From 9 September it has been reported from 7 further locations, so perhaps it will be another good year for this species, despite the very different conditions.

On 9 September Ash Allnutt reported 2 early **Rainbow Bee-eaters** at the Tin Hut Dam at Googong. However, there have been reports from only 3 locations since, the next being on 18 September by Steve Holliday of at least 10 over their place in Ainslie, heading south, as many do at this time of the year. They were calling a lot but hard to count as they kept disappearing behind trees. The **Sacred Kingfisher** was first recorded (also slightly earlier than I expected) by Ian McMahon near the big dam in the Mulligan Flat NRs on 15 September. There have been reports from over 20 different locations since, so it was well established by the end of the month.

The **Leaden Flycatcher** was first reported at Molonglo Gorge on 16 September by 6 observers, only 4 of which were fortunate to see the **Black-faced Monarch** (see below). This is again perhaps slightly early, with reports from only 2 locations since. One species that seemed slow to arrive was the **Noisy Friarbird**, for which there was only one record last month, with Alastair Smith reporting one at Bibaringa on 27 August. While there were then no reports until 6 September, it has since been reported from over 45 locations, so it was well established by the end of the month.

A single **White-browed Woodswallow** was reported by Alastair Smith at Campbell Park on 4 September, but none since. Of the species which had been reported only in small numbers or from a few locations in August, the **Dusky Woodswallow** has now been reported from over 50 locations over the period, so is well established. The same applies to the **White-throated Gerygone** reported from over 40 locations, and to **Fairy Martins** from 14 locations, and **Australian Reed-Warblers** from over 50 locations. However, the **Latham's Snipe** has been reported from only 5 locations, probably reflecting its specific habitat requirements.

There has been an influx of **Superb Parrots** which have been reported from over 35 locations, 10 of them south of the lake, compared with only 8 in August. Also, **Rufous Whistlers** have been reported from close to 70 locations, compared with only 6 in August, and **Mistletoebirds** were reported from 14 locations, compared with none in August. While many **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** overwintered, on 6-7 September a number of observers in locations ranging from Belconnen, Kambah, Calwell, Glendale Crossing, Hoskintown and Harold's Cross reported small flocks of them passing through in their springtime inbound migration, which as usual was much less spectacular than their autumn outward one.

Finally, the **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-cuckoos**, and the **Pallid Cuckoo** were reported from around 9, 16 and 27 locations, respectively, so it does appear it will be a better year for them, at least for the last two species, even though I have yet to observe any of them. The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** has been reported from around 50 locations during the period, so it certainly has been a very good winter and spring for them

So during October please keep an eye out for the remaining spring/summer migrant species yet to arrive, the **Brush** and **Channel-billed Cuckoos**, the **Masked Woodswallow**, the passage migrants the **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail** and **Cicadabird**, as well as further **Eastern Koels**, **Dollarbirds**, **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Brown Songlarks** and **Horsfield's Bushlarks**.

For the three most common winter altitudinal migrant species, there were reports for the **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Golden Whistler** and **Scarlet Robin** from around 45 (10), 65 (35) and 30 (4) locations in the period. As shown by the numbers in brackets, the first and particularly the last-named species have largely moved away from the urban and peri-urban locations. The **Golden Whistler** is typically the slowest to do so. The **Flame Robin** has also clearly moved away, being reported from only 2 such locations (Bibaringa and Hall) from the around 17 total locations (all others were on or West of the Murrumbidgee River) in the period.



White-winged Triller

Kym Bradley *Birds Eyes*



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

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The **Rose Robin**, often considered a passage migrant through Canberra, was reported from just 5 locations, all except one early in the period, of which two were urban/peri-urban. There still have been no reports of the **Pink Robin** in the COG Aol in 2020. The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from 11 locations over the period, all being on, or West of, the Murrumbidgee River. There have been no reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** for the period, or confirmed reports of the **Swift Parrot** since 19 April. The closest reports for the latter I can find in NSW for the period are in Western Sydney around 200 km away.

Two **Bassian Thrush** were last reported from the ANBG on 30 August, but otherwise only 2 birds at Sherwood Forest on 7 September. The **Restless Flycatcher** was reported from 5 locations, 4 of them new locations to the W or SW of Canberra, indicating the species may be moving around. This increases the number of spots from which it has been reported in the COG Aol so far in 2020 to 13 locations.

During October please keep an eye out for the last of these winter altitudinal visitors.

The new “unusual” species for 2020 observed in the period was the **Black-faced Monarch** on 16 September. It was first seen by those (including Ryu Callaway and Peter Higgins) who stayed back and birded the Molonglo Gorge car park area after the COG walk there was cancelled due to the rain. Unfortunately, it only stayed there until lunchtime. COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists it as a species of the east coast, seldom occurring this far inland, for which there were 6 records in that year.

One or occasionally two male **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR throughout the period. A single **Musk Duck** was also reported from here or more often the adjacent Fyshwick Sewage Treatment plant, as well as 1-2 birds from the Baroona Wetland S of Michelago, up to 6 ducks on Rowes Lagoon NE of Collector, and up to 3 ducks from Wet Lagoon at Breadalbane. This deeper water species is clearly enjoying the wetter conditions in the COG Aol. Similarly **Australian Shelducks** have also been reported from 15 locations in the COG Aol to the E and NE of Canberra. However, there still doesn’t seem to have been any further reports for the **Northern Shoveler** anywhere else in Australia as far as I can tell from the eBird map.

A single **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was reported by a number of observers from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment plant in the first half of September. After not having been reported from the ACT since the end of February, **Pied Stilts** returned to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR area in September. However, their numbers were swamped by those reported from 6 locations to the NE of Canberra, the maximum being 300 reported from the Morass on 14 September. A **Whiskered Tern** was reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR by a number of observers on 24 September, and also from Rowes Lagoon on 17 and 20 September.

The **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** has remained elusive with just the single report on 9 September by Steve Holliday of a single bird flying over quite high and fast calling while it was heading south on the western side of Mt Ainslie. There has also been only the single report of **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, the 2 birds seen by Brian Hawkins in Curtin on 1 September. Interestingly the **Singing Honeyeater** has continued to be present on the Franklin Pond system with Michael Lenz reporting it throughout the period. On 1 September it was in exactly the same tree where he had first saw it on 10 July, so it seems to be quite sedentary.

Of the special birds I’ve been asking readers to keep a special lookout for, the **Jacky Winter** has been reported from 4 locations, again the vast majority from the Namadgi NP Visitors Centre, where there have been 2 birds present from 12 September. The other 3 are new locations, a single bird reported from The Angle south of there on 18 September, 2 birds from the Gambles TSR Sutton on the same day, and one bird from Jerangle on 26 September. This now makes a total of 12 locations from which they have been reported in 2020, a more encouraging number.

In contrast the **Hooded Robin** has been reported from only 2 locations, with up to three birds at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads from 12 September. A male bird was reported to be carrying food there on 19 September, the only breeding record from there since 15 August. The other record was from the nearby Apollo Road by Alastair Smith on 7 September. If this is counted as a new location (in my experience they do move around a bit), the species still has only been reported from 6 different locations this year. 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 5 weeks, two of them in the Tidbinbilla NR, but from one a new spot within the reserve. Again, if this is counted as a new location, the species still has only been reported from 9 different locations this year, with the third also being new.

The **Brown** and **Stubble Quail** were recorded from just two and one locations, respectively, during the period, the one for the latter being a new one for 2020. Therefore, they have been recorded from just 8 and 7 locations, respectively, so far in 2020.

For the first month of spring there has been some significant breeding activity reported. Many of these were the expected species but a few are worthy of special mention:

- On 27 August Sandra Henderson first reported the extraordinary sight of dozens of **Silver Gulls** nesting in ground cover grevilleas in the slightly raised beds in the ornamental pool on the forecourt of Parliament House. This was currently closed, so there were not too many tourists around. The birds had been laying for a few days, and the cleaners are being kept busy cleaning the walkways around the pool of bird poo.

- On 3 September a maximum of 100 birds were recorded there, and on 17 September it was estimated there were 40 nests, some of which had hatched, others were still on eggs, and one or two looked to be nest building still. By the end of the month quite a number of the nests had chicks. In the interim breeding had commenced at their usual site on Spinnaker Island with 28 nests with eggs and 39 empty new nests counted there on 26 September.

- On 29 August David McDonald reported there were newly-hatched **Australian Shelducks** with ducklings at both the Trucking Yard Lane and the Bungendore sewage works.

He wondered where they had bred? He noted that mostly (but not always) this occurs in tree hollows, but there did not seem to be trees large enough in the vicinity of their brood territories. He also noted HANZAB says that the parents can lead the ducklings 'several kilometres' from the nesting tree to the brood territories.

- On 1 September Martin Butterfield had a report (and photo) from the Hoskinstown Plain of an **Australian Shelduck** with 11 ducklings swimming in a creek, again a long distance from tree hollows. Both are early records with the BIRD INFO on the COG web site indicating only 2 records of dependent young in August, and 9 in September. Interestingly there are no records at all for nest with eggs or nest with young, illustrating the difficulty in finding the actual breeding site.

- There have been a further two records of **Maggie-larks** nesting in bare trees, and well as two nesting in open man-made structures. On 10 September John Leonard reported one being built at his place in Hughes. He expected they would abandon but on 19 September John noted that a couple of days before he saw the female sitting on the nest, and that day he saw the male feeding a chick (presumably) in the nest.

- Similarly, on 28 September Robin Eckermann posted a photo of a **Pied Currawong** on a nest in the open metal mesh globe that is suspended outside the National Gallery.

- On 22 September Kym Bradley reported that the first fledgling from one of her three pairs of **Brown Treecreeper** had appeared. She expected the others were not far off doing the same.

- On 27 September John Brannan found a pair of **Scarlet Robins** feeding a dependent young during the Mulligans Flat woodland survey. He noted this was a rare breeding record for this season, with those that often breed at the Pinnacle having moved on in early August. There have also been no **Scarlet Robins** reported from Narrabundah Hill since mid August.

As an indication of how wet it is in the NE of the COG AoI on 16 September Michael Lenz reported over 12 000 Grey Teals at Lake George, East, the largest number in a long time (it helped that the lake now had water). I recalled that the last time we had a wet spring in 2016 they all seemed to go inland, but this time they have still been recorded at over 40 locations in the COG AoI in the past month. Michael suspects they went inland earlier when the good rains started from February. They bred and were now dispersing.

October is usually a very active time, so please watch out for any of the remaining returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last departing altitudinal migrants, and in particular for further breeding activity; with the wetter conditions I expect it be a very good season. Please continue a special look out including breeding records for the **Jacky Winter, Hooded Robin** and the **Crested Shrike-tit**, as well as for the **Brown** and **Stubble Quail**.



Silver Gulls

Sandra Henderson

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.

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

COG Blitz 2020 Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October

Only 3 weeks to go until COG Blitz 2020 on October 24-25th.

Recent rains and warm weather promise good spring growth and hopefully abundant bird activity. The Blitz aims to survey birds over as much of the ACT as possible in the one weekend. Thanks to those who have already adopted sites – an updated list can be found at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/cog-bird-blitz/>. Please email me your chosen area and I will put your name against it- blitz@canberrabirds.org.au.

Get in touch if you have any questions.

Nicki Taws
0408 210736



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Future Field Trips

COG Trips

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

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

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

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

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

Be Covid safe on COG field trips:

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

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

Description: We will visit two Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs) in the Bungendore/Tarago area: Sweeney's and Duck Creek. Both are beautiful woodland areas that are part of a five-year conservation project conducted by the Molonglo Conservation Group. The iconic **Scarlet Robin** is a possibility, along with other grassy/woodland birds and a suite of returning migrant species.

eBird hotspots: <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L4568734> and <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L9829457>

Please check the website for up-to-date outings information.

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 October – Eden pelagics

Unfortunately, these trips have been cancelled due to current Covid-19 restrictions limiting the number of passengers on the boat and thus making the cost too high. Hopefully, pelagics will be possible in 2021.

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

Leader: Ryu Callaway

Description: We have been kindly invited to visit Gang-gang, a property managed for conservation 8 km NW of Gundaroo. A range of small birds including 5 species of thornbills, both gerygones and weebills have been recorded amongst a good array of woodland birds at the property.

ebird hotspot: N/A, but you can check out records for the property including some nice orchids on Canberra Nature Map.

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/locations/sightings/7546>

Meeting time and place: 8.30 at the property. Directions will be provided to registered participants.

Anticipated walking distance and time: Approx 2.5kms, 2-3 hours

Degree of difficulty: Easy terrain, off-track. Open with uneven ground surface.

What to bring: Water, snack, appropriate shoes and sun protection. Some morning tea may be provided by our hosts.

Need to register: Yes, contact ryu_is_gr8 (at) [yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp) or 0490 761 124 with your name and mobile number for yourself and an emergency contact.

Numbers limited: Numbers will be capped at 15 participants (to comply with NSW gathering limits) or 8 cars (due to limited parking). Please advise if you will be travelling with another participant.

Tuesday 20 October—Saturday 24 October. Green Cape

This accommodated trip is fully booked.

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

Leader: Lindell Emerton

Description: The October Wednesday Walk will be to West Belconnen Ponds. Meet at 9am on 21 October on Percy Begg Circuit, Dunlop. This is an easy walk on a track around the pond, and will take about two hours.

Need to register: essential – please email Lindell with your name, mobile number and an emergency contact number to lindell.em@gmail.com

Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge – Sunday 1 November 8.00am

Leader: Sandra Henderson

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.

Need to register: To participate, please contact Sandra by e-mail at shirmax2931@gmail.com – please include your mobile and emergency contact numbers.

Sunday 15 November — Campbell Park, Morning 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.

Need to register: 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.

Mount Majura - Sunday 22 November 2020 8:00am

Leader: David Dedenczuk

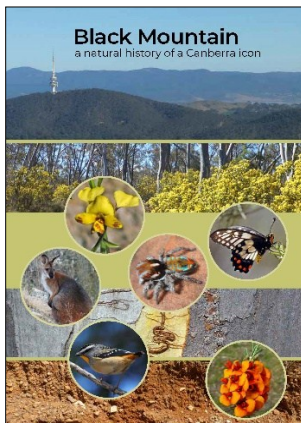
Description: The walk starts at 8am and will last for approximately 3 hours. We meet at the McKenzie St entrance in Hackett. Mt Majura is a big hill, at 888m the highest in metropolitan Canberra, with a variety of habitats. Many interesting birds have been seen here in recent years, including **Glossy 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.

Need 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

Publications for Sale

COG provides a range of birdwatching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices (around 10-30% off RRP).

While we aren't having face to face meetings you can still contact Kathy on sales@canberrabirds.org.au if you would like to purchase a publication.



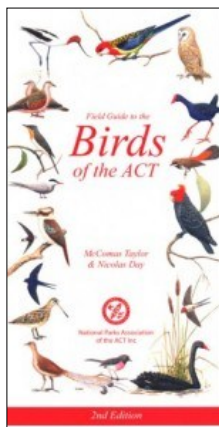
Black Mountain: a natural history of a Canberra icon

Ian Fraser and Rosemary Purdie with Friends of Black Mountain

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

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

Members' Price: \$30



Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT

McComas Taylor & Nicolas Day

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

Members' price: \$20.

Field Trip Reports

Sherwood Forest, Sunday 30 August

20 COG members gathered on a mild, sunny morning at the Sherwood Forest reserve, an increasingly popular Canberra birding destination. The reserve had much green growth after recent spring rains, though the eucalypts on a north-facing slope still look to be recovering after the hot and dry summer of 2019/20. A group of celebrity **Pied Butcherbirds** were in attendance near the dam near the car park - which made for an auspicious beginning to the outing. The party then proceeded up the hill, hearing as much as seeing, a number of species, including **Eastern Whipbird**. Sadly, neither of the advertised species - Noisy Friarbird and Spotted Quail Thrush - were to be seen or heard. Nonetheless, two hunting **Nankeen Kestrels** proved to be adequate compensation. COG members enjoyed seeing the different habitats on the hill, recording 43 species for the morning.

David Dedenczuk



Glendale Crossing, Saturday 5 September

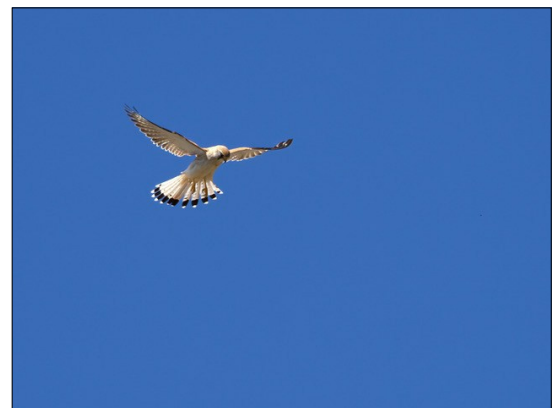
Although the National Park surrounding Glendale Crossing was severely burnt during the recent bush fires, a surprisingly good number of species (36) was heard and observed by a cheerful group of 18. Our group led by Ryu Callaway moved slowly in an anticlockwise direction around the reserve. It was good to welcome some new and enthusiastic, young participants.

Grass is recovering slowly after drought followed by rain. Water flows rapidly in the creek. There were good numbers of kangaroos, possibly coming in to graze from the surrounding burnt hillsides. While the total number of bird species was very pleasing, bird activity seemed thinner than during visits prior to the fires. Very few parrots, cockatoos, **Galahs**, magpies or **Pied Currawongs** were seen.

Of the birds, most interesting were small flocks of migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, totalling up to about 250, heading towards burnt hillsides. One wonders where they will land. Also seen and/or heard were **Fuscous**, **White-naped** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Flame Robin**, **Australasian Pipit**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Little Raven**, a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and one immature **Diamond Firetail**.

All in all a very pleasing outing.

Jean Casburn



Scarlet Robin, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel,
Sherwood Forest Peter Higgins

Oakey Hill, Sunday 13 September

Thirteen members and guests did a circuit of Oakey Hill on a grey morning but the threatened showers didn't really affect the two hour walk. We first headed south towards Hindmarsh Drive but apart from a **Little Corella** sitting quietly in a clump of mistletoe there wasn't much around. We next walked along the upper track on the eastern flank of the hill where we found **Red Wattlebirds**, **Australian Magpies** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** all in nests and **Crimson Rosellas** inspecting hollows.

An **Olive-backed Oriole** called and was seen towards the top of the hill after we had walked through two mobs of kangaroos – about 35 in all. Highlights of the western side of the hill were a female **Nankeen Kestrel**, a female **Golden Whistler** and a **Galah** in a hollow. In total we saw 28 species.

Alison MacKerras

Church Rock Heritage Loop, Wednesday 16 September

26 COG members, most of whom had never walked to Church Rock, joined this outing on a very pleasant morning. Well over 30 species were seen, but it was the spectacular views from the high point of the walk, and the impressive Church Rock itself, which made the morning a great success. The birds included a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, a good number of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Rufous Whistlers**, and two **Eastern Whipbirds** calling near the carpark.

Sandra Henderson

Molonglo Gorge, Sunday 20 September

Despite the very rainy morning, seven of us arrived at the carpark for the walk along the Molonglo River. Around the carpark, a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** called and a party of **White-winged Choughs** fossicked on the ground. We decided to proceed carefully on the wet walking track, with **Grey Fantails**, **Crimson Rosellas** and **Golden Whistlers** early on. A male **Australian Wood Duck** was on the water, with a very vocal **Australian Reed-warbler** in the reeds. We had great views of the river cascades as the walking track moved higher up the slope, and there were some interesting plants in flower. A few small birds moved through the shrubs and trees of the gorge, but they were often quiet and silhouetted in the rainy conditions; these included **Brown Thornbill**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **White-throated Geryone**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. However, bird activity overall was very quiet and with the threat of more rain on the slippery track, the walk was cut short. On our return to the carpark, we were rewarded with **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**.

In total, the group recorded 28 species. Four participants continued from the carpark to the Molonglo Gorge Reserve rest area further along, adding 14 species for the day, most notably a **Black-faced Monarch**. The walk to the Blue Tiles picnic area is a lovely one in better weather, and can be particularly rewarding for honeyeaters and small insectivores, so if you haven't done this walk before I highly recommend it.

Suzi Bond

Bluetts Block, Saturday 26 September

As usual at this time of year the air was ringing with bird calls and activity even though a freezing wind was blowing and we could see snow on the Brindabella Mountains. Despite potentially threatening weather, 21 keen, experienced and new birders turned out for what was a very enjoyable morning. We saw or heard 35 species of birds and many pink, blue, white and a few yellow orchids. Botanists in the group were very impressed by the range of plant species and all by the beauty and importance of this small patch of bushland. (Information on five types of orchids sighted have been submitted to Canberra Nature Map - SH)

Bird highlights included 60 or more **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** foraging, unexpectedly, in the understory. These were more distracting than the **Grey Fantails**! Also seen were **Rufous and Golden Whistlers**, a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, and a female **Red-capped Robin** calling persistently, showing us creamy white plumage. **Scarlet Robins** and **Eastern Yellow Robins** were also seen. Also seen were **Collared Sparrowhawk**, various thornbills, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** and one **Noisy Friarbird**. A Red-necked Wallaby was spotted by Ned.

Jean Casburn



Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Bluetts Block

Sandra Henderson

A Coastal Excursion

Four of us (myself, Prue, Lia and Ryu) took ourselves off to Tathra recently, on a recce for a future COG trip to the area. We stayed at the Kianinny Bush Cottages just out of town, in a cabin overlooking their lake.

Over three days we walked on the property, visited a number of birding locations an easy drive away, and had a wonderful time. We saw just over 100 species, and could easily have spent more time there!

On the Kianinny property we spent several hours exploring, with the highlight being the **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** encountered on the last morning. Although we didn't sight the birds there, each morning we could hear **Wonga Pigeons** not far from the cabin, and **Scarlet Honeyeaters** and **Brown Gerygones** were plentiful. The lake and its surrounds were a haven for frogs, with Ryu identifying several species during an evening wander.

While there were not a lot of shorebirds around, we did find a pair of **Hooded Plovers** at Mimosa Rocks National Park, plenty of **Red-capped Plovers**, and a single **Red-necked Stint** at Mogareeka Inlet. Both local oystercatchers were seen a number of times, and we also caught up with various egrets and spoonbills. In another area of Mimosa Rocks we heard the unusual call of **White-bellied Sea-eagles**, (Ryu and I have heard the same call at Corin Dam, where we suspect they are breeding) and finally located a pair of the birds in a tree half-way down the hillside. At the entrance to Wallaga Lake we saw two **Eastern Curlews** fly in for a brief stop.

When next year's trips program is decided, look out for a trip to Tathra – you will enjoy it!

Sandra Henderson



Glossy Black-Cockatoo, White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Sandra Henderson



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New Places: September 2020

JellatJellat Wetlands

Where: Wallagoot Lane, off Tathra Road

Unfortunately this appears to be on private land, and there is very limited parking on the lane, which does offer good views over the wetlands. It was a very extensive water body, so the 23 species we saw was probably conservative. Of particular interest was a pair of **Australian Shelducks** with 13 tiny ducklings, and 30 **Pied Stilts** in shallow areas.

Capital Hill

This is the hill on which Parliament House sits, but how many of you have explored the gardens, which are surprisingly extensive. I went to look at the **Silver Gulls**, and on a couple of occasions now have walked right around the House through the gardens (but do go on a weekend, when there is untimed free parking along Federation Drive). There is a speaker near those garden beds, which irregularly makes a loud bird call, supposedly to deter other birds from that area.

The gulls are using the raised beds in the forecourt pond, which are planted with ground cover grevilleas. It is very difficult to count how many nests are there – some birds are very well hidden. The gardens hide a variety of sports facilities, and at present a mini-Floriade, somewhat larger than most of the suburban ones. On one of the mornings I was there, both **Spotted and Striated Pardalotes** were taking fibre from the Red Stringybarks to use in their nests. **Gang-gangs** are usually found in the gardens, and there is a resident **Masked Lapwing**. On the two occasions I walked the circuit there were 28 and 24 species noted.

Woody End (private property)

Where: off Smiths Road past Tharwa. A visit by COG is being planned.

I visited with two other COG members, on a cold and windy day. Despite the conditions, we saw 36 species, and planned a probably route for a COG walk. As we sat on the verandah enjoying a cuppa before setting out, **White-throated Gerygones** were calling in the garden. A quick visit to a very windy hilltop gave us a good view over the property, some of which is being left for wildlife in perpetuity. Watch out for this one in next year's program of field trips.

Mimosa Rocks National Park

Where: close to Tathra

This is a large National Park – we birded in several areas, but Aragunnu was particularly good. Apart from the **White-bellied Sea-eagles** noted in the short article about our trip, the scenery is quite spectacular, and Lia was delighted to find a **Brown Gerygone** building a nest. eBird indicates that over 100 species have been sighted in this area of the park, so more visits will produce good results.



Australian Shelduck

Sandra Henderson

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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

COG membership

2020-2021 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

J Walsh
M Lim
H Canning
J Pyne
R Weaver
S MacBeth
D & M Maxwell
K Van Roy

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for November 2020 edition:

Wednesday 28 October 2020

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

COG information

President: Neil Hermes
0413 828 045
president@canberrabirds.org.au

Treasurer: Prue Watters
cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Secretary: Bill Graham
cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary
COG, PO Box 301
Civic Square, ACT 2608

Canberra Bird Notes
Editor: Michael Lenz
michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com

COG website

canberrabirds.org.au
COG Webmaster
Julian Robinson
cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

Membership Enquiries & Updates:
membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for change of address or other details.

Gang-gang Newsletter
Editor: Sandra Henderson
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au
Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Publication Sales
Kathy Walter
sales@canberrabirds.org.au

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