



Gang-gang

MAY 2021

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

Wednesday 12 MAY 2021 7.30pm
normal face-to-face meeting

Following the approval of our COVID Safety Plan, COG will hold our 12 May meeting as a face-to-face one at the usual venue, Canberra Girls Grammar School (CGGS) Multi-media centre, corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

Attendees will need to sit so that there is only one person per 2 sq m and with 1.5 m distancing, by maintaining 2 spare seats between people except for members of the same family or group of close contacts.

All attendees must practice good hand and respiratory hygiene and stay home if unwell.

As required by the ACT Government for application of the 2 sq m per person rule, the 'Check in CBR' app will be used to collect participants' contact details, using the QR code displayed at the entrance to the venue.

If attendees do not have or cannot share this app, COG will make a paper record of their names and contact details.

Proposed attendees should make themselves familiar with COG's approved COVID Safety Plan for CGGS, the full details of which are available on COG's web site.

Everyone welcome

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

Over the 4 week period from 29 March to 27 April covered by this column, the weather has consisted of two distinct but unequal halves. It was relatively warm up to 9 April when a cold change came through, followed by our first frost a few days later. Since then it has been much cooler though stable, with minimums often hovering around 0°C and maximums in the high teens or low 20s. However, in both phases it was very dry, with just 1.5 mm in my rain gauge in Chapman. This cooling down and lack of rain does not seem to have had a major effect on the birds within the COG Area of Interest (Aoi), as my analysis below shows that many species seem to have stayed/be staying longer than usual.

The species which has generated by far the most interest in the period was the **Swift Parrot**. We were first alerted to them on 15 April by John Goldie and Kathy Walter who found 2 birds on the equestrian/fire trail behind Hackett. However, the eBird Australia map shows that the first actually reported were 4 birds by Carolyn Larcombe and Rainer Rehwinkel from Wandiyali-Environs Safe



Julian Robinson

Swift Parrot

The first presentation will be by **Geoffrey Dabb** on the “**Mysteries of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo.**” These include: How could anyone think it is glossy? Why does it visit Canberra? What does it prefer to eat, really?

The main presentation will be by **Michael Guppy** and is entitled “**Home-range sizes of 11 bird species on a 10 ha site in South-east Australia.**”

The study we (Michael and co-workers Sarah Guppy, Philip Withers, Anthony Overs and Richard Marchant) present here, for a community of both permanent residents and seasonal visitors, on our Moruya site, was designed to produce long-term, comprehensive and unambiguous sighting data for individuals from a variety of species in the same habitat. For 7-9 breeding seasons (depending upon the species), sightings of multiple, colour-banded breeding individuals, of both sexes, from 11 species, were recorded and used to calculate home-range sizes. A novel method of quantifying relative and actual home-range size was developed, that allows rapid and simple calculation, and analysis. These data have enabled us to address three questions. First, what, if any, external factors are related to home-range sizes on the site? The factors we investigated were year, the Southern Oscillation Index, and pair numbers. Second, are there inherent differences in home-range sizes, both within species (males vs females), and between species? Third, how do our home-range sizes compare with those in the literature for the same species. The results are unexpected and puzzling, and have forced us to completely re-think the factors that determine the sizes of the home ranges on this site.

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

Haven to the south of Queanbeyan on 13 April. Following some reports from Watson and Ainslie, 4 **Swift Parrots** were recorded by Kim Farley at Callum Brae NR, where many, many birders have been able to observe up to 25 birds up to the time of writing. Including the reports from Richardson, where at least 15 birds have been seen, there have now been reports from 7 locations, by far the most birds and locations in recent years. If the extent of flowering around my place is any indication, I expect them to stay for some time, though I understand they are feeding mainly on lerps at Callum Brae.

This species migrates all the way from Tasmania where it breeds in the summer. My impression has been that the altitudinal migrants, which move into Canberra and its surrounds in autumn/winter from the mountains and other higher areas, have continued to move in slowly. Of the first arriving altitudinal migrants, about half of the over 60 locations from which the **Golden Whistler** was reported were urban or peri-urban, and for the **White-eared Honeyeater** only around 30 of the 80 locations. For the **Grey Shrike-thrush**, only 20 of the over 60 locations were urban or peri-urban. There were reports from around 40 locations for the **Scarlet Robin**, less than 20 of which were in peri-urban areas. While from this analysis the case for relatively late movement to lower altitudes for these species is not that strong, possibly due to more significant movement in the second half of the period, the situation for the usually later arriving **Flame Robin** is much clearer, with just 1 (a single bird at Callum Brae on 21 April) of the 19 locations from which it was reported being urban or peri-urban.

So look out for this species and the other altitudinal migrants which usually arrive later such as the **Rose Robin** (reports from 8 locations, 4 of which were urban or peri-urban) and **Pink Robin** (still no reports from the ACT so far in 2021, or in 2020), the **Crescent Honeyeater** (2 birds were recorded at the ANBG on 26 April, but otherwise reports from 6 locations, all on or to the west of the Murrumbidgee River) and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** (no urban or peri-urban reports so far in 2021).

Of the spring/summer migrants still present in March, there have been no further reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **White-throated Needletail**, **Fork-tailed Swift**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Dollarbird** or **Sacred Kingfisher** in the period covered. However, there have been reports of some very late staying summer migrants including the **White-winged Triller**, for which a female was still reported (and photographed) from Namadgi Visitors Centre on 3 occasions between 2-7 April. The **Common Cicadabird** was still reported from the top of Brindabella Road on 27 March (it just missed my April column) by Timothée Bonnet, who heard it calling the typical cicada-like buzzing song from the top of the canopy.

The **Brush Cuckoo**, which also often leaves by the end of February, was still reported from 2 locations during the period, the first being heard calling and seen momentarily in flight as it flew from a gully into dense vegetation on Vanitys Crossing Road by Ben Ward on 4 April, and the second a very marked juvenile photographed by Karin Neufeld at ANBG on 5 April. A clearly immature **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** with no barring and only the slightest hint of a brown bar through the eye and ear-coverts was photographed by Patrick Cox at Yankee Hat car park and track in Namadgi NP on 17 April. A **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** (no further details) was still reported from East Uriarra Reserve by Martin Butterfield on 8 April.

The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory of the local cuckoos, was still reported from 9 locations, the most recent being from the ANBG on 27 April. In contrast to the very late reports of breeding, adult **Eastern Koels** do not seem to have stayed much longer than usual, with only 2 reports I can find, the last being a female, still being chased by 2 **Red Wattlebirds**, from Upper Stranger Pond by Peter Bijlmakers on 2 April.

Up to 2 **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were still reported on 3 occasions from 1 April from Nelanglo TSR north of Gundaroo, with one last photographed there by Frank Antrim on 9 April. This is also late for this species, as was the female **Satin Flycatcher** reported on the K2C surveys to the south of the ACT by Sue Lashko on 11 April. The **Leaden Flycatcher** was still reported from 8 locations, the most recent being 2 birds at Stringybark Reserve Queanbeyan by Zachary D on 17 April. The other passage migrant, the **Rufous Fantail** was still reported from 4 locations, the most recent being photographed at Narrabundah Hill by Patrick Cox on 25 April. It was first seen here by Jean Casburn on 22 April, so it appears to have been in no hurry to move through despite the cool weather. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows that there are very few records in April, particularly for the first three above species.

Fairy Martins were reported from 3 locations, most recently a single bird at Naas Road and Apollo Road by Peter Morris on 12 April (also late according to the BIRD INFO data), and the **Tree Martin** from 9 locations,



Mistletoebird

David Cook



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Good birding, good food

Top End birding tour— FULL

10 — 24 May 2021
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine,
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Cairns & Atherton
31 May — 5 June 2021
Julatten to Iron Range NP
5 June — 13 June 2021

The Pilbara birding tours NW WA—FULL

29 June—8 July 2021
12 July—21 July 2021

Central Australia—FULL

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

Nullarbor Plain birding tour—FULL

5 - 20 September 2021

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2021

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

Personal tours around Deniliquin,
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most recently from Nelanglo TSR north of Gundaroo by Michael Lenz on 26 April. The **Australian Reed-Warbler** has been reported from 10 locations in the period, up to the time of writing.

Of the species that usually leave by the end of April, the **Noisy Friarbird** was reported from a remarkable over 60 locations and was still present up to the time of writing. **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** were still reported from 8 and 12 locations, respectively, in the period, up to the time of writing, as were **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** reported from over 70 and well over 100 locations, respectively. The incredible numbers for the last two species underline how late they are staying. A number of these species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** (reported from 7 locations) and **Superb Parrot** (still reported from around 38 locations, 8 of these being south of Lake Burley Griffin).

So during May please keep an eye out for the above late-leaving spring/summer migrants. Also keep a lookout for **Dusky Woodswallows** and **Olive-backed Orioles** which are usually the last migrant species to leave, but small numbers often overwinter.

After a later start to the honeyeater migration compared with recent seasons, it has also been a relatively poor season for witnessing this phenomenon. The around 800 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (YFHE) reported from the COG outing to Narrabundah Hill on 3 April (see separate report in this issue) was the first record of any significant numbers. On Easter Monday 5 April Barbara Allan and Penny Olsen walked around the circular track below the summit of Black Mountain and from about 10.30 am a steady stream of YFHE passed overhead. They estimated around 1000 birds in the two hours they were there.

However, the maximum numbers this season I am aware of are the about 1500 YFHE and 140 **White-naped Honeyeaters** (WNHE) flying north over the car park at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR by Ryu Callaway over 30 minutes on the morning of 15 April. Ryu noted the average flock size of about 100 birds. He had quite a few flocks that had about 10 WNHE mixed in, and a few small WNHE only flocks. Liam Manderson was there a little longer after Ryu left and counted an additional 600 YFHE, but the extra time frame is not clear.

Certainly before and during the Anzac Day weekend I visited several known locations including Narrabundah Hill and saw very little sign of movement under ideal conditions (cool clear days after a cold night) and concluded the migration season was all but over with it particularly poor for the **White-naped Honeyeater**. Nicki Taws posted that it would not be surprising if there were far fewer birds to migrate, given that the honeyeaters had the double whammy of severe bushfires through much of their summer breeding grounds and also through vast swathes of their winter feeding areas.

However, checking my notes for last (2020) season indicates that it was a surprisingly good season after the fires with, on the morning of 12 April 2020, Lindsay Hansch posting that over an hour's duration he had 7000-8000 birds, almost all YFHE, over his place under the major migration pathway in Jerrabomberra. While this season's numbers may have been affected by Lindsay no longer living there, Michael Robbins, who also lives close to a major flight path on the western end of Urambi Village and Murrumbidgee Golf Course, counted over 5000 birds passing through there on the same day in 2020. Michael has indicated he did not see anywhere near the same numbers this season, with his maximum number being around 1000 birds in nearby Greenway on 13 April.

So watch out for any remaining late movement, in particular for the **White-naped Honeyeater** which is usually the dominant species towards the end of April/early May.

However, there has been some late **Red Wattlebird** migration observed with, on 22 April, Jean Casburn counting 87 birds in groups passing over the northern edge of Narrabundah Hill from the Mount Stromlo region. Later that day I had flocks of 25 and 20 coming through my garden, interestingly heading almost due south. In contrast early on the morning of 26 April at least 25 birds were heading in a northerly direction, with many in my garden area before and after enjoying the blossoms. Clearly their effort to help increase the **Eastern Koel** population over the summer does not seem to have reduced their local numbers.

Of the "unusual" species, the **Common Sandpiper** continued to be reported from Isabella Pond to 29 March, and then from the drain at the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong on 3 April. Last year it left on 10 March, over three weeks earlier, another example of a very late-staying species.

Two **Australian Shelduck** were reported by Peter Bijlmakers at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 16 April, but otherwise only from 7 locations at their usual spots around Bungendore and to the north of there; though the maximum numbers (79 at Bungendore Meadow Dam by Martin Butterfield on 7 April) were much lower than in March. On 30 March Martin Gascoigne first reported **Plumed Whistling Ducks** from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, the only day on which many observers were able to observe up to 12 ducks there. Otherwise, they have been reported only from the Trucking Yard Lane, with a maximum of 17 there on 24 April. Single **Blue-billed Ducks** were only reported on single occasions from 3 locations between 14-16 March, with 2 ducks then from one of them on 26 April, whereas 1-2 **Musk Ducks** (4 on one occasion) have been more widely observed, being reported from 8 locations during the period.

Reports for the **Stubble Quail** dropped to 2 locations over the period, a further indication of how much we rely on their call for their presence. They are now fewer than for the **Brown Quail** reported from 4 locations. A **Painted Buttonquail** was photographed by Peter Bijlmakers at Rendezvous Creek in Namadgi NP on 12 April, but no more **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period. Only two **Great Crested Grebes** have been reported from Vanities Crossing Road side of the Cotter Dam on 1 April.

On the afternoon of 21 April I flushed a small bird in Rivett which I initially thought was a **Red-rumped Parrot**, but when it landed nearby it was clearly a very small dove. I returned with binoculars 15 minutes later and was able to confirm **Peaceful Dove** by its bluish face and “scalloping” on the neck and shoulders. I was surprised that it has been reported to eBird only from 6 locations in the COG Aol this year, and not since early March. I have occasionally recorded them locally before, but not for many years, though they have been regularly reported from Bibaringa not that far away.

The **Diamond Dove**, which I was able to rule out, has not been reported in the ACT so far this year. On 16 April Kym Bradley posted a very short video of a call she thought may be from a **Bar-shouldered Dove**. While this was confirmed, the location remains unclear to me other than that it was from a very bushy area. There are no records in the COG Aol in 2021 of this even rarer dove on the eBird Australia Map.

A **Barn Owl** was reported at the ANBG on 22 April by Deb and Rod Ralph. While it appears many mice survived the floods, the closest report to the ACT on the eBird Australia map over the period is from Yarragong north-west of Forbes, still nearly 250 km away. So, it still appears it would be some time before there is an influx of this species, if indeed it happens given the dropping temperatures. There were no reports of the **Black-shouldered Kite** in the COG Aol over the period, the nearest record being to the west of Boorowa about 100 km to the NW.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from the Cotter Bend area on 13 April, as well as from Stony Creek NR on 13 and 16 April. A **Major Mitchell's Cockatoo** was reported from Cotter Reserve on 14 April, about 8 km west of Coombs Pond from where one has been reported earlier this year. A **Budgerigar** in natural colours was reported on 14 April on the Naas Road at Apollo Road. In the last week of the period single **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 3 locations, mostly from Callum Brae NR, from where a hybrid with the much more widespread **Rainbow Lorikeet** was reported on 21 April.

A **Blue-faced Honeyeater** was reported from the ANU on 9 April, and between 31 March and 10 April up to 3 **Scarlet Honeyeaters** were reported by many observers from the ANBG. Single male **Scarlet Honeyeaters** were also reported from 3 locations between 2-15 April, initially from Margaret Robertson's garden in Giralang, then from the Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla NR, and finally from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR.

Of the birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for continuing into 2021, between 3-18 April up to 3 **Jacky Winters** were reported by many observers at Namadgi Visitors Centre, with 1 and then 2 birds reported from another known location, Naas Road at Apollo Road on 8 and 18 April, respectively. Up to four **Hooded Robins** were also reported by many observers from the latter location from 3 April, with only a single report of one bird at Namadgi NP Visitors Centre on 7 April, but with 2 birds seen while the K2C surveyors were having lunch in the woolshed at the Scottsdale Reserve on 11 April. Finally, compared with the number of locations in March, **Restless Flycatchers** have been reported from only 3 locations, with 1-2 birds up to 7 April recorded at the known one, Nelanglo TSR north of Gundaroo. The other 2 were close together, one from Tuggeranong Marsh on 2 April, and then one was heard at the nearby bus depot on Scollay St Greenway on 4 April. Both of these are within a well-known winter spot for this species.

Reports of breeding have continued over the period, including the late **Brush Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** records mentioned above. However, none rival the remarkable **Eastern Koel** breeding season which may be summarised as follows:

- My near final count of **Eastern Koel** fledglings/juveniles for the season is around 365, of which over 320 were definitely different and the remainder possibly so. This is close to four times as many as any previous season.
- My personal tally is 32 fledglings counted over a very long local season of over 3.5 months, far longer than any previously. Of these, 23 were determined to be new/different, and another 9 possibly new/different. Twenty six (close to three times as many as in any previous seasons) were observed within the area in Chapman/Rivett I have covered in 8 previous seasons.
- The earliest fledgling in Canberra was reported on 31 October, and the earliest nestling in the second half of November 2020, both earlier than in any previous season, particularly the former.
- However, it was the late breeding season which was particularly impressive, with around half of the fledglings/juveniles first observed from the start of the last week in February, and at least 5 first observed in April. One in Higgins was last seen still begging on 20 April, one in Macgregor on 21 April, and the one in Dunlop was still calling and sitting in the sun in the early morning of 24 April with two Red Wattlebirds still in close attendance (also soaking up some rays). All three easily break the latest previous record of a fledgling seen on 6 April 2011.
- Previously I have only ever had one local fledgling in March (one heard on 1 March), but from 22 February to the end of March I had 15 different local fledgling/juvenile **Eastern Koels**, with one fledgling still seen in my garden on 3 April, and another probably different one on 5 April.
- However, on 18 April a near neighbour showed me a dead juvenile Koel in some bushes at the edge of his property. He said he had first seen it about a week before. It was not fresh but not too badly decomposed, so fitted being seen around 10-11 April, 5-6 days after my previous latest sighting.
- In summary, it has been the longest and most productive **Eastern Koel** season ever, with a male first reported on 25 September, and the last fledgling/juvenile observed on 24 April, a full 7 months later.

Again only a few reports of mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have come to my attention during the period. In fact it has been very noticeable over the past weeks how quiet many of the areas we routinely visit have been, despite the still seeming excellent conditions. So please continue to look out for this autumn phenomenon, especially for the unexpected species often quietly feeding in amongst all the activity. Watch out too for the signs of birds that gather together in single species flocks. I have no reports of these over the period and have yet to see flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** or **Corellas** on the verges or median strips in the areas I visit. I also have very little information on roosts or roost flight activity for the period, except that numbers of the **Common Myna** roosting numbers in my GBS site have halved from their peak, with another roost formed about 250 m away.

Finally on 9 April Ian Fraser was surprised his local **Southern Boobook** was calling for quite a while the night before, somewhere over near the Duffy shops. He had not heard it for a while, nor would really have expected to. Interestingly the eBird Australia map shows how relatively few sightings there are for this species so far in 2021, possibly because they do not often get onto lists done during daylight hours. While there is only one record in Weston Creek, and only 1 from Woden, both were heard calling while it was dark, and both are from the past month. There is also a recent similar cluster of calling after dark from 5 locations in north-west Belconnen, with 8 such records from the one in Higgins between 26 March and 13 April.

Please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the altitudinal migrants still to arrive, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any late autumn breeding activity. Please also continue to keep a special look out for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** and **Hooded Robin**. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, posting on the COG 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.

Jack Holland

Committee news

Owing to the unavailability of several members, the committee meeting scheduled for 22 April was postponed for a week.

As mentioned last month, the committee has approved a new copyright policy relating to photos, videos and other material provided to COG for use on the website and in its other publications. The text of the policy is available here – <http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/acknowledgements/>. Anyone whose photos or other material are included on the website is asked to read the policy and contact cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au before 30 June 2021.

Neil Hermes *President* Alison Mackerras *Minutes Secretary*

Publications for Sale

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

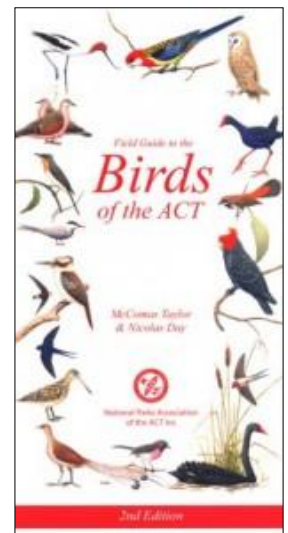
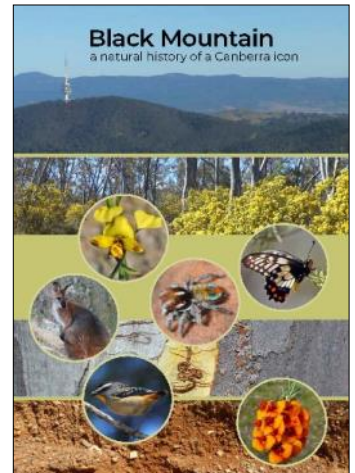
Members' Price: \$30

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 hand hygiene

DO NOT ATTEND if you have any cold or flu symptoms

Sunday 9 May – Goulburn

This outing, slightly further afield than our usual day trips, will visit the Goulburn Wetlands and the Marsden Weir. At the wetlands, there are ponds which attract a variety of waterbirds, and COG member Frank is a very regular volunteer there. The Marsden Weir is on the Wollondilly River, and there is a walking track along the river. Over 90 species have been seen at the weir and waterworks reserve, and over 130 at the wetlands. Numbers limited to 20 participants. Please bring lunch and the usual water, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat.

Registration is essential, to Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com; please provide your name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Meet at 8am at the National Library carpark for carpooling (carpark on the corner, across from Questacon). There is free parking there at weekends. Suggested petrol contribution \$7 per passenger.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 22 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

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

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

Note that the aim of the walk is to introduce you to **bird-watching, not bird photography, so please leave your camera at home.**

Anthony Overs

Sunday 23 May – Scott Nature Reserve, Mulloon

Description: Scott Nature Reserve is in the Mulloon area, south of the Kings Highway, approximately halfway between Bungendore and Braidwood. It covers an area of 151 ha. NSW NPWS has given permission to COG to visit the Reserve. It is renowned as a stronghold of the threatened **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** as the Black Sheoak is prominent there. The Reserve is rarely visited by birders.

eBird hotspots: none yet. I have nominated the Reserve as a hotspot.

Meeting time and place: **08:30 am** at the car park of Mick Sherd Oval, Gibraltar Street, Bungendore: 235.254229, 149.444036

Walking distance: 7 km approx.

Degree of difficulty: moderate to difficult as it commences and ends with climbing over a gate and 1 km of bush-bashing. The rest is on a good track.

End time (approx.): 12:30 pm

What to bring: water & morning tea

Numbers limited: yes

Name of leader: David McDonald

Registration is essential at email 14mar21@canberrabirds.org.au, or phone/text the leader on 0416 231 890 - please provide your name and mobile phone number, as well as an emergency contact name and number.

Sunday 30 May – Mullanggari Grasslands NR

Description: The reserve is 160 hectares and includes native and exotic pasture and endangered Temperate Grassland. There is Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy woodland on the north and west ridges. Highlights have included **Superb Parrot, Stubble Quail, Brown Songlark, Australasian Pipit and Eurasian Skylark.**

eBird hotspots: Mullanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 9.00am at the Newsome Street entry in Franklin via Well Station Drive off Gungahlin Drive or Flemington Road, then Hoskins St through to Gwen Meredith Loop. Sturdy boots and gaiters are recommended due to long grass, grass seeds and thistles.

Walking distance: 5 km, a medium to hard walk.

Time ending: 12.30 pm.

What to bring: water, morning tea and something waterproof to sit on.

Participants must register with the leader, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Numbers limited: yes, maximum of 20.

Leader and contact details: Bill Graham graham.br63@grapevine.com.au. Participants must register with the leader, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Saturday 12 June – Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve -Superb Lyrebird surveys

Since the January 2003 bushfires Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join them for a morning's survey. They are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8.00am at the Reserve car park to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004.

Register with Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au) MOB 0418679 847, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Sunday 20 June – The Pound, Kowen Forest

The Pound is a fascinating area of woodland, deep in the 'seahorse's snout' - that is, the far east of the ACT. It is a small TSR on a disused section of the Kings Highway, with a nice selection of bushland birds, including thornbills, honeyeaters and (possibly) sittellas. Mixed feeding flocks are a possibility. So far, eBird lists 50 species from there, and we may add to that list.

Numbers limited to 20 participants. Please bring morning tea and the usual water, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat. We will be walking off-track, but through very light understory.

Registration is essential, to David at david.dedenczuk@gmail.com (or 0417 222 154); please provide your name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

From the Canberra direction on the Kings Highway, take the Sparrow Hill Road into Kowen Forest, and drive to the carpark end of the road. **Meet there at 8am.**

David Dedenczuk

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Field Trip Reports

Thursday 1 to Monday 5 April – Easter camp on private property near Wanganella



Shearers' Quarters, Easter camp near Wanganella

Kathy Walter

Twenty-five COG members and their families joined the Easter Camp this year based at the old shearers' quarters on a private property via Wanganella, about 60km north of Deniliquin. We were joined by the property owner John Nevinson, a keen birder himself, as we visited various semi-arid habitats around the property, as well as various woodland, scrublands, dry forests and wetlands afield in the Wanganella area, around Deniliquin, and at the Mathoura Reedbeds and Gulpa Creek forest in the Murray Valley National Park. The weather was lovely – hot days to 32-33 deg, mild nights and generally calm conditions.

In all, 115 bird species were seen by the group over the long weekend – a very good tally considering that the recent rains were very patchy across the area, with John's property itself receiving only 11mm. The highlight target bird was a male **Plains Wanderer** found while spotlighting on foot by John in a record time of about 15 minutes. Old hands were prepared for the usual couple of hours pacing and torch-sweeping around the grassland paddocks and were most surprised to be back at camp so early.

John's house and dam area gave us good views of a pair of resident **Barn Owls**, a **Southern Boobook**, **White-backed Swallows** and, for a lucky few, two **Black Falcons**. The surrounding paddocks had dozens of **Banded Lapwing** and many **Red Kangaroos**. Woodland and grassland areas gave us other target inland species such as **Chestnut-rumped Thornbill**, a pair of **Major Mitchell's Cockatoos**, **Bluebonnets**, **Brown Treecreepers**, **Purple-backed** and **White-winged Fairywrens**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Singing**, **Spiny-cheeked** and **Striped Honeyeaters**, **Yellow-throated Miners**, **White-fronted Chats**, **Black-faced Woodswallows** and **Pied Butcherbirds**. Phil Maher's re-vegetated woodland patches around Wanganella were impressive in the flora planted, and productive for birds, butterflies and reptiles.



A bit of concern about rumours of house mice moving south proved to be unfounded. A few were seen spotlighting in the grassland, but only one caused a little trouble at camp. Two lucky folks sighted a **Letter-winged Kite** early on the drive home, a great addition to the wide variety of raptors seen in numbers, particularly **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, **Nankeen Kestrels**, **Black** and **Whistling Kites**, and **Brown Falcons**.

Plains Wanderer

Sue Lashko



Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *David Cook*, **Boobook Owl** *Marcus Hellyer*, **Our host John and his dog May** *Sue Lashko*, **COG members and their families** *Marcus Hellyer*, **Yellow Rosella** *Marcus Hellyer*, **Banded Lapwing** *David Cook*



Greater Bluebonnet David Cook, **Major Mitchell Cockatoo** David Cook, **Black-faced Woodswallow** Marcus Hellyer, **Red-capped Robin** David Cook, **Red-capped Robin** Marcus Hellyer, **Plains Wanderer** Marcus Hellyer, **Plains Wanderer** David Cook



Pallid Cuckoo *Marcus Hellyer*, **Crested Shrike-tit** *David Cook*, **Singing Honeyeater** *David Cook*, **Striped Honeyeater** *David Cook*, **COG members and their families** *Marcus Hellyer*, **White-fronted Chat** *Marcus Hellyer*

From a social perspective, we again enjoyed communal nibbles and drinks each evening before dinner. In addition, John was given a second bite at an 80th birthday celebration with a communal bring-a-plate meal – confirming the culinary skills of all. Many thanks for the conviviality of all participants, the generosity of those sharing their knowledge on flora and fauna, our younger members for keen eyes and enthusiasm, to John for hosting us again, to Sandra Henderson for organising the camp. My personal thanks to whoever organised the beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and to the **Pied Butcherbird** which serenaded me awake every morning.

Julie McGuinness

Saturday 3 April - Narrabundah Hill

Twenty three members and guests, including couples from Sydney and Melbourne, joined me on this outing on a lovely still, fine, warming up morning. We walked for about 1.5 km along the northern and about one third of the western boundaries of this reserve, returning by the same route. The aim was to observe the honeyeater migration, as well as to find any altitudinal migrants and any late departing summer migrants.

The weather was ideal for migrating honeyeaters and already at the start we had quite a large flock moving over, but unfortunately too quick and high for most of the participants to see them. We then saw few, if any, until we reached the known, around 100 m wide, flight path/route on the western fence line a few hundred metres from the north-west corner. Here most (around 80%) of the over 800 birds we counted for the morning were seen coming through/over in waves rather than a continuous stream during the 30 minutes or so we had morning tea there. While this was well below the conservative 2500 birds we saw in April 2019, it is the second highest number we have counted of the 6 trips I've now led here around this time since 2014.

Interestingly all were **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and no **White-naped Honeyeaters** were confirmed as travelling with them, despite some other observers noting them also moving through over the past few days. A few other species did seem to be caught up with them, including **Silvereyes**, **Red Wattlebirds** and **Rufous Whistler**.

A feature of the morning was the paucity of small birds, with no noticeable large mixed feeding flock observed, though on a couple of occasions a number of species were in loose association. This included good views of the **Striated Pardalote**, **Weebills**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, with **Grey Fantail** numbers well down on previous years, as I had been noticing in my local area. We did get good views of some of the larger, less common birds such as the **Satin Bowerbird** (all females/immatures) and **Grey Butcherbird**. Four **Gang-gang Cockatoos** were seen flying through, and a number of **Australian King-Parrots** were also seen.

Late departing summer migrants included a couple of **Rufous Whistlers** (as noted above), and a single **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, whereas altitudinal migrants included (surprisingly) only a single immature/female **Golden Whistler**, of which we all had good views. Tina photographed a male **Scarlet Robin** when she returned to the morning tea spot to retrieve her sunglasses – they had been very slow so far to arrive this year. Lastly, there was a surprise **Australasian Grebe**, still in breeding plumage, on the small dam where we had gathered to see the honeyeaters come through low. This is the first one I have seen locally for several years.

The total of 39 species recorded was second lowest in the seven trips to date (the low of 34 species was in 2018), and compares with the between 42 and 50 we have counted on previous occasions. Participants very much enjoyed the outing including the shade along the northern fence, and they kept together as well as in any other trip I've lead in many years. Special thanks go to Steve Read and Lindell Emerton for keeping the bird list and entering this into eBird – this is always a difficult task with so many participants seeing and calling out different birds they see.

Jack Holland

Sunday 18 April – Gorooyarroo NR

A group of over 30 participants assembled at the Gorooyarroo NR carpark in overcast, cool conditions. It was great to see families and people new to birdwatching in attendance in addition to regular COG members.

We set off on the main walking path through the reserve. There were low levels of bird activity throughout the morning, and the dull light was not ideal for viewing birds. Despite this, we managed to record 36 species of bird and we did particularly well with parrots and cockatoos, recording not only our target species for the day, **Superb Parrots**, but also **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, **Galahs**, **Little Corellas**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Australian King-Parrots**, **Crimson Rosellas**, **Eastern**

Rosellas, and **Red-rumped Parrots**. It was also pleasing to see small insectivores using areas of revegetated trees and shrubs, such as **Weebill**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Brown Thornbill**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Grey Fantail**, and **Superb Fairy-wren**. Other highlights from the morning were a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** at their roost, and **Common Bronzewing**s.

Aside from the birds, we also saw Eastern Grey Kangaroos, heard Verreaux's Tree Frogs and Common Eastern Froglets, saw Meadow Argus, Cabbage Whites, Common Browns, Common Grass-blues and encountered quite a few Pasture Day-moths. Many thanks to Lia Battison for keeping the bird list and submitting it to eBird.

Suzi Bond



Rainbow Lorikeet

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 21 April - Gungahlin Hill

Fifteen members and guests attended this walk led by Margaret, with 25 bird species recorded, but it was the beautiful woodland which was most admired. The gums have shed their old bark and the gleaming white new bark was stunning. The bird of the morning was the **Crimson Rosella**, which were numerous and noisy. At one spot, while watching a male **Galah** sitting outside a hollow (which his mate seemed to be refurbishing), a **Rainbow Lorikeet** was spotted peering out of a nearby hollow. Not far away, a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** was seen in another hollow, which seemed to have both front and back entrances.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 24 to Monday 26 April - Mallacoota

Seventeen members of COG spent the ANZAC Day long weekend in Mallacoota. Some members of the group started their birding on the way down on Friday, with a call in to Black Lake at Bibbenluke. This gave (*inter alia*) a huge number (estimated as 800) of **Grey Teal**, 18 **Australian Shelduck** and 45 **Pied Stilt**. Heading a little further south a **Cattle Egret** was observed in a paddock at Paddy's Flat. That evening, the team gathered for welcome drinks and introductions, at Angophora Drive.

The next morning our first walk was the beach starting at Bastion Point. We went along the beach to the mouth, quite wide and flowing very strongly. We looked across the dunes at the sand flats in the inlet. This revealed the expected species of waders, with some **Bar-tailed Godwits** in breeding plumage and one of the **Red-necked Stints** moving that way. **Double-banded Plovers** were evident (albeit without much band) and **Red-capped Plovers** were common.

The highlight of this walk occurred when a **Collared Sparrowhawk** was seen flying next to the caravan park along Develings Inlet. This is a nice record on its own, but this got bumped up by the bird being followed by 2 **Grey Goshawks** (one of each morph. All up, we scored 39 bird species on [this walk https://tinyurl.com/jvj62sed](https://tinyurl.com/jvj62sed).

We then drove through the town and walked along the lakeside path, checking the birds on Seagull Island, and along to the marsh near Fisheries Jetty. A few **Royal Spoonbills** were lurking in the lagoon and 5 **White-fronted Chats** perched on the usual branch in the marsh. (Neither Southern Emu-wrens nor Lewin's Rail obliged.) We saw 31, mainly common, species [in the area https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86204345](https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86204345).

After lunch we went to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. We ended up recording 43 species on [this walk https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86210503](https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86210503). As we arrived 2 **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** were seen; one was a quite dark juvenile and the other a very spiffy adult. The other raptor highlights were a group of 5 **Whistling Kites** towards the end of the walk and a **Peregrine Falcon** which scared off a small flock of **Common Starlings**.

As always with this site the surrounding woodland provided quite a good list of bush birds. The number of mosquitos possibly explained the range of insectivores seen including **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. I was quite surprised to see an **Olive-backed Oriole** (there are eBird records in all months except July but the number of observations is much lower from March to August).

Waterbirds are the main reason for visiting the site, which is the only regular location in the area for **Hardhead**, **Australian Shelduck**, **Australasian Shoveler**, **Australasian Grebe** and **Musk Duck**.

The next morning we went to Shipwreck Creek along about 8 kilometres of good dirt road and 7 kilometres of ungraded, potholed track. Our first walk <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86293545> was to the east of the campground. The initial walk through the regenerating woodland was very disappointing for birds. A couple of **Grey Fantails** were all we logged here. On getting in to the heathland the Grass Tree (mainly *Xanthorrhoea resinosa*) remnant flower spikes provided useful perches for several **Jacky Winters**. Looking out to sea, good numbers of **Crested Terns** and a few **Australasian Gannets** were observed.

After taking a side track to the clifftops we recorded the most unexpected bird with 3 **Brown Quail** flushing immediately behind us. There are only 12 previous records of the species in the area.

A late morning tea was interrupted by some members hearing a **Scarlet Robin** calling. A search did not reveal it although a member who did not come on the next walk did see the bird very close to the day use area.

We next headed off to the Western Heath. Faint hopes of seeing **Southern Emu-wren**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** and **Ground Parrot** in this area were not met. We recorded 14 species <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86300767>. The Heath was almost devoid of birds although a female **Flame Robin** was seen and photographed along the way. Back at the cars a bonus was a flock of 5 **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**.

Back towards town, we parked at Davis Beach for our final walk for the day. We recorded 24 species on this walk <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86303785> with **Crescent Honeyeater** (feeding in *Banksia marginata*) being the least common species seen. Our target species was the **Hooded Plover** family at the mouth of the Betka River, with three seen, 2 adults and an immature.

The final morning we gathered at the caravan park for a drive to Gipsy Point. While the group was gathering **Cattle Egret** was seen in a nearby paddock.

The track along the Peninsula at Gipsy Point had been cleared recently although the most recent storm had blown a couple of trees over. We recorded 32 species on this walk <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86388001>. As would be expected most of these had already been seen in the trip with **Rose Robin** being the "best bird".

We finally drove to Genoa to walk through the village (hamlet?) hoping – unsuccessfully - to record Emu grazing on the flats. We recorded 23 species here <https://ebird.org/australia/checklist/S86390972> adding **Grey Butcherbird** and **House Sparrow** to the trip list.

That walk finished the organised events and most people headed for home. Overall 97 species (and 1 spuh) were recorded according to COG rules which tally taxa seen on group events. Using another protocol to include all birds seen by members of the group in the Mallacoota area, I totalled **106 species!** I think that is a much better measure of how well the group contributed to knowledge of the birds in the area at the end of April 2021.

A full species list is in <https://tinyurl.com/44vrmvkr>. The species without a number are those recorded outside formal events. A second worksheet in that file lists the unrecorded species for which there are more than 10 previous records in April. I am **very** surprised that we didn't record Superb Lyrebird or Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Martin Butterfield



Woodland Surveys – autumn 2021 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 28 March, a perfect weather morning, fine, clear and not a hint of breeze, after indifferent weather/rain in the previous fortnight. Disappointingly, the number of birds was on the low side, with all the sites, except for site 10 (on the ridge at the northern end of the reserve), having fewer than 10 species in and around sites (within 100 metres). Site 10 had a very large mixed feeding flock moving through, with 10 species in the 50 metres radius plot survey, including **Varied Sittellas**, three **thornbill** species, both **pardalotes**, **Weebills**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Grey-Shrike-thrush**, and **White-throated Treecreepers**. There were another 10 species recorded outside the site (50-100 metres). This is unusual for the dry forest site.

Some of the seasonal migrants were still around, including a few **Noisy Friarbirds**, both **gerygones**, and a few **Rufous Whistlers**. There were signs of cooler weather coming, with movement of groups of **Striated Pardalotes** and some **Spotted Pardalotes**. Small groups of **Superb Parrots** were around the reserve area from Forde to the Woolshed environs and were recorded in several of the survey sites. There were no **Scarlet Robins** recorded (again), very few water-based species, and no movement of small **honeyeaters**. **Grey Currawong** was a nice sighting at sites on the north-east side of the reserve, where they are often recorded on various bird surveys. The total species count was only 39, the equal lowest autumn count with March 2003.

Newline

Sue Lashko carried out the survey on the first fine day after several wet days; it began under light cloud but the sun came out about 8.30am, which brought out the **Superb Fairywrens** in particular. The paddocks are even more weed-infested than they were for the previous survey, with lush South African love grass, blackberries, boxthorn and broad-leaved weeds of many types, as well as dense stands of drying-off saffron thistles. It is possible that some sites will be inaccessible next spring.

The migration of **Noisy Friarbirds** was very evident with 135 birds recorded, included one flock of 19 in a site and another of 112 birds on the transect. A few other migrants were still present, including **Sacred Kingfisher**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. **Rainbow Lorikeets** were recorded in 6 of the 9 sites and were certainly much noisier than the **Noisy Miners** which were sitting quietly until a **Collared Sparrowhawk** appeared. Other birds of interest were a **Brown Quail** in the front western paddock, a flock of 9 **Little Ravens** and just 2 **Double-barred Finches**.

A total of 34 species was recorded .

Goorooyarroo South NR

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the autumn survey on Sunday 28 March, in perfect weather although it was a little soggy underfoot. Vegetation was looking lush although quite a lot of this was weeds, and there was plenty of water in dams and creeks. A total of 45 bird species was recorded, a reasonable total for autumn, with 34 of these noted during 10 minute survey counts.

Amongst the more interesting finds were a **Scarlet Robin** calling at site 9, **Australian Owlet-Nightjar** heard at site 8, a female **Brown Goshawk** at site 5, and incidental records of **Stubble Quail** (2 flushed) and **Common Bronzewing**. **Mistletoebirds** and **Speckled Warblers** were seen in a couple of places, as were **Superb Parrots**, including a flock of nine flying over site 5. Of winter visitors, **Golden Whistlers** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** were recorded in small numbers. Summer visitors were in short supply with just a handful of **Rufous Whistlers** and a **Noisy Friarbird**, along with a flock of 5 **Dusky Woodswallows** passing west over site 1. Small bird activity was largely confined to the more heavily wooded sites in the south of the reserve. There was no sign of honeyeater migration.

Mt Majura NR

Kathy Walter and John Goldie conducted the surveys on 16, 18 and 19 March under cloudy dull weather. Birds were a bit sparse with only one site delivering a nice mixed flock. This included 3 **Speckled Warblers**, numerous **Striated** and **Spotted**

Pardalotes, Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous Whistler, Striated and Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairywren and Silvereyes. Highlight for the survey was a juvenile **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. A total of 30 species was recorded over all nine sites.

Majura Training Area (formerly Majura Field Firing Range)

Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan surveyed on 30 March delaying the start until 8.00 am as it was still daylight saving. It was a lovely morning, temperate, sunny, and with little breeze. The range looked as good as it has ever been, with all the bodies of water filled to the brim, and the ground cover very lush, with little sign of the overgrazing that was apparent in the last few years. There weren't too many roos about, except for a mob of about 30 at site 4, and a brief view of possibly a red-necked wallaby at site 7. There were no water birds seen except for **Australian Wood Ducks** and a lone **Australasian Grebe** on Mick's Dam (site 9). This is a little unusual. They recorded 34 species at the sites, and only 6 other species between sites: **Southern Whiteface** (unusual for this area), **Wedge-tailed Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Superb Fairywren, Australian Wood Duck** (about 12) and **Laughing Kookaburra**.

The range of species was to be expected at this time of year, and there were flocks of little brown birds at 4 of the sites, including all the local thornbills (except Yellow), **Western and White-throated Gerygones, Speckled Warbler, and Grey Fantail** (but no Silvereyes). Some **Noisy Friarbirds** were observed, and one group of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** was heard passing through. The only other honeyeaters were a solitary **Red Wattlebird**, a few **Noisy Miners** and a couple of **Eastern Spinebills**. A few **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were observed, and one **Grey Shrike-thrush** was heard. There was a single observation of 2 **Scarlet Robins. Spotted Pardalotes** were heard at most sites, but few were seen.

There were 60 **Common Starlings** at the Grenade Range at the southern end of the MTA not far from the airport. There were not many parrots or cockatoos, but most of the local common species were observed here and there. **Australian Magpies** were observed at most sites, and there was one observation of a **Magpie-lark**. A group of **White-winged Choughs** was heard at one site, as well as a single **Rufous Whistler**.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz and Robin Hide did the survey on 24 March, the first day after the rain event. Conditions were reasonable with few clouds in the morning, but clouds closed in later, and wind varied from light to moderate with some wind gusts. Small birds were notably rare, and no mixed feeding flocks were encountered. The most widespread species were **Striated Pardalote** (8 sites), **Crimson Rosella** (6) and **Noisy Miner** (5). The number of species per site ranged from 4 to 11. Species of interest included **White-throated and Western Gerygone, Rufous Whistler**, a flock of 15 **Superb Parrots** arriving in the morning and dispersing across a wider area, a flock of 16 **Dusky Woodswallows**, several **Common Bronzewing**s and 1 **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Two older **Noisy Miner** chicks were still constantly begging. At sites 24 species were recorded, with an additional 8 between sites.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds did the survey over the mornings of 5 & 6 April, after a delay due to access issues after the recent rainfall event. Fortunately, the vehicle/walking track had been slashed for most of the way to the woodland and the ground had dried sufficiently, but the dense, dry saffron thistle (and other tall weeds) over much of the site was quite difficult to walk through. Long gaiters and a corflute material 'shield' had to be used to avoid being spiked/scratched. Birds were not abundant except for **Common Starlings**. The total species count was 36, reasonable for autumn (autumn 2020 had 22 species, the lowest ever). Most migrant species had left, but there was a **Rufous Whistler** around and a couple of small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** moving around. Many of the sites had small numbers of **Striated Pardalotes** and **Grey Fantails** moving through. Highlights were a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, a small group of **Varied Sittellas** and a **Golden Whistler** at site 5 deep in the woodland, and an **Australian Owlet-Nightjar** heard at site 2 near the grasslands edge. There were quite a few Meadow Argus butterflies in the grasslands on the way out.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battison surveyed on Monday 29 March. It was very quiet, with the most productive site producing only 8 species. There was evidence of the honeyeater migration, with flocks of up to 20 flying through after 9am. Just a few **White-naped Honeyeaters** accompanied the **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**. Water was flowing in several of the gullies. No mixed feeding flocks were encountered. The most exciting things that occurred were flushing a **Common Bronzewing** and hearing an **Australian Raven** making a noise that sounded like a cough! In all, 16 species were observed in sites, and a further 16 in between, which is down a little on the average autumn count for Tuggeranong Hill.

Rural Leasehold near Mt Tennent

Julie McGuinness did the survey on 28 March on a mild, calm clear morning. Substantial rain a few days earlier had left the ground still very wet underfoot, dams full, and creek lines and gullies still running. As with the previous season's survey the grassy understorey was still prolific, and there were waist high saffron thistles still prevalent around site 2. Limited species diversity was seen, with only 18 species being detected within survey sites and 20 between sites, with a total of 28 species in total, most in small numbers only. However, several species were seen in unusually high numbers for this property – 25 **Galahs**, 35 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (flying south-east) and a mixed flock of approximately 40 **Eastern** and **Crimson Rosellas**. The only seasonal migrant and/or species of conservation concern detected was a **Western Gerygone** which is very unusual.

New Places: April 2021

Sandra Henderson

Black Lake

Where is it: Bibbenluke (near Bombala).

This was a recommended stopping place on the way to Mallacoota recently. It is apparently one of a pair of lakes (the other is Green Lake, which we didn't visit). The end of the boat ramp is a considerable distance from the water's edge indicating the lake is very low at present. A large number of waterbirds were on the water, including **Pied Stilts**, **Shelducks**, **Chestnut Teal**, **Black Swans** and **Australasian Shovelers**. Over 800 **Grey Teal** were present. A large number of **Black-fronted Dotterels** were spotted on the edge of the lake. With the sun in our eyes, and some distance yet to travel, we did not attempt to walk around the lake, but it will be on the list of places to visit next time I venture down that way.

Oaks Estate River Corridor Heritage Walk

Where is it: at the end of River St in Oaks Estate.

I'm surprised I had not visited this before. It's a great walk along the Molonglo, near its confluence with the Queanbeyan River. Most of the walk is in the ACT, but by going under the railway bridge I crossed into NSW. I continued past the bridge to have a look at the Riverside Cemetery, which has been severely affected by flooding in the past. I saw 43 species before getting to the cemetery, none of them rare or unusual, but a good list nonetheless. It appears to be a track well liked by walkers, and it was interesting to see the height of debris from the recent floods - much of it well above the track I was walking on. There are a number of signs about the history of the area, and marking a couple of the former fords across the river. At the cemetery the flowering eucalypts were full of **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Red Wattlebirds**. The May Wednesday Walk will be in this location.

Namadgi National Park. Rendezvous Creek

I've stopped at the carpark for this walk in the past, but never walked the track. A very pleasant walk with a loop starting about half way, it follows the creek, which at one point has some huge boulders in it, so it is very picturesque. There is good birding close to the carpark. Species seen included **Diamond Firetail**, **Flame Robin**, both pardalotes, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**.

Tuggeranong Hill - Handasyde St entry

After a short walk uphill, there is a firetrail heading around the base of the hill. I headed left, following the trail for about 1km, then took a narrow foot track leading uphill. This took me to a dam, where a mixed flock included **Silvereyes**, **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, a **Golden Whistler** and **Grey Fantails**. There were some wonderful views, and the fire trail passes the house which has been in the news recently for having a spectacular cubbyhouse in the back garden. Quite amazing.

Update on Reed Warbler Study

Michael Guppy

In 2019, Sarah and I started a project on Reed Warblers in the Brindabella valley. We only managed one trip in the 2019/20 season due to the bushfires and Covid. We have just done our last field trip for the 2020/21 season, so can report on our findings so far.

The study site comprises four separate reed beds (*Phragmites*) which cover an area of approximately 9,500 square metres. We went out to the site once a month for three nights, September 2020 - February 2021 inclusive, and then in April 2021 to see if any birds were still on the site. On the first morning of each field trip, we walked the reed beds boustrophedon, and we are confident that we found all the nests on each visit. Cameras were put on the nests we found, to be collected on the next trip. We then put up nine mist nets which covered all the four reed beds. The next morning we opened the nets and keep them open for most of the day (unless we caught the same bird in the same net twice, in which case that net was furred). The nets were taken down at the end of the second day. All the birds were sexed, measured, weighed, colour-banded and released. We found that the sex of the birds can only be determined by the presence of a brood patch (a female) or by a bird being associated with a known female at a nest on camera (a male). We now can identify the male at a nest, as the males obviously guard the nest (without sitting on it) while the female is absent. But 59% of the birds we caught were not able to be sexed.

A summary of the data so far is given below.

1. We banded 9 birds in 2019, and retrapped 6 of these in 2020/21.
2. Three of the six 2019 birds that were retrapped in 2020/21, were again retrapped during the 2020/21 season.
4. We banded a total of 39 birds in 2020/21. 4 males, 12 females and 23 sex unknown.
5. Out of that 39, 32 (82%), were not retrapped (1 male, 10 female and 21 unknown).
6. Cameras were put on 15 active nests (some nests showed no activity on the camera). Nine birds were definitely associated with a nest (5 males, 3 females and 1 unknown), 5 were possibly associated with a nest (4 females, 1 unknown). Of the retrapped birds banded in 2019, 1 (a male) was definitely associated with a nest, and 1 (unknown) was possibly associated with a nest.
7. There were 8 nests for which we identified no female, and there are 8 females (with brood patches) for which we have no nest.
8. There were minimally 6 pairs according to the concurrent nest data (i.e. the maximum number of nests that were simultaneously active).
9. We come up with 5 pairs simply looking at what we think are pairs at nests on the cameras.
10. Seven birds were associated with at least three nests, one bird was associated with four nests, and one male and one female had three nests with the same partner.
11. All repeat nests for which the individuals were identified, were in the same reed bed, within a few meters of each other.
12. We heard no Reed Warblers on our last field trip in April, and caught none in the nets. We are as confident as one can be for a negative finding, that there were no Reed Warblers on the site on April 18, 2021.

We will do at least one more season, starting in September 2021. There are two unanswerable questions which arise from this season's data. Where do these birds go over the winter, and what was going on with the 82% of the birds banded in 2020/21 that were never caught again? But next season's data will tell us how many of the 2020/21 birds come back in 2021/22, whether they pair up with the same mate, and whether they nest in the same part of the reed beds as they did in 2020-21.

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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.

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2020-2021 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

N Hardy
L Aust
R Soroka (rejoining)
R Lones
Y Hallam-Walsh
B Palmer

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for June 2021 edition:

Wednesday 26 May 2021

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

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