



# Gang-gang

**OCTOBER 2021**

**Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.**

## **OCTOBER MEETING**

**Wednesday 13 October 2021  
7.30pm—virtual meeting**

Please note that, with the ACT lockdown due to the COVID outbreak announced on 12 August, COG meetings will be held online for the foreseeable future. Each month, COG members and guests will be able to log into these meetings through the same regular webinar link for COG Members Meetings:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/channel/COGMembersMeeting>.

This link is also available on the Home page of the COG website. Please do this around 10 minutes before the 7:30 pm start of the meeting, so that you can enter your name and e-mail address to join the Webinar.

Despite it being a virtual meeting, there will be two presentations as usual.

The first presentation will be by **McComas Taylor**, a keen bird-watcher in Canberra for over 40 years, and author of the ACT Bird Atlas and ACT Field Guide, on “The five ‘red’ robins.”

This will be a quick survey and comparison of five robins that you are likely (or less likely) to see in the Canberra area: Rose, Pink, Flame, Scarlet and Red-capped.

*Continued Page 2*

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

The weather over the 5 weeks from 25 August covered by this column has been quite changeable, with some fine warmer days interspersed with quite a few cooler ones, and with still some frosts. They were often windy days, and with some rain, including one significant event of over 30 mm early in the period. However, due to the continuing COVID lockdown restrictions, it has been more difficult than usual to analyse how this might have affected bird activity within the COG Area of Interest (Aoi). This has severely hampered birders’ movement to within their “local regions”, at least those from the ACT, while those in the neighbouring areas of NSW may have been able to be a bit more mobile at times.

Despite the incomplete coverage of the COG Aoi compared with usual, there do seem to have been enough local observations made to demonstrate the early arrival of at least some of our spring/summer migrants, though it has been more difficult to track the movement away of the winter altitudinal migrants, as detailed below.

*Continued Page 2*



**Red-backed Kingfisher**

*Shorty*

**Everyone welcome**

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## OCTOBER MEETING *continued from Page 1*

The main presentation will be by **Russell McGregor**, an adjunct professor of history at James Cook University, on “**The History of Birdwatching in Australia: A Bird’s Eye View.**”

In this talk, Russell will give a bird’s eye view over the history of birdwatching in Australia, from the beginning of the twentieth century to now. From field glasses to field guides, from the skinning kit to the camera, from notebooks to Facebook, the changes in birding over the last 120 years or so have been immense. He will look at what impels people to watch birds and how our ways of doing so have changed under the massive technological, economic, social and cultural shifts of modern times. Russell can’t cover everything in a short talk, so he will focus on three related themes: the dissociation of watching birds from collecting them; the rise of bird photography; and the evolution of the field guide in Australia.

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

An unexpected sighting which clearly garnered the most interest over the period was the **Red-backed-Kingfisher**. COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists this as a breeding vagrant, an inland species that appears here occasionally with, in the last 35 years, it being reported only in 2001, 2003 and 2008 to 2017. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website confirms it has been observed largely between October and January (so it’s a “spring/summer migrant”), but with a few records in September, March and May. I can find no records for it since on eBird Australia for the COG Aol.

The bird was first reported from Campbell Park by Putter T and Ferg Dale (both names with which I am not familiar) on 12 and 13 September, respectively. It has since been seen by many, many observers up to at least 28 September as it ranged roughly between the overflow car park and the cavaletti (horse gate). It was very confiding, allowing many excellent photographs which clearly showed its very extensive red back (a feature I have often had difficulty in discerning, particularly inland when trying to separate it from the more common **Sacred Kingfisher**), and often darting down to the ground to pick up prey such as spiders, etc, to then consume on a perch. As far as I can tell no-one seems to have reported it calling.

Given the amount of water available inland it is very surprising that a single bird would come to Canberra and stay here so long at this time. Amazingly on 25 September Shorty alerted me that there had been a post on Facebook that day of one photographed at Yass. So, two birds in the COG Aol is even more remarkable, given that the closest other report on eBird for September is from Lake Cargelligo 300 km to the northwest.

Of the inland species expected to arrive during September, the **White-winged Triller** has been reported from 4 locations, the first quite early on 5 September by David Dedenczuk on Isaacs Ridge. Surprisingly, there were no records between 13 and 28 September. A silent **Rufous Songlark** was first reported by Steve Read on 18 September at Bluetts Block, but there has been only one further report, from the Bungendore Sewage Treatment Plant, on 21 September. There have been no reports so far of the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow**. So please keep an eye out for these species; I expect numbers of them reaching the COG Aol to be much lower this year due to the wet inland conditions.

Of the other spring/summer migrants expected to arrive during September, five **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were first reported over Coombs on 12 September by Daniel Kurzawa. They were seen and heard flying in a north-westerly direction over pine forest just north of the Molonglo River. The only other sighting has been by Peter Miller of around 6 birds hawking for insects at Campbell Park on 21 September. The first **Dollarbird**, also early for the season, was reported by Sue Lashko at Palmerville Heritage Park, Evatt on 22 September. The first **Leaden Flycatcher**, a male, was reported by Karyn Cook on 24 September at Queanbeyan near the river, with a further male reported at North Mulligans on 26 September.

Just as this column was to be sent to the editors Mark Clayton posted that on the "Canberra Birders - Rare and Unusual Sightings" there was a record of an **Eastern Koel** from Narrabundah on 26 September. He noted the bird appeared to be suffering a bad dose of laryngitis but was still easily recognisable as a Koel.

Of the species which had arrived in August but for which there were only a few records, the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was reported from 15 locations over the period, the **Horsfield’s Bronze-cuckoo** from 9 locations, and the **Pallid Cuckoo** reported

from 17 locations. These are reasonable numbers for the latter two inland species given the conditions there. However, the surprise is reports of the **Brush Cuckoo** from 3 locations between 8 and 24 September. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website notes very few records for this month, though a few in August as well. It clearly is a very good season for the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which has been reported from about 45 locations over the period. This includes a pair photographed copulating by Kym Bradley on 2 September, as well the first record since at least 2004 in my GBS site in Chapman when on 18 September one collided with my window. Luckily after spending around 30 minutes recovering, it could fly away.

After arriving early, the **Sacred Kingfisher** has surprisingly been reported from only 7 further locations over the period. The **Latham's Snipe** has also been reported from just 4 locations during the period, and in surprisingly low numbers so far, the maximum being 8 birds at the Forde Pond–Horse Park Drive wetlands on 19 September. In contrast the **Fairy Martins** have been reported from about 20 locations.

While there were no reports of the **White-throated Gerygone** over the previous period, it has been recorded from about 35 locations since about 28 August, so like the **Western Gerygone**, reported from around 20 locations, it is now well established for this spring/summer. Likewise for the **Rufous Whistler**, which has been reported from over 50 locations, compared with just 5 in the previous period. This also applies to the **Yellow-faced, Fuscous and White-naped Honeyeaters, Noisy Friarbird, Dusky Woodswallow, Olive-backed Oriole, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Fantail, Mistletoebird and Tree Martin**, as well as the **Superb Parrot**, which was reported from a remarkable close to 80 locations, around 25 of these being south of the lake.

So, during October please keep a lookout for the species mentioned above which have only arrived so far in small numbers, or have yet to be



Rufous Songlark

Stuart Harris



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Good birding, good food

**2022**

**Wet Season Iron Range NP**

18 — 24 January 2022  
Prior 2 tours full

**The Gulf Country**

9 — 26 May 2022  
Cairns, Karumba, Burketown,  
Mt Isa, Winton

**Atherton Tablelands**

30 May — 4 June 2022

**Top End**

22 June — 5 July 2022  
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,  
Mitchell Plateau charters 6 July 2022

**Central Australia**

21 — 31 August 2022  
Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges,  
Yulara, Eridunda, Marla

**2023 tours**

**Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range**

May 2023

**Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range**

June 2023

**Pilbara WA**

July 2023

Contact Patricia Maher for itineraries.

[www.philipmaher.com](http://www.philipmaher.com)



reported, as well as the **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, the passage migrants the **Satin Flycatcher**, **Rufous Fantail** and **Common Cicadabird**, and the **Brown Songlark** and the **Horsfield's Bushlark**.

Of the birds that spend winter around Canberra, **Swift Parrots** have continued to be reported from Kambah/the top of Lake Tuggeranong, with the maximum being 35 birds on 30 August reported by Richard Allen. While numbers have gradually decreased, a single bird was still reported from there on 23 September, as well as 4 birds from Callum Brae NR on 21 September. They should all be on their return journey to Tasmania by now, so please keep an eye out for any late stayers of this species.

Of the species which move into Canberra and its surrounds in autumn/winter and move back to the mountains and other higher areas in spring, the **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** and **Golden Whistler** have still been recorded from over 20, 30 and 65 urban/peri-urban locations, respectively. Due to the COVID restrictions it is not possible to properly compare these to rural locations, but it does reflect that the latter is usually the slowest to leave. The **Scarlet Robin** was still reported from 12 urban/peri-urban locations, again the 21 total locations probably reflects the lack of birding opportunities in the rural areas, as it does for the **Flame Robin** reported from 6 such locations of a total of 16.

The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 14 locations, all of them urban/peri-urban with probably quite a few of them returning passage migrants. There were no reports again of the **Pink Robin** during the period. The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from just 4 locations in the period, all to the west or south of Canberra but east of the Murrumbidgee River, and with just one of them urban/peri-urban (Coolman Ridge). This compares with 15 such locations in August, so they clearly have largely moved away. There has been just a single report of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, a bird recorded at the Stringybark NR Queanbeyan on 11 September.

Please keep an eye out for the last of the altitudinal migrants mentioned above.

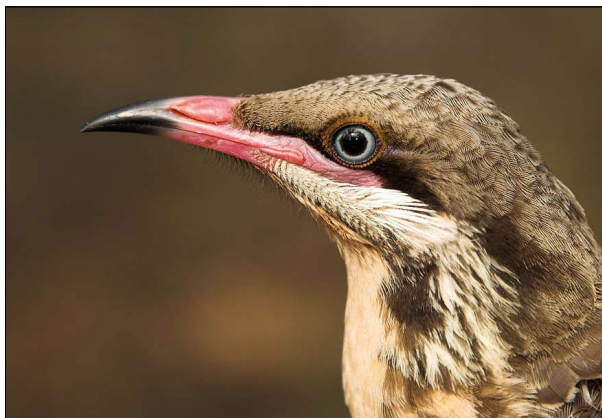
The most notable "Unusual" species for the period has been the **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, a species which often is observed by only one or two birders before it moves on. The one first reported at the Kama NR on 14 August stayed there till at least 17 September, a period of 5 weeks, a remarkable time for this species noted as "nomadic" in the 2018-2019 ABR. It was often with or near the related **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**. In the interim it was reported from 3 other locations (Callum Brae NR between 25 August and 10 September, with a late sighting on 27 September, Bruce Ridge NR on 5 September and Isaacs Ridge NR, Long Gully Road on 8 September). I understand photos taken suggest they were all different birds despite them all being of the dark morph.



White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike

Frank Antram

On 19 September Geoffrey Dabb investigated the loud THUMP on the window at sunrise and found an ex-**Painted Buttonquail** that he assumed must have been commuting south at some speed at about 5 m above ground level. I wondered where it had come from, expecting this to be either Callum Brae or Red Hill NR, based on records from mid-2019 to 2021 at these nearest sites, in the mistaken assumption that they don't fly far. However, Richard Allen pointed to September 2021 records from 3 sites that line up with Geoffrey's place, Campbell Park, Isaacs Ridge and Wanniasa Hills. That **Painted Buttonquail** can certainly travel long distances on the wing was clearly illustrated by the photo Julian Teh posted of one seen on a pelagic roughly 2 nautical miles off the coast of Sydney. This may explain the influx of this species over the period (see below).



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Julian Robinson

On 26 September a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** was reported by Michael Lenz, on behalf of butterfly expert Michael Braby, feeding in and later passing through North Lyneham that morning. Michael Lenz walked the area later that day, but failed to find the bird. The 2018-2019 ABR lists this as a non-breeding vagrant from inland districts for which there was one record in December that year, and

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previously at Gundaroo in 2010, and Michelago and Mt Ainslie in 2011. The eBird map also contain records at Lake George in 2017 and Wamboin in 2020.

**Plumed Whistling Ducks** were again reported only from the Bungendore area during the period, with a maximum of 9 from the Trucking Yard Lane Dam and 12 at the Bungendore Meadow Dam. **Australian Shelducks** were reported from 11 locations to the northwest, northeast and east of Canberra during the period, with the estimate of 100 at Wollogorang Lagoon by far the highest number (see also breeding records below). Up to 2 **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported from 5 locations, while up to 2 **Musk Ducks** were reported from only 2 locations.

**Stubble Quail** were reported from just 6 locations over the period, calling from at least 2, so listen out for them as the grass grows and their breeding season commences. **Brown Quail** were reported from 9 locations, whereas **Painted Button-quail** were reported from a remarkable 14 locations, many of them new and a significant increase on the previous 2021 locations. On 26 September a **Great Crested Grebe** was reported from a new location, the Molonglo River–Kallaroo Road by David Dedenczuk, who noted it was a pleasant surprise to see this species there.

Two **White-headed Pigeons** were reported flying across North Lyneham Ridge on 27 September. However, no **Diamond** or **Peaceful Doves** were reported during the period, at least in part attributable to the Glendale Depot site not being accessible due to the COVID restrictions. No **Red-necked Avocet**, **Little Button-quail** or **Caspian Terns** (one reported 29 September – ed!) were reported during the period. The **Common Sandpiper** was regularly reported from Isabella Pond to 19 September. It appeared it may have moved as Deb and Rod Ralph photographed a bird at Village Creek at the top end of Lake Tuggeranong on 23 September, but it was then recorded again at the Isabella Pond on 27 and 28 September.

**Barn Owls** were reported from 5 locations during the period, one a very decomposed corpse, a likely roadkill, on Lady Denman Drive. There have been reports of revived mouse plagues to the north and west, so please continue to look out for these as temperatures warm up and mice become more active locally. The fact that the **Black-shouldered Kite** was reported from around 21 locations, and the **Nankeen Kestrel** from around 55 locations, despite the COVID travel restrictions, suggests there are still plenty of mice around.

A **Spotted Harrier** (also a new “unusual” species for 2021) was reported by a number of observers at Campbell Park from 16–18 September, then at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 20 September, and Kama NR on 26 September, possibly all the same bird. So, please watch out for this large raptor flying slowly low over paddocks on broad upswept wings. **Southern Boobooks** have been reported from 11 locations; most of these were of birds calling while it was dark, with on some occasions at least 2 birds being heard at the one time.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was reported from Isabella Pond on 26 August. Single **Little Lorikeets** were again reported from three different spots in Watson, while single **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from Watson and Callum Brae. Up to two male or immature male **Scarlet Honeyeaters** were reported from Isaacs Ridge NR–Mugga Lane on 12, 17 and 28 September, and another male from Bluetts Block on 27 September. A **Singing Honeyeater** was photographed at West Bonner Pond on 28 August, close to where it was last recorded in July.

Of the birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for continuing into 2021, there were no confirmed reports of the **Jacky Winter**, probably due to access difficulties to the areas in the south of the ACT from where it has been most frequently reported in recent times. Unfortunately, the same also applies to the **Hooded Robin**, with the only record I am aware of being the pair photographed copulating by Kym Bradley on 7 September, and to the **Restless Flycatcher**, for which a single bird was reported from Uriarra Rd about 1 km east of Brindabella Rd on 5 September.

The excellent conditions promise a very good breeding season with many reports coming to my attention, particularly from early in the period covered. Some of these have been noted above, with some other highlights noted below:

- On 9 September John Leonard watched two **Welcome Swallows** swoop down the ramp of a below-street car-park under one of the new apartment blocks in Phillip. They perched on a sign and he noticed that one was carrying a feather in its beak. Within a few seconds the automatic gates began to open to let a car exit and both birds swooped underneath and went inside. He inferred they had begun a nest in there and had already worked out the access routine. Isobel Crawford noted that **Magpie-larks** at the National Library had perfected this technique too. Alison Rowell posted that many **Welcome Swallows** used to roost securely overnight in the House of Representatives underground car park and also relied on car movements to let them out in the morning. John Layton posted he has read accounts of **Welcome Swallows** hovering in the path of beams in order to open doors of buildings!

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- On 7 and 17 September Sue Lashko saw a pair of **Pied Butcherbirds** with a juvenile at Kama, another breeding record for this increasingly common species.
  - On 25 September David McDonald visited one of his neighbours' properties in Wamboin where **White-necked Herons** are currently breeding. He observed an adult sitting on a nest which is in a tall eucalyptus tree overhanging their bottom dam. The landowners advised that, on 5 September, they first observed two of the herons building the nest. Over the next few weeks they had seen them flying around, being chased by nesting magpies, and flying off when approached. David noted there were only a tiny number of breeding records of the **White-necked Heron** in COG's Aol. In fact the BIRD INFO on the COG website shows only 13 breeding records for the 35 years, 9 of these being on/leaving the nest.
  - David also reported 3 **Australian Shelduck** ducklings at the Trucking Yard Lane dam that morning. Luke Downey posted that he also saw the Shelducks with 3 young earlier in the week, and that there was another pair with 4 young at the Bungendore Sewage Ponds as well. To my surprise the BIRD INFO on the COG website shows many breeding reports for this species in the COG Aol, the vast majority of them being dependent young between August and January.

The COVID lockdown has allowed more focus on local birding, with many people noting the clear **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** inward migration during the period. It certainly has been more notable than for some years in my Chapman garden, where they have been attracted in particular to a profusely flowering *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* and a bank of grevilleas, keeping clear of the many **Red Wattlebirds** also attracted to these and the flowering Mugga ironbarks. Many other birders have noted many of the latter species feeding similarly, as well as the **Noisy Friarbird** which seems to be more numerous than in recent years.

On 27 September Michael Lenz counted 65 **Noisy Friarbirds** moving through Lyneham, coming from the direction of Mt Majura/saddle between Mt Majura and Mt Ainslie and going west to northwest. This is similar to the observations he has made previously and published in CBN.

So please watch out for more of the remaining returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last of the leaving altitudinal migrants, for roost sites and flights, and for spring breeding activity. With the favourable conditions there should be lots of the last-named. Please also continue to keep a special look out for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** and **Hooded Robin** in COVID-accessible areas. 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.

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## PhD opportunity

A PhD opportunity has arisen to conduct research on the Latham's Snipe within the COG area of interest. If interested follow the link below. For any queries please contact Chris Davey ([chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au))

<https://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/research/research-stories/phd-opportunity-movement-and-migration-latham%E2%80%99s-snipe>

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## Committee News

The COG committee met by Zoom on 16 September for its monthly meeting.

The committee wants to remind COG members that we are required to be aware of and comply with ACT or NSW (as applicable) government directions about permissible outdoor activities. And it might be prudent to remember that your eBird records and the alerts they generate display where and when you saw that rarity.

When they can restart, COG's field trips and other activities will be conducted according to the rules that apply at the time. This will need to take account of the rules applying to individual participants (that is, whether your movements are restricted for any reason) and the rules applying in the area where the activity is located and in any regions that participants would have to travel through to get there.

Our behaviour needs to protect the well-being and interests of our fellow birders, and COG's activities will be designed to assist with this.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 10 November 2021. Nominations for the Committee are now open and must be received by 31 October. The form is available in this edition of Gang-gang or from the website.

The COG committee can have 14 members: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and up to 10 general members. As we said last month, the current committee has 10 members, so additional members would be very welcome. If you have benefited from belonging to COG please consider whether you have time and skills to contribute to the success of its ongoing activities by nominating to be part of the committee.

### Good with correspondence?

The Committee is looking for someone who could manage COG's correspondence?

It is an interesting role that largely involves preparing short letters on a range of bird matters, often for the public. This person would work with the Secretary and Minutes Secretary. If you want more information about the role contact Neil, Bill or Alison.

The committee discussed the development application for the area between Callum Brae and the Mugga Lane/Narrabundah Lane corner – the old Mugga Lane Zoo site. COG will be making a submission and this will be published on the website when it is completed.

Neil Hermes *President*      Alison Mackerras *Minutes Secretary*

## COG Blitz

### Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 October

With the easing of restrictions it seems we will be able to run the 16<sup>th</sup> COG Blitz on 23-24 October and aim for good coverage of the ACT. For those who are new to this concept, COG tries to survey as much of the ACT as possible over one weekend, recording birds and their breeding. Details will be updated shortly on the COG website [www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au), under the header 'Observing and Reporting Birds'. Let me know, email [blitz@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:blitz@canberrabirds.org.au), where you would like to survey, particularly if there is an area not on the list.

*Nicki Taws*

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# Notice of the COG Annual General Meeting for 2021

Wednesday 10 November 2021, 7.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc. will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 10 November 2021. At this stage, the meeting will be held by webinar (see link here - <http://canberrabirds.org.au/>).

However, if we can meet in person the AGM will be held at Canberra Girls Grammar School in the usual way. Check the November issue of Gang-gang or the website for up-to-date information about the November meeting.

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## Annual General Meeting, 10 November 2021

### Agenda

- Opening
- Apologies
- Confirmation of minutes of 2019 AGM
- Confirmation of minutes of 2020 AGM
- President's Report
- Adoption of President's report
- Presentation of annual statement of accounts
- Adoption of annual statement of accounts
- Appointment of auditor for 2021-22
- Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary, and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members
- Other matters for which notice has been given
- Close of meeting.

The minutes of the 2019 AGM and 2020 AGM are available on the website and financial reports will be published before the AGM (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/annual-reports/>).

Please advise any apologies to [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).

If the meeting is held by webinar, please record your attendance by emailing your name to [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au) during the AGM.

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## Call for Nominations

Nominations for positions on the COG Committee are invited from interested members. The form is attached to this issue of Gang-gang (page 17) or from <http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/annual-reports/>.

Completed forms can be submitted by mail or scanned and emailed to [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).

Although COG has taken nominations from the floor during previous AGMs, it will not be possible to do this during the webinar as each form must be signed by three people. Instead, please ensure forms are received by 31 October 2021 to allow for voting processes to be arranged.



## COG's cogs - No 4

Our series about the volunteers in the COG gear house continues this month with Gail Neumann, the hand behind the production of each month's Gang-gang publication.

Gail is another long-time COG member, having just clocked up her thirty-years with the group, after her first outing to Warks Road where she saw a **Pilotbird** and **Rufous Fantail**. It was on a trip into Nadgee Nature Reserve where she saw a couple of **Southern Emu-wrens** nesting that her interest in birding was triggered.

Gail's journey into the dark recesses of COG began innocently enough at a monthly meeting back in 2013 when a call was put out for someone to take on the layout editor role of Gang-gang. Initially Gail wasn't going to volunteer, but a few friends 'gently coaxed' her into putting her hand up, despite the fact she had no experience in newsletter layout, graphic design ... or really any knowledge of publishing software. But hey, you learn on the job, right. Eight years later, Gail is still at it, so she must have picked up a couple of tricks along the way. But it goes to show that experience isn't necessary when it comes to helping out at COG. Nothing is too complex, and there's always a friendly face or two to lend a hand.

As you'll no doubt know, the Gang-gang comes out once a month. Gail works with the newsletter's editor, Sue Lashko, and the COG photographers, to incorporate the content into the newsletter's template and get it ready for distribution. By all accounts, the process of setting the content in the familiar layout is a leisurely affair that takes place over four days. Of course, if there's ever a birding emergency (yes they happen) the entire job can be compressed into one long day. The good news for anyone interested in volunteering for the role is that for the most part the job isn't onerous or time-consuming at all. In fact, it produces a great feeling of accomplishment when the newsletter is complete and ready for publishing.

Throughout the year Gail participates in a number of surveys – the annual Blitz, weekly Garden Bird Survey and annual Snipe and Woodland quarterly surveys.

If anyone is interested to know more about the role, or is keen to get a foot in the door and become more involved with COG through Gang-gang you can contact Gail via [gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au)

### Acknowledgements

Nathan Finger and Gail Neumann



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### Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

Feathers'n'Friends cottage is fully self-contained with extensive facilities to ensure guests can enjoy short or extended stays.

The secluded lodging is surrounded by tropical rainforest and beautiful gardens with varying habitats and a large variety of birds and wildlife.

Activities in the area include birdwatching at nearby Mt Lewis and other birdwatching locations, as well as Daintree River nature tours and other attractions.

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**[www.feathersnfriends.com.au](http://www.feathersnfriends.com.au)**

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244 Clacherty Road  
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: [freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au](mailto:freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au)

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## Bin chickens in a different light

I was in the right place at the right time with binoculars in hand watching blue black thunderheads burgeoning in the west when I noticed a ragged echelon of **Australian White Ibis** beating across the stormy sky. As they moved into surreal light filtering through clouds, their whitish plumage segued to an abalone nacre. Scarcely had the colour shift registered when turbulence struck. Sundered curtains of virga flailed and ibis catapulted head over heels like lingerie in a tumble dryer. Seconds later the instability passed, the echelon reformed and flew stoically onwards. Another aberration in the light and their mother of pearl sheen shifted to the pewter-esque patina of a dragonfly's back. I kept my binoculars on the birds for a moment until tridents of lightning and sprinkling hail sent me indoors, visions cached in my mind like lightning lingering on the retina.

I grabbed my pen, copied down impressions of what I'd seen and dropped the note into my "Things to do" tray where it languished until I marshalled my jottings into words that might adequately describe the storm-flung ibis passing through ethereal fields of light one memorable afternoon last summer.

John Layton  
Holt.

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## Publications for Sale

COG provides a range of birdwatching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices. You can purchase publications at meetings or contact Kathy on [sales@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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.

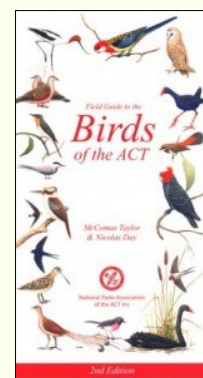
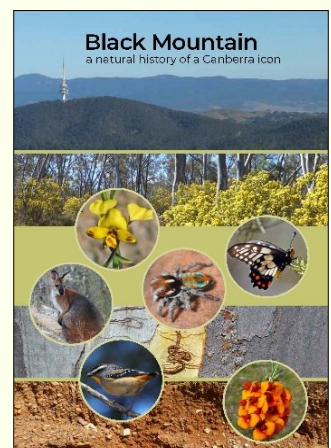
**Members' Price: \$30**

### **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.**



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# Future Field Trips

## COG Trips

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

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

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

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

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

Be Covid safe on COG field trips:  
Maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres  
Maintain hand hygiene

Do NOT attend if you have any cold or flu symptoms.

### Sunday 17 October – Bluetts Block

Please note that the current ACT Government Covid rules require you to wear a mask outdoors until Oct 29.

Bluetts Block is one of the few remaining areas of natural bushland containing heath in the south of Canberra and a vital connection for wildlife between the Molonglo River Corridor and the Murrumbidgee River. The Friends of Bluetts are hoping that the ACT Government will soon protect it as a conservation reserve.

I find this to be one of the best birding areas in all of the south of Canberra, for seasonal diversity and for regular species such as **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Scarlet Robin**, thornbills, whistlers, pardalotes, parrots, **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** and birds of prey. Especially in springtime the well-groomed fire trail walks are ringing with birdcalls. Red-necked Wallaby and a few Grey Kangaroo are also seen when they thump away through Red Stringybark trees. There are very fine views from the survey point and during the last summer season following good rain many species of orchids were seen and photographed.

**Meet** at 8.30am. To get to the start of the walk drive from Stromlo Forest Park roundabout for 2.5 km on Uriarra Road, at which point you will see the end of a bicycle track on the left-hand side which runs parallel to Uriarra Road. Park near the gate on the left-hand side of the road, or across the road alongside the white gate. Please take care, as cars often travel very fast along Uriarra Road. Be aware that it will be necessary to step through a loose wire strand fence to start the walk, unless you are good at climbing the gate (unless a key is made available).

This is mostly an uphill and down again walk but we will take it in gentle stages as we stop to listen for bird calls. Please wear sturdy walking shoes and bring water to drink. You must **register** in advance (no later than Thursday 14 October) with Jean Casburn at [casburnj@bigpond.com](mailto:casburnj@bigpond.com), providing your name, mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

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### Wednesday 20 October, 8.30am, Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

**Please note that the current ACT Government Covid rules require you to wear a mask outdoors until Oct 29.**

It's been a while since we visited Jerra Wetlands for a Wednesday walk, and this was the venue suggested last time we met! Meet in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road at 8.30am. The walk will be on paths, very easy walking, and will be 2-3 hours. Wear sturdy shoes and hat, bring suncream and water.

Note: **Registration** is essential – provide your name, mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. There is an absolute limit of 25 participants. Masks must be worn, and social distancing must be observed. Register with Sandra at [shirmax2931@gmail.com](mailto:shirmax2931@gmail.com)

### Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 October – COG Blitz

**Please note that the current ACT Government Covid rules require you to wear a mask outdoors until Oct 29.**

See notice elsewhere in the newsletter.

### Sunday 7 November – Tin Hut Dam, Googong

**This outing will proceed if ACT residents are allowed to enter NSW for recreation at this time.**

**Meet** at 8:30am at the Tin Hut carpark (beware the road into the site is unsealed, and can be rough at times). We'll be walking around Tin Hut Dam and in the surrounding woodland. A relatively easy walk, with a formed track for about half the loop, but no defined track on the western side, so it is likely we will have to walk through some grass. Some birds we might see include **Musk Duck, Western Gerygone, Southern Whiteface**, cuckoos and raptors.

**End time:** ~ 10.30-11am.

**Bring:** water, sunscreen, hat, sensible footwear.

**Numbers** limited to 16.

**Registration** is essential, no later than Friday 5 November. Email: [Lkmanderson@hotmail.com](mailto:Lkmanderson@hotmail.com) with your name, mobile number, and an emergency contact name and number.

Liam Manderson

### Sunday 14 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

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

The workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also very welcome.

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

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

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

**Numbers limited** to 30 (based on the latest ACT Government pathway out of lockdown).

**Name of leader and contact details:** Registration is essential no later than Friday 12 November. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840) or preferably by email on [jandaholland@bigpond.com](mailto:jandaholland@bigpond.com) – please include your name and mobile, and your emergency contact name and numbers.

### Sunday 21 November – Mt Ginini

**Description:** This walk is in Snow Gum forest with a shrub layer interspersed with subalpine wildflowers with good views across the ACT. We will set off from the carpark and stop for lunch at either Stockyard Spur or Pryor's Hut (depending on our progress on the day), and then retrace our steps back to the carpark. Previous highlight species include **Gang-gang Cockatoo, Olive Whistler, Flame Robin, Spotted Quail-thrush, Grey Currawong** and **Little Raven**. We might also encounter some interesting non-avian montane specialists - butterflies like Macleay's Swallowtail and Forest Brown, and reptiles like Mountain Dragon and Blotched Bluetongue.



Please note there are no facilities available on this walk; the nearest toilets are at Bull's Head picnic area. In the event of rain, this walk will be cancelled.

**eBird hotspots:** Namadgi National Park–Mt Ginini, Stockyard Gap

**Meeting time and place:** 9 am at the Mount Gingera Walk Trail Head carpark.

**Walking distance:** Approximately 9.7 km (return)

**Degree of difficulty:** Medium; track is an undulating vehicle track with some steeper sections.

**End time** (approx.): 3 pm

**What to bring:** This is a remote location with no mobile reception. Ensure you bring sufficient water and food (including lunch), rain and sun protection, and warm clothing. Even if it is forecast to be sunny and warm, weather in the mountains can change quickly and you need to be prepared.

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

**Numbers limited:** Yes, limited to 10 people.

**Name of leader** and contact details: Suzi Bond, [chowchilla29@yahoo.com](mailto:chowchilla29@yahoo.com)

## Sunday 28 November – Wamboin White Gum Forest Reserve

**Description:** This will be COG's first visit to this interesting area on the NSW side of the border, abutting the Kowen pine forest. It is a Brittle Gum forest with tracks built in recent years for the Kowen Trail Runners. The birds are typical of the Southern Highlands Brittle Gum/Red Stringybark Forest ecosystem: not prolific, but nonetheless interesting. **Painted Button-quail** have been observed in similar habitat nearby.

**eBird hotspot:** <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L3296954>

**Meeting time and place:** 08:00 am at the Spotlight carpark, Bungendore Road, Queanbeyan, for optional carpooling

**Walking distance:** 5 km approx.

**Degree of difficulty:** Easy/moderate

**End time** (approx.): 11.00 am, with an optional additional visit to a nearby travelling stock reserve

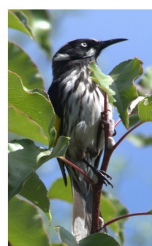
**What to bring:** Water & morning tea

**Registration** is required, by email or text to the trip leader, giving name, mobile number, and emergency contact name and mobile number

**Name of leader** and contact details: David McDonald, email david [at] [dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:dnmcdonald.id.au), phone/text 0416 231 890

**Numbers limited** to 15.

## MELIPHAGA MAGIC ACCOMMODATED HONEYEATER TOUR 18-22 OCTOBER 2021



Spring honeyeater  
hunt across some of  
the best  
destinations in  
inland NSW with  
Neil Hermes  
and  
Mark Clayton

With the drought and bush fires as an added challenge, this October Neil and Mark are guiding a trip to try to track down a target of 25 species of honeyeaters in 5 days. Highlights we are seeking are Painted and White-fronted Honeyeaters and at least three species of chats.

The trip will be accommodated and travelling in an airconditioned mini coach.

Of course we will also be trying to get a good list of species other than just honeyeaters!

**Tour booklet with bird lists and full itinerary provided to all participants.**

Cost for 5 days \$1150pp  
single supplement \$400

Includes four nights motel accommodation, minicoach travel, two guides, snacks and water, picnic lunch on some days. All other meals, drinks and personal items are at participants cost.

### Brief Itinerary

Day 1 Ingaba NR, Charcoal Tank NR.

Day 2 West Wyalong Wetlands, Ungarie, Lake Cargelligo, Chat Alley.

Day 3 Round Hill NR, Nombinnie NR.

Day 4 SW Woodland NR, Pulletop NR, Lake Wyangan

Day 5 Fivebough Wetland, Murrumbidgee National Park, Bethunga

To book or get further details email

bookings@canberraguidedtours.com.au  
or go to  
[neilhermes.com.au](http://neilhermes.com.au)

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## Where to (exercise and) bird in Canberra

This article began before the easing of restrictions on outdoor activities from Oct 1, but I decided to publish the suggestions I received anyway, as it is always good to visit somewhere new. The regions are based on those that applied during lockdown prior to 1 October.

### Gungahlin

Gungahlin Hill NR : park on the side of Barton Highway coming in to Canberra just after the last houses in Crace on the left. Dry sclerophyll forest with the usual dry country birds.

Crace Wetlands could be combined with a walk along Ginninderra Creek and into Percival Hill NR.

Bellenden St, Mitchell. Enter off the Barton Highway, park and walk the length of the road. (Mark Clayton)

### Belconnen

Evatt-McKellar: Suggested parking place is at Palmerville Heritage Park off Owen Dixon Drive in Evatt. From there a path winds through the Park, which is the site of an early European settlement. Look for three old English oaks, read the explanatory signs describing the history of the area and listen for **Double-barred Finches** and **Laughing Kookaburras**. Return to the carpark and cross under William Slim Drive to Giralang Pond and Ginninderra Creek. **Black Swans** currently have cygnets and a **Great Egret** is often near the causeway. Due to roadworks, the underpass to McKellar under Baldwin Drive, and then under William Slim Drive (now called Gundaroo Drive but still has the old name on Googlemaps) is currently closed. So return to the Palmerville Heritage Park carpark, walk south across Owen Dixon Drive and follow the walking path to McKellar Pond and McKellar Wetland (**Australasian** and **Black-backed Bittern** have been seen here in the past). **Latham Snipe** have been seen, as well as **Australian Reed Warbler**, **Red-browed Finch** and **Double-barred Finch**. Then retrace your steps back to your car. (Margaret Robertson) (I did this walk last week and found an interesting array of birds, including my first **Dollarbird** of the season, and covered four eBird hotspots – ed!)

Lake Ginninderra: 3 good sites or walk the 7.3km loop

- Park in Diddams Close east carpark and walk anti-clockwise along the peninsula and then walk back along the road from the Diddams Close west carpark. **Crested (Eastern) Shrike-tits** turn up occasionally. Check the casuarinas along the lake edge for **Nankeen Night Herons**. You can also walk north from the east carpark along the edge of the lake as it narrows. Look out for **Brown Quail** in the short grass where it meets the unmown grass, as well as a good variety of water and bush birds.
- Park in Townsend Place and walk through John Knight Park (rarities turn up sometimes, e. g **Regent Honeyeater** at McKellar Pond) and along the eastern shore of the lake. The wetland at the southern end between Lake Ginninderra College and the restaurant area is worth a look.
- Park in Macdermott Place and walk the western shore.

Hawker to Holt: park in Dungowan Street and walk westwards behind the houses and take the underpass under William Hovell Drive. To your left, you will see a sign to the old Weetangera Cemetery which is worth a browse and a bird among the old eucalypts. Return to the path and follow it north and then west along the edge of Drake Brockman Drive. Walk as far as you fancy before retracing your steps.

### Central Canberra

Lyneham Ridge is accessible at the northern end from Ellenborough Street by the GDE overpass. From the southern end, access is via Duterrau Cres.

### Woden/Weston Creek/Molonglo Valley

Cooleman Ridge: We have been seeing good numbers of species on our near daily (local) walks on Cooleman Ridge - a loop starting and finishing at Namatjira Drive, around Mt Arawang on the Kambah side, up to Little Reservoir (from the south west) and return on the Chapman side. (Brian Jones)

### Tuggeranong

Tuggeranong Marsh: Rowland Rees Cr, Greenway. This pond seems to be filled by runoff from the Greenway Oval. Access can be tricky. I walked straight over from the road, but some recent rain has cut off that access, so walking through the adjacent

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weedy paddock to a gateway further up appears to be the best way to get there. Parking is limited by construction workers' cars. The marsh has a number of dead trees, almost every one of which had Little Pied Cormorant nests when I first visited (all are now fledged). There were also **Hardheads**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Grey Teal**, **Australian Wood Ducks** and a family of **Australasian Grebes**. On one visit I've seen a **Spotted Crake**. The grassy edges are also very popular with a number of large male Eastern Grey Kangaroos, who seem to be permanent fixtures. (Philip Veerman)

(For more birding spots in Canberra, see the attachments to my email to the chatline on 17 Sept, where I had sorted 4 years of Sandra's New Places column into regions – ed!)

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## New Places: September 2021

Sandra Henderson

### Beau and Jessi Park, Banks

Where: Corner of Pockett Ave and Betty Maloney Ave, Banks

This has long been on my list of "places to visit". It's a suburban park, with scattered trees. The north-west corner, with a line of trees, was the "birdiest" area, with **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, as well as **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Weebills**. A pair of **Australian Magpies** were wrestling on the ground, not even giving up when I stood right next to them. Some readers may recall the tragedy back in 1992 which led to the establishment of this park in 1994. A plaque is located near the two impressive turtle sculptures.

### Arthur Calwell Hill, Calwell

Where: O'Connor Cct, Calwell

There is a track around the base of the hill, and paths which go up to the top of both sections of the site. On the day I visited, **Weebills** and **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** were visiting the flowering eucalypts. I was there in early September and there was already a **Noisy Friarbird** on the site. There are some great views of the surrounding area.

### East O'Malley Pond, O'Malley

Where: Wallangara St, O'Malley

This is a surprisingly big suburban pond, right next to (but hidden from) Hindmarsh Drive, on the edge of the suburb, with quite a small total bird list from various COG members who've visited. I managed to see only 12 species, from a total 37 observed there to date. I was there early in the morning, and heard **Australian Reed Warblers** only towards the end of my time there, perhaps other species might also be late risers.

### Wanniassa Hills Reserve – north-east corner

I usually wander in the opposite corner of the reserve, but this time entered at Long Gully Rd and walked towards the Rose Cottage horse paddocks, before wandering uphill to the Karralika Firetrail. There are many old eucalypts, particularly on the higher areas, and **Striated Pardalotes** were obviously nesting in some of the hollows. A **Common Bronzewing** was calling from very thick vegetation near the reservoir on the Actew Long Gully firetrail, and **Galahs** were exploring hollows. A very confiding male **Golden Whistler** followed me along the track for some distance, and an **Australian Raven** was carrying sticks into a large tree close to Long Gully Rd.

## 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 Coughlin  
B Thorp  
J Gorst  
S Fuller

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for November 2021 edition:**

**Wednesday 27 October 2021**

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

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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

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**Secretary:** Bill Graham

[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)

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Civic Square, ACT 2608

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Julian Robinson

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### COG library

### Membership Enquiries & Updates:

[membership@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:membership@canberrabirds.org.au)

for change of address or other details.

### Gang-gang Newsletter

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**Lay-out Editor:** Gail Neumann

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Kathy Walter

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## COG E-mail Discussion List

COG E-mail Discussion List COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'CanberraBirds'. Join (subscribe to) the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an email message to [canberrabirds-subscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au). The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

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## COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate ..... for the position \*  
of ..... on the COG Committee.

(\*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)

(Name): .....

(Signature): ..... Date:.....

I second the nomination.

(Name): .....

(Signature): ..... Date:.....

I accept the nomination.

(Name): .....

(Signature): ..... Date:.....

Nomination forms can be submitted until the date in the call for nominations. Send by mail to COG at PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608 or by email to [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).

All nominators, seconders and nominees must be financial members of COG.