



Gang-gang

SEPTEMBER 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 9 September 2020
virtual meeting

There will be another virtual meeting from 7:30 pm on 9 September. The following is the webinar link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/56/r47k4i8w>

Participants are encouraged to register at least 30 minutes prior to 7.30 pm.

They will need to have their video and sound working on their computer.

During the webinar participants will be able to see and hear the presenters but not talk.

Feedback will be via a typed live chat (which has about a 20 second delay).

The webinar is scheduled to last up to one hour.

The speaker for this meeting will be **James O'Connor**, Head of Research, BirdLife Australia, presenting on "From Monitoring to Mapping, Analysis to Action: BirdLife Australia's Bushfire response program".

Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the 4-week period from 30 July covered by this column has been much wetter and colder than the previous 2 months of winter, with our coldest day in four years on the last weekend. The signs of spring 5 weeks ago pretty much seemed to have disappeared and as a result my impression was that bird activity in the Area of Interest (Aoi) had been comparatively dull, with just a few highlights. However, as detailed below, on a closer examination many species seemed to have quietly snuck back earlier than in previous years, despite the cold weather.

On 31 July there was another early **Pallid Cuckoo** report of a perched, silent bird by David McDonald east of Wamboin, with the next at Wamboin on 13 August before further reports of 2 birds at North Mulligans and again in Wamboin on 22 and 24 August, respectively. After being last recorded in April, the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** was first reported by Kim Larmour at Cavan Woolshed TSR on 11 August, and has since been reported from 5

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Glossy Black-Cockatoo

Shorty

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

other locations, so perhaps it will be a better year for this species compared with the past few. Three **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**, a species last reported on 17 June, were observed by Peter Higgins at North Mulligans on 16 August. From the photos all appeared to be mature birds, whereas the single one seen there the same day on the COG outing was said to be a “young bird”. None has been reported since. In contrast, the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, recorded this year throughout winter, was reported from an incredible 35 locations, so it does appear it will be a very good year for our local cuckoos compared with the previous ones.

Two **Dusky Woodswallows**, not recorded since 14 June, were first reported east of Newline by Brian Hawkins on 14 August, followed closely by 2 more at Namadgi NP Visitors Centre by Liam Manderson on 15 August. However, none has been seen since, so perhaps they were moving through. After having been absent since mid-May, a **White-throated Gerygone** was first reported from Namadgi NP Visitors Centre by Lindell Emerton on 10 August, and there were reports from 3 other locations, all in the week after. In contrast, over the period the **Western Gerygone**, recorded throughout winter, was reported from around 12 locations.

Fairy Martins, last recorded in March, were first reported from Rowes Lagoon on 3 August, and since from a further 4 locations, the first from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 15 August. In contrast, the **Tree Martin**, which has been present throughout winter, was recorded from an amazing 20 locations during the period. **Australian Reed-Warblers**, last recorded on 9 June, have been reported throughout the period, but until 25 August only a single bird at one location other than Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, where it was first recorded by Brittany Brockett on 4 August. After being not reported since the end of March the first **Latham’s Snipe** were reported on 25 August, 3 birds at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR and 2 at West Belconnen Pond.

So many species seem to have arrived early. Of the spring migrants which overwintered in the largest numbers, the **Grey Fantail** was recorded from around 80 locations, a slight increase from the 70 spots in July, so it probably includes some returning birds. The **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was reported from around 20 locations, a slight decrease from the 25 in July, while **Yellow-faced**, **White-naped** and **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were reported from around 35, 19 and 10 locations, respectively. These compare with 30, 20 and 9 locations, respectively, in July so, while it’s difficult to tell, it doesn’t appear there has yet been a major influx of these species.

However, **Olive-backed Orioles** were reported from 13 locations compared with just 4 in July, so some do seem to have returned, while the **Rufous Whistler** was reported from just 6 locations compared with 9 in July. The **Superb Parrot** was reported from just 8 locations, the same as in July, but none of them southside. A single **Mistletoebird** was reported only from Stony Creek NR (Cotter end) by Sandra Henderson on 31 July, with none so far in August compared with the 6 locations last month.

So during September please keep a look out for any of the above, and also for the other species expected to return during the month including the **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **Rainbow Bee-eater**. The **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark** also usually return towards the end of the month, but I expect numbers of these reaching the COG Aol, as well as the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow**, to be much lower this year due to the much wetter inland.

As the spring migrants arrive the winter altitudinal migrants depart. For the three most common species of these, there were reports for the **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Golden Whistler** and **Scarlet Robin** from around 75 (24), 70 (37) and 45 (19) locations in the period. As shown by the numbers in brackets, about 30 to over 50% of them were still from urban or peri-urban situations, indicating that many birds still had to move away. In contrast the **Flame Robin** was reported from only 7 such locations of around 34 total locations in the period. However, in this case the picture is complicated by well over half of the locations being within the newly re-opened burnt areas of Namadgi NP, with peak numbers being 24 at Gibraltar Peak and 23 birds at Glendale Crossing. As mentioned in my previous column this species is an early coloniser of burnt areas.

The **Rose Robin**, often considered a passage migrant through Canberra, was reported from just 3 locations, only one of which was urban (the ANBG). A male has been reported from Namadgi NP Visitors Centre for most of August, so it does not yet seem to be passing through. There still have been no reports of the **Pink Robin** in the COG Aol in 2020. The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from around 12 locations over the period, but again only 1 of these was urban

(the ANBG), all the others again being on, or west of, the Murrumbidgee River. There has again been only the single report of a **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** for the period, from Googong Dam Downstream Picnic Area on 23 August. There have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** since 19 April; in fact the only reports I can find in NSW for the period have been by Ash Allnutt from around Wallaga Lake on the South Coast, with a maximum of 7 birds.

A single **Bassian Thrush** was reported from the ANBG on two occasions, but otherwise only from 3 wetter locations to the south-west of Canberra. Again the **Restless Flycatcher** was reported from only 3 widespread rural locations. Two birds were again reported several times north of Gundaroo, there was a single bird at Mullion on 11 August, and many observers reported the one at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads. The second is a new location which increases the number of spots from which it has been reported in the COG Aol so far in 2020 to 9 locations. The coastal **Brown Gerygone** still has not been reported, and appears to have been absent this winter.

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

No new "unusual" species were observed in the period, but there were several sightings which generated much interest. Firstly, following Rowena Gribble's details on 1 August of the exact location of the Curtin **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, many observers were able to find the 3 birds up to 5 August. Often it took a long cold wait for them to appear. After that they may have moved away to feed, which is supported by the only subsequent sighting in the area being Richard Allen's on 17 August of 3 birds traversing the paddocks flying from Yarralumla to Curtin. A late report on 24 Aug was by Brendan Sheean, who observed 3 adults at the National Zoo and Aquarium interacting with the zoo's captive honeyeaters. Brian Hawkins has been observing them in Curtin from February, so keep an eye out for them. Otherwise the nearest sighting closest to central Canberra this year was of 6 birds by Benjamin Serafin at Yass Gorge on 29 May, with Boorowa the next closest.



Eastern Yellow Robin

Kym Bradley *Birds Eye*



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

Good birding, good food

Tours that are cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19 will be run in similar timeframes in 2021.

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

13 to 22 July 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

24 July to 2 August 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

7 to 17 August 2020

Adelaide to Nullarbor Plain

5 to 20 September 2020

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2020

24 & 25 October 2020

14 & 15 November 2020

28 & 29 November 2020

Top End birding tour

May 2021

Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra, Mitchell Plateau.

Atherton Tablelands

& Iron Range NP June 2021

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2021

16 & 17 October 2021

30 & 31 October 2021

6 & 7 November 2021

27 & 28 November 2021

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

www.philipmaher.com

John Leonard asked how many previous records of the **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** there have been in the ACT. As shown below, without a detailed interrogation of the COG database etc it would be very hard to give a reasonable estimate. The 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) notes that the species has been reported in 7 years in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) since the first records in 2006. In 2018-2019 there were 19 records, a considerable increase, mostly from Yass and Hall. The total number of birds was 35 but this included multiple sightings at similar time periods, so the actual number of birds would be far less than indicated in the data. This would also be true for the Curtin birds.

Barbara Allan noted that in assessing the status of the **Blue-faced Honeyeater** for the upcoming revamped list of unusual species, COG's Rarities Panel encountered these same issues. While there may have been 19 records in 2018-2019, this probably equates to two individual groups of birds, recorded multiple times. By the Panel's reckoning, there have been fewer than 10 observations of clearly distinct groups in the previous ten years.

The second species to garner much interest, following Ash Allnutt's report of 2 birds over Mt Stromlo High on 20 August, was the **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**. The following morning Shorty photographed them feeding in a casuarina near the Stirling Playing Fields, and a couple of hours later Ash Allnutt saw them heading south-east over Kambah. I'm aware many people have been unsuccessfully looking for them, and based on below I thought they may have moved on, but on 22 August Liam Manderson managed to hear the distinctive loud rolling screech of two birds, most likely in flight, in Stirling.

Following his recent CBN article Geoffrey Dabb was interested in what species they were feeding on. He found one tree near the site where Shorty located them that had recent chewings underneath. He suspected it was an *Allocasuarina verticillata* by the size of the more than 20 mm cones, rather than the *Casuarina cunninghamiana* that Shorty's photos suggested it may have been. I walked pretty much the whole length of the extensive plantings from the northern corner of Streeton and Fremantle Drives to the underpass on the north-west side of Chapman Primary School (more than 1 km) and found all the other trees are very similar. Only a few actually had cones, which were much smaller, like *C. cunninghamiana*, which is not a favoured food source. Based on this limited food supply I'm not certain the **Glossies** will be back there, though there were still many cones on the one tree.

These are rare local urban (as opposed to peri-urban) sightings. Apart from these and the peri-urban ones at Mt Majura and Mt Jerrabomberra earlier this year, the closest sighting has been east of Goulburn. Particularly the difficult to find Mt Majura ones suggests the species must be around, and is simply not located. This is even truer for the **Northern Shoveler** which has not been seen since 25 July, and as far as I can tell from the eBird map nowhere else in Australia. It must be lurking on a swamp somewhere unseen or unrecognised (there are plenty around to choose from at the moment). Similarly the **Singing Honeyeater** has not been seen since 18 July, and given its very exact location at Franklin Pond it must still be somewhere in the COG Aoi, probably nearby, noting the closest location otherwise in 2020, other than one in Goulburn in February, was at Narranderra, nearly 150 km away.

Three **Australian Shelducks** were reported from Namadgi Visitors Centre by Peter Morris on 30 July, a relatively rare ACT record compared with those around Bungendore, where sightings have also been relatively few, with just 12 seen at Trucking Yard Lane on 7 August, and 2 on Lake Road on 15 August. The male **Blue-billed Duck** moved from Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant to Kelly Swamp, from where it was first reported on 29 July by Ash Allnutt, and was subsequently observed there by a number of birders, culminating in 2 males seen on Kelly Swamp on 22 and 25 August.

The female **Musk Duck** at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant was further reported there from 29 July to 11 August, and the male at Yerrabi Pond from 29 July to 9 August. A female was also reported from the Western Foreshores of Googong Dam on 12 August, and up to 3 birds from Rows Lagoon between 13-22 August. Tony Willis reported a male at West Belconnen Pond on 24 August. So they seem to be moving around more than for a while, perhaps due to the wet weather. Two **Spotless Crakes** were recorded by their call by Alastair Smith from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 19 August.

A **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** in Chapman was reported by Timothée Bonnet on 16 August, and a **Musk Lorikeet** was reported from Watson and Narrabundah by several observers. There have been few "unusual" raptors reported this winter. A **Black Kite** was reported by Luke Downey in Queanbeyan on 22 August, and there were only two reports of **Black-shouldered Kites**, from Namadgi NP Visitors Centre and near Lake George, during the period.

Of the special birds I've been asking readers to keep a lookout for, the **Jacky Winter**, has been reported from 3 locations, the vast majority the single bird at Namadgi NP Visitors Centre, with also up to 2 birds from Lookout Hill north-west of Tharwa,

and a single report of one bird at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads. The species has been reported from all 3 locations previously this year, so none are new sites for 2020, further underlining my concern for the species.

The **Hooded Robin** has also been reported by many observers, but from just a single location, at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads. While up to 4 birds have been reported from there (see also breeding observation below), again it is not a new site for 2020, so the species still has only been reported from 5 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 2 sites in the past 4 weeks, both of them known locations.

As a somewhat different challenge in spring I would like readers to look out for **Brown** and **Stubble Quail**, recorded from just 8 and 6 locations, respectively, so far in 2020. These grassland species are often best located by call, mostly given in spring. This is often early in the morning or late in the day, and is best represented by repeated “Tu-weees” and “Pippy wheats”, respectively. Both were relatively common at Coleman Ridge after the 2003 fires, but I haven’t recorded any of the former now for over 2 years, whereas the last record for the latter was in January 2012. The peak for the former was during the last wet period in 2010-2012, so based on this year’s winter rain they may breed up again.

Despite the last month of winter having been cold and wet there has been significant breeding activity (some quite advanced) reported, including a pair of **White-faced Herons** nesting in a backyard in Watson, **Masked Lapwings** with chicks in Barton and at Kelly Swamp, **Noisy Miner** chicks in a nest in Red Hill, dependent young **Weebills** at the North Curtin horse paddocks, and a **Magpie-lark** on a nest in a completely bare tree in Holt. A few others are worthy of special mention:

Among the many observers of the **Hooded Robin** at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads, on 15 August Liam Manderson reported them nesting and feeding young in a boulder near the road. He counted three males, and a female was photographed carrying food. The BIRD INFO on the COG website indicates this is very early for them to be nesting, with just 1 record of a nest with eggs and 1 for copulating in August. The location is also unusual with neither Morecombe nor Beruldsen mentioning rocks. HANZAB also indicates most situations are in a tree or stump, and doesn’t specifically mention rocks, but does indicate the species often breeds co-operatively.

Denise Kay posted that a **Pacific Black Duck** had 8 day-old ducklings on Giralang Pond on 5 August. On 16 August Fleur Leary observed an **Australian Wood Duck** pair with 4 ducklings at Crace Recreation Park pond. She noted the earliest she had ever observed ducklings before at this site was in late September. Both are examples of how prolific ducks can be given the right wet conditions, recalling how many broods of particularly the latter were reported this past autumn.

On 18 August John Hurrell was excited to see the **Pied Butcherbirds** at Stony Creek building a nest. I have noted before how little breeding information there is for this species on BIRD INFO. Amazingly, there are no nest building records at all, though there are 2 reports of carrying food in July! However, the timing is similar to my knowledge of the **Grey Butcherbird**. John’s record of the dependent young still being fed at the nearby Sherwood Forest on 27 May should also be noted.

On 23 August Duncan McCaskill found a **Speckled Warbler** pair feeding a recently fledged young at The Pinnacle. He noted he didn’t know how unusual it was for this species to breed this early, the earliest COG “dependent young” records being from September, but we don’t have lots of breeding records. The BIRD INFO data shows there is one record of nest

Duncan McCaskill

Speckled Warbler



building in July and 7 in August, but then breeding records through to May, including one of nest building, demonstrating the very long breeding period for this species.

On 24 August Kathy and David Cook posted that **White-throated Treecreepers** were building a nest in a purpose-built nest box adjacent to their bedroom window in Wamboin. It had been lined with fur from a long-deceased rabbit. This is the first time the box was being used for its designated purpose – they have three of them specifically designed for **White-throated Treecreepers**. One of the others probably has an **Australian Owlet-nightjar** as they regularly hear it calling from there, but the occupant of the third one is unknown.

In line with the breeding season already being quite advanced, no more mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) were reported in August. However, I've still been seeing relatively large flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas**. In early August Jean Casburn let me know that **Red-rumped parrots** were still using their staging tree in Tullaroop Street Duffy prior to going to their roosts. There had been up to 53 birds each evening. This is a site I reported on in my CBN articles. My Rivett/Chapman birds, which usually fly to feed in the peri-urban areas, may be feeding on the Stirling Playing Fields, where up to 71 birds have been reported when people were looking for the **Glossy Black-cockatoos**

The start of spring is usually a very active time, so please watch out for any of the returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the departing altitudinal migrants, for the remaining single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and in particular for further breeding activity, with the wetter conditions it could be a very good season. Keep a special look out for the **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 email Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

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



Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper

Kym Bradley *Bird Eyes*
September 2020

COG Blitz 2020

Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October

The COG Blitz is on again and there has never been a more important year for us to take part. After the ravages of bushfire and drought, how are the birds of the ACT faring? We have 14 years of previous blitz data, and this year's results will set a benchmark against which to measure recovery.

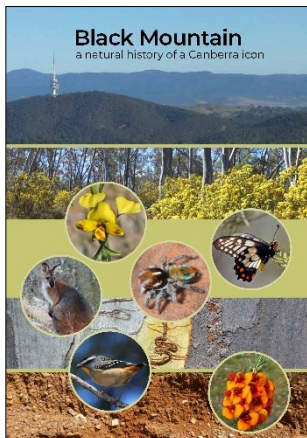
Barbara Allan has decided to take a very well-earned rest from organising but will be assisting me in the background with the handover. The details are on the COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au, under the header 'Observing and Reporting Birds'. The list of sites for 2020 will be updated shortly. We will not be able to access the Closed areas of Namadgi, but there are still many areas that have been burnt and are now open to the public. It is important we survey in these areas even if they aren't teeming with birds. There are also many unburnt areas in Namadgi, Tidbinbilla and the lowlands. Let me know, email blitz@canberrabirds.org.au, where you would like to survey, particularly if there is an area not on the list.

Nicki Taws

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.



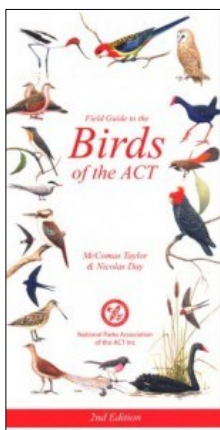
Black Mountain: a natural history of a Canberra icon

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.

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

Saturday 5 September – Glendale, Namadgi National Park

Description: Explore the valley which has largely escaped the fires, although surrounds are burnt. A good opportunity to check out a relatively intact part of southern Namadgi that has only recently reopened, and bear witness to the extent of some of the fire damage on the drive down. **Flame Robins** have been present in good numbers recently.

ebird hotspots: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L5133976>

Meeting time and place: 8:30am at the dirt car park for Glendale Depot / Brandy Flat Walking Trail. The turnoff is on the left 700m south of Glendale Picnic Area. Coordinates are -35.686723, 149.002162.

Walking distance: 3km

Degree of difficulty: There will be some off track but not very steep or rocky.

End time (approx.): Expect to walk for approx 2.5-3 hours

What to bring: Wear appropriate clothes and shoes. The weather can be colder down there so come prepared. Bring some morning tea if you wish. The Glendale Picnic Area is nearby and is a nice spot to have a snack post-walk if you wish.

Prior registration is essential. Send your name and mobile to Ryu Callaway: ryu_is_gr8(at) [yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp)

Sunday 13 September – Oakey Hill NR

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

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

Meeting time and place: PLEASE NOTE CHANGED MEETING POINT DUE TO ROAD CLOSURES. 9:00 am at the underpass on Rubbo Crescent, Weston (opposite number 34). Cars can be parked on Rubbo Crescent.

Walking distance: approx. 4 km

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

End time (approx.): 11:00am

What to bring: water

Need to register: Yes, by email

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

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

Wednesday September 16 - Church Rock Heritage Loop Walk, Tidbinbilla NR

Meet at the Flints Picnic Area carpark at 9am (there are no entry fees for Tidbinbilla for the rest of 2020). This is an easy walk of about 2km, with quite a number of gentle (downhill) constructed steps in one area. It takes in wooded and open areas, and there is a good chance of seeing **Flame Robins**, **Satin Bowerbirds** and a variety of honeyeaters.

Please register providing your name and phone number with Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com) ahead of the walk.

Sunday 20 September - Molonglo Gorge

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

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

eBird hotspots: Molonglo Gorge, Kowen Forest – Blue Tiles

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

Walking distance: Approx 6.8 km (return)

Degree of difficulty: Medium with a few steep rocky parts

End time: Around midday.

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

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

Numbers limited: Yes, limited to 15 people.

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

Saturday 26 September - Bluetts Block, Uriarra Road

The walk will start at 9am and last for approximately 2 hours. Bluetts is a forested reserve with heath in much of the understorey, grassy flats, and rocky hillsides. A fire trail leads up the hill from the entrance gate and there are views all around from the survey point. Bird and flower species vary throughout the year depending upon rainfall conditions and the forest rings with bird calls in springtime. Apart from the regular bush birds and seasonal visitors, **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** breed here. Sturdy boots or shoes are suggested because stones on the slope of the fire trails can be slippery.

How to get to Bluetts: Go to Stromlo Forest Park roundabout and turn right onto Uriarra Road. Travel about 2 km to Denman Prospect Gate on the right hand side of the road. My car will be parked by the gate. Please be careful if turning across the road at this point as traffic flows swiftly.

To register, email Jean Casburn with your name, mobile number and an emergency contact number at casburnj@bigpond.com.

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>

Meeting time and place: 08:30 am at the carpark of Mick Sherd Oval, Gibraltar Street, Bungendore: -35.254229, 149.444036

Walking distance: 4 km approx

Degree of difficulty: Easy

End time (approx.): 12:00 noon

What to bring: Water & morning tea

Need to register: Yes, by email or text, giving name, mobile number, and emergency contact (details below).

Numbers limited: Yes, maximum 15

Name of leader and contact details: David McDonald 04Oct20@canberrabirds.org.au, phone 0416 231 890.

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.



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Field Trip Reports

Saturday 1 August - Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

This outing, attended by 15 beginners or recent arrivals in Canberra, replaced the usual May outing which was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions at the time. It was a cold and foggy morning, with the sun not appearing until well after 10am and seemingly keeping all but a very few **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **White-browed Scrubwrens** tucked away out of sight. However, **Eastern Spinebills**, **New Holland Honeyeaters** and **Red Wattlebirds** gave brilliant views, often so close that binoculars were not needed. Thornbills, of course, were the most challenging, with **Brown Thornbills** very vocal and visible but softly calling **Striated Thornbills** proving elusive when binoculars were pointed in their direction. A highlight of the morning was watching a male **Satin Bowerbird** constructing his bower, seemingly unperturbed by a large group of observers. **Gang-gang Cockatoos** gave their creaky gate call as they flew over but didn't stop to allow closer views.

The leader, Anthony Overs, called on his many years of birding to explain, firstly, how to find a bird with binoculars – **Australian Wood Ducks** in the carpark made good targets to practise on. As we moved around the gardens, he discussed plumage colours and age in **Satin Bowerbirds** and **Crimson Rosellas**, how to tell male and female **Australian Magpies** and **Magpie-larks** apart, how to recognise an **Eastern Spinebill** in flight, and many other useful snippets of information. By the end, most participants should have been quite familiar with the calls of **Brown Thornbills** and **Spotted Pardalotes** at least. Anthony finished up with advice on what binoculars to buy.

Many thanks to Anthony for sharing his passion for birds with beginners, something he has been doing for COG for many years.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 16 August - North Mulligans

Eighteen people attended the walk, some from as far as Queanbeyan and Forbes Creek in the Tinderries. The dams were overflowing and we had to pick our way across shallow streams. The wind was quite gusty so we headed north-west from the car park to the two dams in the middle. Most of the observing was in the sheltered areas around the top dam.

Two **White-throated Gerygones** were heard and one seen. A Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo was heard and a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was tracked down; the latter stayed in the one spot and the group had great views of its barring patterns and iridescent green. It changed positions and with full sun was truly a highlight of the day. A mixed feeding flock with many species stayed in the area beside the dam for some time and a juvenile **Golden Whistler** was identified by the light brown/tan on the wings. **Scarlet Robins** were seen in two locations and some of the group were lucky to see a **Red-capped Robin**. In all, 36 species were observed on this most successful outing. A splendid panorama of NSW unfolded from the Centenary Trail as we headed back.

Bill Graham

Wednesday 19 August – Tharwa Bridge to De Salis Cemetery

Despite the less-than-promising weather forecast, quite a number of the registered participants still met at Tharwa Bridge for the walk to the historic de Salis cemetery. The sun was shining and the wind scarcely apparent as we set off. Along the track the more obvious birds were **Grey Fantails**, **Crimson Rosellas**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. The activities of the local wombats were very evident. At the cemetery, we had great views over the junction of the Gudgenby and Murrumbidgee Rivers. A tree some distance away was decorated with a good number of **Little Ravens**, while a couple of **Australian Ravens** were seen to be carrying nesting material. The walk back was less pleasant, as the promised wind and rain soon set in, making the last few hundred metres quite miserable. There were 29 species recorded in total, and it's a very pleasant walk for those who've not explored this area in the past.

Sandra Henderson

CANBERRA ORNITHOLOGISTS GROUP

UNUSUAL BIRDS IN THE ACT – 2020 update

The following is the list of ‘unusual birds’ in the ACT compiled by the COG Rarities Panel.

Common name	Latin name	Notes
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	
Brush Bronzewing	<i>Phaps elegans</i>	
Diamond Dove	<i>Geopeliacuneata</i>	Reporting not required for “Bibaringa”
Bar-shouldered Dove	<i>Geopeliahumeralis</i>	
Brown-capped Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps longirostris</i>	
White-throated Nightjar	<i>Eurostopodus mystacalis</i>	
Spotted Nightjar	<i>Eurostopodus argus</i>	
Black-eared Cuckoo	<i>Chalcites osculans</i>	
Black Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>	
Bush Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	Reporting not required for Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo
Banded Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tricolor</i>	Reporting not required for COG Aol outside ACT
Australian Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula australis</i>	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	
Little Buttonquail	<i>Turnix velox</i>	Reporting not required for TSR 48
Powerful Owl	<i>Ninox strenua</i>	
Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	
Square-tailed Kite	<i>Lophoictinia isura</i>	
Turquoise Parrot	<i>Neophemaphys chella</i>	
Little Lorikeet	<i>Glossopsittacus pusilla</i>	
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	<i>Glossopsittacus porphyrocephala</i>	
White-cheeked Honeyeater	<i>Phylidonyris niger</i>	Reporting not required for JWNR
Blue-faced Honeyeater	<i>Entomyzon cyanotis</i>	
Black-chinned Honeyeater	<i>Meliphaga fasciata</i>	
Pied Honeyeater	<i>Certhionyx variegatus</i>	
Black Honeyeater	<i>Sugamel niger</i>	
Crimson Chat	<i>Epthianura tricolor</i>	
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	<i>Acanthagenys rufogularis</i>	
Little Wattlebird	<i>Anthochaera chrysoptera</i>	

Common name	Latin name	Notes
Regent Honeyeater	<i>Anthochaeraphrygia</i>	
Singing Honeyeater	<i>Lichenostomusvirescens</i>	
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	<i>Ptilotulaornata</i>	
White-fronted Honeyeater	<i>Purnellaalbifrons</i>	
Grey-crowned Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus temporalis</i>	
Australasian Figbird	<i>Sphecotheresvieilloti</i>	
Black-faced Monarch	<i>Monarchamelanopsis</i>	Reporting not required for Tallaganda
Apostlebird	<i>Struthidaecinerea</i>	
Pink Robin	<i>Petroicarodinogaster</i>	
Tawny Grassbird	<i>Megalurustimoriensis</i>	
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotusjocosus</i>	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LISTING ON THE 'UNUSUAL BIRDS' LIST

In compiling this list, the COG Rarities Panel considered records only from the previous 10 years. This list primarily contains species for which there have been fewer than 10 endorsed records of clearly separate individuals or groups over this time. Where a bird or group of birds has been seen in roughly the same location for an extended period, that has been counted as a single occurrence.

This list is selective - there are many additional species which might be considered 'rare' on any number of grounds, including those that occur naturally in very low numbers. Included on the list are relatively rare species that present identification challenges, such as the female Black Honeyeater, and the Pink Robin. The Panel has excluded from this list species rare in the ACT that are particularly easy to identify, such as the Red-necked Avocet and Bell Miner. Nor has the plethora of possible shorebirds which might appear at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR been included, though unusual bird reports are encouraged for all but the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

This list self-evidently excludes species not yet recorded in the ACT but which might turn up at some time in the future: an unusual bird report is required for any bird that does not appear in the most recent COG annual bird report or on the list of ACT birds on the COG website. Clarification can be sought from rarities@canberrabirds.org.au if in doubt.

The Panel has included in the list one species whose continued existence might be threatened by the January 2020 fires – the Brush Bronzewing. It has also included for the first time the Little Lorikeet.

To keep the list of 'unusual' species to a reasonable length, birds that have not been recorded in over ten years have been excluded; should they reappear, of course, an unusual bird report would be required. Several other species have been dropped from earlier versions of the list as they are now being recorded more frequently, for example Pied Butcherbird, Musk Lorikeet, Red-backed Kingfisher and Azure Kingfisher.

REPORTING UNUSUAL BIRDS

An unusual bird report must be completed for the species here mentioned, then provided to and endorsed by the COG Rarities Panel before the record will be published as an accepted record in any formal COG publication. A form is available on the COG website for this purpose (canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/frequently-asked-questions/unusual-birds/). The Panel will also accept as a report an eBird record with a full description of the observation. It particularly welcomes photos or sound recordings in support of the observation.

New Places: August 2020

Duntroon Horse Paddocks

Where: Addison Rd off Fairbairn Ave, near the playing fields

This is a very large area, with quite a few separate paddocks. The paddocks, as is the case with most of the government agistment areas, are separated by fenced off vegetation lines. The Duntroon paddocks have electric fences around most if not all paddocks, but there are step-throughs in many of the gates. The most numerous birds were **Australian Magpies** and **Magpie-Larks**. A large group of **White-winged Choughs** was being annoyed by a magpie at the horse yards as they gathered in a noisy group where some feed had been spilled. Many of the vegetation lines had little undergrowth, but one patch with some bushes had a group of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and a family of **Superb Fairy-wrens**. Some of the paddock areas were very wet underfoot.

Gigerline Nature Reserve – between Tharwa Sandwash and De Salis Cemetery

As we stood at the cemetery at the junction of the Gudgenby and Murrumbidgee Rivers during the Wednesday Walk, we were looking over at the narrow spit of land between the two rivers. This area, only a few hundred metres long, appeared to have lots of little birds, so I've since been out to explore it. There is a step-through gate on the left on the way to Tharwa Sandwash, with a track along the top of this small area of the reserve.

The same small group of **White-winged Choughs** we'd seen from the cemetery was still fossicking through the grass, but of more interest were the many small birds in the many acacias and eucalypts close to the river junction. **Weebills**, **Yellow Thornbills**, **Silvereyes**, **Red-browed Finches**, **Brown Thornbills** and **Grey Fantails** were among the many birds busy in the foliage. Walking close to the edge flushed a **White-faced Heron** and a couple of **Little Pied Cormorants** fishing close to the bank. A **Western Gerygone** was also calling, although I could not locate the bird. Well worth a stop if you're heading to the Sandwash.

Mount Stranger – west

Where is it: Woodcock Drive, track starting almost opposite Gordon Pond

I've walked to the trig on Mount Stranger from suburban Bonython, but this is a completely different approach. The Bicentennial National Trail itself runs between Mount Stranger and the Point Hut area. I walked along the Trail until a gate on the right into the Mount Stranger area appeared. The various well-vegetated areas are fenced, although some of the fences are in a poor state of repair, so I was able to gradually find my way to the trig. It's a fairly steady uphill walk (no track) over rocky ground, and probably best to do in cooler months when snakes are not active. The most striking bird activity was the large number of **Pied Currawongs** as I got closer to the top – calling and moving around in small groups. The highlight of the walk was a **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, although a very cooperative **Australasian Pipit** on the fence of the Bicentennial Trail was a treat.

Church Rock Heritage Loop

Where is it – Tidbinbilla, starting and ending at Flints picnic area.

I'd previously seen the signs at the back of Flints, indicating there was a loop walk. Towards the back of the picnic area a number of **Satin Bowerbirds** (all green birds) were on the ground, just in front of some male **Flame Robins** which had drawn my attention from a distance. The robins seem to have been slow getting to Tidbinbilla this year, but they were certainly very obvious on the day I visited. At least 12 males and a few females were foraging close together. The loop walk is well marked. The track crosses the loop road, passes a small dam which was almost entirely covered by ice, then emerges into an open area near the top of the hill, with a seat to take in the view. Church Rock, with an explanatory sign at its base, is well worth seeing up close. A long but gentle series of steps leads down the hill, and there were **Eastern Yellow Robins** and **White-browed Scrubwrens** in the undergrowth. Closer to the entry back onto Flints a group of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** was moving through small eucalypts, and a **Crescent Honeyeater** appeared briefly. **White-naped Honeyeaters** were heard in several areas. Why is it called Church Rock? Join COG's Wednesday Walk in September to find out, or venture along this track at some other time to read the very interesting information board.

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:

G Bluff
V Markovic
A Dwyer
K Heberley
M Nickols
P Lawless
M van LookerenCampagne
G Ramsay (rejoining - welcome back!)
J Emerson

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for October 2020 edition:

Wednesday 30 September 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: Sue Lashko

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Publication Sales

Kathy Walter

sales@canberrabirds.org.au

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