



# Gang-gang

SEPTEMBER 2021

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 8 September 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 short presentation will be by **Alice Wells** (retired entomologist/editor) and **Jean Casburn** (COG member), titled "Bluett's Block: Wildlife Haven and Corridor".

The presentation will place Bluett's Block in the context of its history and location between present and imminent housing developments. They will outline the attributes of Bluett's as a valuable wildlife corridor, rich haven for wildlife (especially

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

Over the first half of the 4 weeks from 28 July covered by this column the weather gradually changed from the cloudy, wet, windy and cold conditions experienced in July. Except for the cold change and 20 mm rain event at the end, we then mainly had a series of clear, frosty days, with temperatures warming up significantly in the final week. Unfortunately, this also coincided with the ACT going into lockdown on 12 August due to the COVID outbreak which, due to the restricted travel opportunities, had a much bigger effect on birders compared with bird activity within the COG Area of Interest (AoI).

However, there do seem to have been enough local observations made to demonstrate the arrival from around mid-August of many of the early spring/summer migrants, as well as the movement away of some of the winter altitudinal migrants, as detailed below. It also resulted in a number of interesting observations close to birders' homes.

*Continued Page 2*



Diamond Dove

*Patrick Cox*

Everyone welcome

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## SEPTEMBER MEETING *continued from Page 1*

birds), and its residual box-woodland habitat and diverse flora. A strong push is underway to persuade the Government to afford permanent protection to Bluetts. In relation to this they will touch briefly on several relevant ACT Government NES Plan documents and outline ongoing efforts to obviate perceived threats to what they hope will be the future of the Block.

The main presentation will be by **Claire Taylor**, a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Melbourne, on “**Cracking egg investment: maternal investment in Superb Fairy-wrens**”.

Claire will discuss how mothers investing in their young is often influenced by the physical and social environment. The physical environment, such as temperature and rainfall, affect the resources that mothers have to invest, whereas social conditions may influence how many carers offspring have. Claire and her colleagues investigated the influence of the social and physical environment on maternal investment in cooperatively breeding Superb Fairy-wrens, which breed as both pairs or groups when offspring from previous breeding attempts stay and help. Their work has found that the environment, both physical and social, is incredibly important for Superb Fairy-wren maternal investment in egg size and the resulting chick mass. In addition, the assistance provided by helpers (when breeding in groups) allows females to more finely tune their investment in eggs and nestlings to the prevailing environmental conditions.

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

Before the lockdown the species creating the most interest was the **Diamond Dove** first photographed at Glendale Depot by Patrick Cox on 31 July, and then seen, nearly always in the presence of a **Peaceful Dove**, by many observers. In fact, they were so familiar with each other they were seen copulating a number of times, with the noticeably smaller **Diamond Dove** on top. They were last reported on 8 August, though I expect due to the considerable interest (for a number of birders this was their first ACT record) they would have been further reported except for the COVID lockdown travel restrictions. The big question is what were single birds of these species doing there together? Not only is this the first record for the **Diamond Dove** in the COG AoI for 2021, but also the closest sighting so far this year is from Weddin Mountains over 200 km to the northwest. The **Peaceful Dove** was actually first seen at the Glendale Depot a week earlier on 24 July by Lachlan Reed, and of the 8 other 2021 records of this species there are 2 separate records on eBird by Brian Hawkins on 5 March about 8 km to the northwest. I thought the two species may have been part of a relict aviary there, though the most recent eBird records of single **Diamond Doves** from the nearby Yankee Hut car park and track, and at Namadgi NP Visitors Centre, not much further away, both on 1 January 2017, cast some doubt on this theory.

With the warmer weather rapidly inducing flowering with the spectacular sight of so many species coming into blossom together, it was no surprise to see many of the spring/summer migrant species starting to arrive from around mid-August. The biggest surprise was the **Common Sandpiper** arriving at Isabella Pond for the third year in a row, as photographed by Richard Allen on 20 August. This is much earlier than the previous first sightings of 7 October 2019 and 4 October 2020, respectively. There were two further reports of it on 23 August, and I expect many more as it will be well within a number of birders' COVID travel bubble.

As I alerted in my August column, the local cuckoo species have started to arrive. While the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** recorded by Kim Farley on 12 August at Naas Road at Apollo Road was likely the overwintering bird photographed there on 10 July, the one reported on 20 August by N Froelich from Southwell Park Lyneham is likely the first spring arrival. The first returning **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was reported on 19 August by Steve Holliday from Campbell Park. On 15 August the first **Pallid Cuckoo** was reported by David McDonald on behalf of a friend from Birchmans Estate, Wamboin. There have been none, one and two reports of these three species, respectively, since so please keep an eye, and especially an ear, out for them as they often call loudly on first arrival. In contrast the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, has been reported from 14 locations over the period; this species has clearly stayed over this winter, though some of the later reports may be from birds moving back in.

Other species whose first arrivals have been reported are the **Latham's Snipe** with two birds reported at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 2 August. However, there have been none since. In contrast the **Australian Reed-Warbler** was first reported from Melba Wetlands by Bron and Daryl King on 9 August and from a further 9 locations since. The first returning **Fairy Martins** were reported from West Belconnen Pond by Murray Delahoy on 7 August, and from 3 other locations since.

A very early **Sacred Kingfisher** was reported on the power line beside Majura Rd on 11 August by Yvette H and, on 22 August at the West Hume woodland and wetlands, Deb and Rod Ralph both heard the unmistakable "kee, kee, kee, kee, kee" call clearly repeated several times over a few minutes, but were unable to locate the bird.

Of those species still present in July, there have been no reports of the **White-throated Gerygone** over the period. The **Western Gerygone** did stay over the whole of winter as it was still reported from 6 locations throughout the period, though more towards the end as some more birds moved in. The **Rufous Whistler** too has overwintered with reports from 5 locations, though with just the single report (on 2 August) between 21 July and 14 August. The **Noisy Friarbird** was reported from a remarkable over 25 locations, with many reports coming in the last week of the period. While this has been a rare occasion this species has overwintered, there were few, if any, reports between 11 July and 9 August. The **Tree Martin** has also overwintered with reports from 10 more evenly spread locations over the period.

The **Dusky Woodswallow** has also returned in good numbers with reports from 19 locations (most from towards the end of the period) compared with just the single location in July. This also applies to the **Olive-backed Orioles** reported from 26 locations, compared with 4 in July, though spread more evenly during the period. However, single **Mistletoebirds** were reported from the same number of 4 locations as in July, though spread relatively evenly in the period.

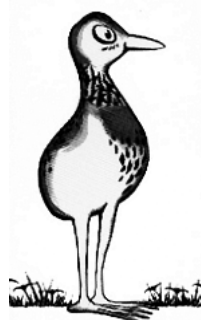
The **Superb Parrot** has also clearly started to return with reports from over 45 locations (about half from south of the lake) compared with 24 locations in July. On 18 August Anthony Overs posted that the **Superb Parrot** traffic was just ramping up in Hawker. He had been seeing and hearing the birds move in and out of the suburbs, being basically under a flyway (Dungowan and Mataranka Sts) between the breeding area to the southwest in the Molonglo Valley and feeding areas in the suburbs.



Common Sandpiper

Kym Bradley

*Red Eye*  
Australian Photo Art



**Australian  
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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, Erldunda, 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)

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The birds which overwintered in larger numbers also started to return with the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Grey Fantail** reported from around 50 (compared with 25 in July) and over 100 (80 in July) locations, respectively. Watch out too for increasing numbers of returning **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, reported from around 75 and 45 locations, respectively, though this is never as spectacular as their autumn migration. Watch out also for the returning **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, recorded from 9 locations (compared with 14 in July), as they can get caught up in these flocks.

So, during September please keep an eye out for the above early returning spring/summer migrants as well as for the other species expected to return during the month including the **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and the **Eastern Koel**. The **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark** also usually return towards the end of the month, but I expect numbers of these reaching the COG Aol, as well as the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow**, to again be much lower this year due to the wet inland.

As these spring/summer migrants are returning, the species which move into Canberra and its surrounds in autumn/winter are moving back to the mountains and other higher areas. These include the **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler** of which, while still recorded from around 60 and 50 locations, respectively, many of these have been rural rather than urban/peri-urban, particularly for the former. This is consistent with the latter usually being the slowest to leave. The **Grey Shrike-thrush**, reported from around 80 locations, around half of them urban/peri-urban, also will move away from the Canberra area.

While the **Scarlet Robin** has been reported from around 35 locations, with about 20 being from urban/peri-urban areas, this does reflect the lack of birding opportunities in the rural areas as they were reported from around 45 locations in July. Again, I haven't been able to find them on Cooleman Ridge or Narrabundah Hill. In contrast, for the **Flame Robin**, only 12 of the 45 locations from which it has been reported were urban/peri-urban, and it appears they may have moved out earlier than the **Scarlet**. Again I haven't been able to locate them at their usual autumn/winter spots on Cooleman Ridge. Some support for this is Patrick Cox reporting 30 of them in two flocks at the Glendale Depot on 31 July (one of 12 with 1 orange male, the other of 18 with 10 orange males), as they do on return migration.

The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 11 locations, 9 of them urban/peri-urban and all east of the Murrumbidgee River. Some might have been returning passage migrants. Again, there were no reports of the **Pink Robin** during the period. The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from 16 locations in the period, all except one of them to the west or south of Canberra, and with 8 of them urban/peri-urban. Of these 4 have been within a few km of my Chapman garden, the closest one being the male I found on 17 August on Cooleman Ridge about 1.3 km to the south. It is unclear why it seems to have preferred this much less attractive habitat than all the blossoms in or around my garden this winter. In contrast the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** was reported from just 2 locations, 3 birds at the Gigerline NR on 7 August, and a single bird at the Kambah District Playing fields on 18 August.

After a gap in reports of over 3 weeks, on 11 August Philip Veerman again reported the **Swift Parrots** from Kambah/the top of Lake Tuggeranong, with his maximum being 30 birds on 17 August. While it appears likely they might have been present there all along, only one other birder, Stan Jarzynski, has reported them from there since (a total of 13 birds on 19 August), so they may have started on their return journey to Tasmania. During September please keep an eye out for this species and all the other altitudinal migrants mentioned above.

Of the new (for 2021) "unusual" species reported during the period, the **Square-tailed Kite** observed by Bill Graham on 29 July near the Lade Vale Stockpile south of Gunning off the Gundaroo Road, is a very interesting one. This is listed as a rare, non-breeding species in COG's 2018-2019 Annual Bird report (ABR), with the first endorsed record in the ACT in January 2016. eBird Australia shows this was in Ainslie, but also that there is a further ACT record since, also by Steve Holliday, in December 2018 at Goorooyaroo NR. There are also two records from near Bill's in 2014 and 2016, as well as from the western side of Lake George in 2017 and 2019.

The other new "unusual" species for 2021, at least for the ACT, was the **Red-necked Avocet**, with 9 birds first reported by Rob Geraghty from Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant on the afternoon of 9 August. A number of others managed to observe them that day, before they typically moved on overnight. Frank Antram reported 8 of these (possibly the same?) birds from the Wollagorang Lagoon to the northeast of Collector on 11 August, with the only previous COG Aol records in 2021 being from East Lake George and the East Basin of Lake Bathurst. Up to 12 **Pied Stilt** were recorded from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR during August. However, these numbers were dwarfed by the estimate of 120 Frank Antram reported from the Wollagorang



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Lagoon on 11 August. The latter species has been reported from 5 other locations to the northwest and northeast of Canberra in 2021.

Again, up to 15 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported only from the Trucking Yard Lane dam at Bungendore during the period. A maximum of 2 **Australian Shelducks** was reported from here during the period; this was also the maximum number reported from 5 locations to the northwest and northeast of Canberra. Up to 2 **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported from Upper Stranger Pond, and a single one from Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant. The only **Musk Ducks** reported were 2 birds from Rows Lagoon in the first half of August.

Up to 3 **Stubble Quail** were reported from just 2 locations over the period, whereas **Brown Quail** were reported from 8 locations, including again from NW Cooleman Ridge. Up to 3 **Painted Button-quail** were reported from 3 locations, all of them new for 2021. However, no **Little Button-quail**, **Great Crested Grebes**, **White-headed Pigeons** or **Caspian Terns** were reported during the period.

Interestingly there were no **Barn Owls** reported from 24 July to 11 August, when Matthew Larkin saw one while driving north on Benjamin Way, Belconnen. Following this there were reports from another 4 locations in suburban Canberra to 22 July, unfortunately the latest being of a suspected road kill in Crace by Fleur Leary. Interestingly the closest most recent sighting away from Canberra is still Cowra over 150 km to the north. So please watch out for more of these as temperatures warm up and mice become more active. The fact that the **Black-shouldered Kite** was reported from around 20 locations, and the **Nankeen Kestrel** from around 65 locations, suggests there are still plenty of mice around.

A **Black Kite** was reported from Stony Creek NR on 12 August, the first ACT record since January, though there have been reports to the north in between. **Southern Boobooks** have been reported from 5 local locations, four of these being of birds calling while it was dark; in one case 3 distinct individuals could be heard.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was reported from Isabella Pond on 20 August, the second record here in 2021. The tame **Major Mitchell's Cockatoo** was reported from Coombs Pond, for the fifth time this year. On 17 August, Ash Allnutt reported single **Little Lorikeets** a week apart from two different spots in Watson, while two **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from Watson and Scullin only. A male **Scarlet Honeyeater** was reported from Cook on 17 August, and two **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** flying southwest over O'Connor on the same day.

A **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, clearly a dark morph, was reported by Michael F from Kama NR on 14 August, only the second report for this patchily distributed species in 2021. Finally, a **Spangled Drongo** was reported by David Dedenczuk from Isaacs Ridge NR – Mugga Lane on 20 August, also only the second report for this non-breeding vagrant from the coast in 2021.

Of the birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for continuing into 2021, there were confirmed reports of the **Jacky Winter** only from 2 locations, with up to 3 birds seen at Namadgi NP Visitor Centre. However, an important late confirmation was of 2 birds seen at Campbell Park, the first reported from there since September 2015 (so well worth looking for if this is within your COVID bubble). Unfortunately, up to 2 **Hooded Robins** were reported from only the one known location, Naas Rd at Apollo Rd. Up to 2 **Restless Flycatchers** were reported from 5 locations in the period, two of them being new for 2021 (Isabella Pond and Mulligans Flat).

While it was still the last month of winter, breeding seemed to commence in earnest over the period, not only after the weather fined up, with some highlights noted below:

- On 9 August Anthony Overs posted that it had been chaos around his Hawker home over the past few weeks with the the bird baths continuing to draw loads of birds every day. There had been lots of breeding behaviour from some species: **White-browed Scrubwrens** were observed copulating the day after the solstice, and of the pair living on the eastern side of the house he had multiple observations of the male feeding the female. The territory boundary between them and the pair next door is along the fence on the west side of the house; and quite a few battles had taken place. Also three pairs of **Eastern Spinebill** were sorting themselves out with lots of chasing, though he still had not worked out which breeds where. The day before he put a big handful of dog hair out in the wire basket near the baths; within ten minutes, a Spinebill came and checked it out, had a poke about, wiggled her belly down into it and sat for a couple of seconds, then took off with some! A pair of **Crested Pigeons** were building a nest in a dense grevillea in the eastern side garden, not that early for this species which is known to breed all year round.

- On 20 August David Rosalky posted that this season he had had regular, almost daily, visits from at least a pair of **Rainbow Lorikeets** feeding on a flowering Banksia in his front garden in Deakin. The day before he saw a pair on top of an Atlantic Cedar next door, one (the presumed male) was bobbing and fluttering its wings. It then approached the female, and there was some contact of heads and necks before they copulated. David noted there were no theatrics and no screeching or calling of any kind that he could hear.
- Maryanne Gates responded that between Wildcare Queanbeyan and ACT Wildlife they had had 7 juvenile **Rainbow Lorikeets** come into care this winter, most of them having just fledged and one apparently came out of a hollow. Two came from the ACT, two from Queanbeyan and three from Jerrabomberra. The above are remarkable as the BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows no records of breeding of any kind for this species between March and September (inclusive), perhaps due to the difficulty in observing parrots breeding in hollows. All year-round breeding may explain how successful this species has become.
- On 20 August Archer Callaway alerted me to a report on the Canberra wildlife photography page on Facebook of Diane Cutting noting over the past few days there had been a lot of activity in her backyard from a pair of **Brown Thornbills**. She ascertained they had a nest in her next door neighbour's shrubbery, as they had an attack from a pair of **Pied Currawongs** the day before; with lots of noise and fluttering. However, that day the chicks had obviously fledged and were now in a dense shrub in her backyard. She had not seen them yet but there was lots of noise when food arrived. The parents are not phased by her, landing so close that she could not focus her camera.
- On 23 August Elizabeth Keen posted she had found a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** with nest near the Hackett water tank. Frogmouth researcher Stuart Rae informed me that the season has begun; he had a bird on a nest on 19 August, early but not the earliest he had seen. Several others had well-built nests.

Despite the early breeding I have still observed a number of mixed feeding flocks (MFF), as late as 17 August, during the period.

The COVID travel restrictions have allowed more focus on local birding. On 18 August Jean Casburn posted that a leisurely stroll around the streets of Duffy led her to note the large number of 'green' **Satin Bowerbirds** distributed around the suburb. These were seen flying vigorously about and heard vocalising variably. She estimated 40 or more – also the odd male. She noted the bushy habitat of many gardens is ideal for the species. Duffy was one of the first suburbs to be colonised by this species as described by Philip Veerman and me in Canberra Bird Notes (CBN) in 2000.

Jean also noted she has a very pleasant habit of sitting outside in her GBS in the late afternoon to watch the birds coming out of Duffy and flying overhead to roost in Narrabundah Hill and some to roost nearby within the suburb. The day before, she counted 16 **Satin Bowerbirds**, 18 **Australian King-Parrots**, 24 **Red-rumped Parrots** (local roosting which has also been described in CBN), 8 **Crimson Rosellas**, 9 **Red Wattlebirds** (very much an underestimate) and 2 rare **Rainbow Lorikeets** flying over. During the COVID lockdown readers might like to challenge themselves to see how many species they can count on roost flights from their GBS.

So please watch out for more of the early returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last of the leaving altitudinal migrants, for roost sites and flights, and for early 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**. 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.

Finally, to all readers, please keep safe and please comply with the current health restrictions while birding locally during the COVID lockdown.

*Jack Holland*

## COG's cogs - No 3

Our series about the volunteers in the COG gear house continues this month with Michael Lenz, keeper of Canberra Bird Notes.

Michael began his birding career during a different era in Cold War West Berlin. It may have been a city severed from the rest of the West, but that didn't stop the birds from getting in. Michael remembers following the annual spring and autumn migrations of European birds. Just like today, the best sites attracted birders from all over the city and Michael made many life-long friends. It was the beginning of a fascination with birds.

In 1977 Michael emigrated to Australia and he didn't waste any time joining the ranks of COG; he's now been with the group for over 40 years. It was Canberra's waterbirds that really grabbed his attention in the beginning. Michael began a monthly waterbird survey of the residents, visitors and vagrants on Lake George and Lake Bathurst. Maybe saying they only caught his attention in the beginning is a bit misleading, because all these years later, Michael is still conducting the survey. He is also very interested in breeding birds, especially to establish how many there may be of a given species in a certain area. This could be rarer species or common birds of suburbia.

Michael has been involved with Canberra Bird Notes (CBN) since his early days with COG, when he would contribute to the annual bird report. In 2011 when the position of editor became vacant Michael slipped right into the role. Michael acts as something of a content scout for CBN. He keeps an eye out for anyone who might have an interesting story to share. The most rewarding part of the job is seeing many initially hesitant people turn around and write an interesting article. A highlight was the production of the COG 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue in 2014.

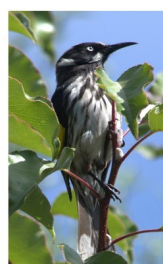
There are now many keen young observers who do very intensive bird watching in our area. Michael would welcome articles on the results of some of their observations and surveys as well as hearing from anyone who might want to contribute to one of Canberra Bird Notes editions. If you think you have a story to tell, then drop Michael a line at [michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com](mailto:michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com) and he'll be more than happy to hear from you.

### Acknowledgements

Michael Lenz and Nathan Finger

Julian Robinson for title to this series

### 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 Ingalba NR, Charcoal Tank NR.

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

Day 3 Round Hill NR, Nornbinnie 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

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## Committee news

The COG committee met by Zoom on 19 August for its monthly meeting.

Members' meetings will be held virtually until lockdown restrictions ease and we can meet in person again. The Webinar platform will be similar to last year but with some enhanced features that should make it easier to use. Look for the link on the website which will be the same each time.

Over the years COG members have written many papers, reports and articles in addition to those published in Canberra Bird Notes. Chris Davey has compiled a list which will be published here – <http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/other-resources/>

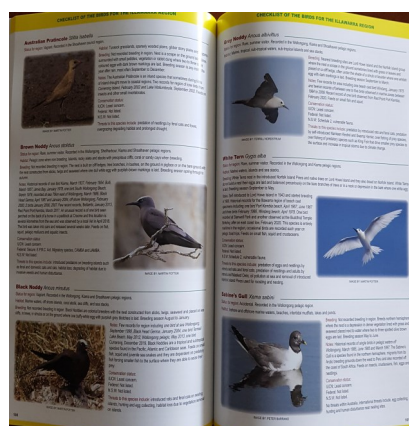
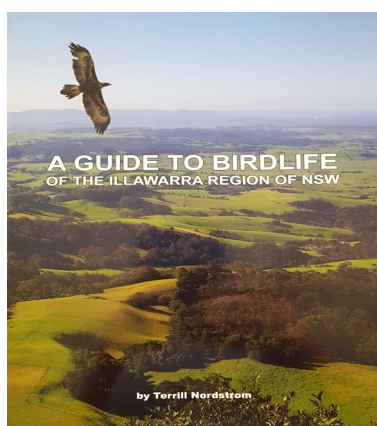
The Annual General Meeting will be held on 10 November. The COG committee can have 14 members: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and up to 10 general members. The current committee has 10 members, so additional members would be very welcome. If you have benefited from belonging to COG please consider whether you have skills and time to contribute to the success of its ongoing activities by nominating to be part of the committee. Nomination forms will be available in October.

As you will have seen in the COG's Cogs series, there are many other ways that members contribute to keep COG going. If you have read about a role that appeals to you, consider talking to that person to see if they would like some assistance.

Neil Hermes *President*

Alison Mackerras *Minutes Secretary*

## A Guide to the Birdlife of the Illawarra region of N.S.W.



Now available, a new book on the birdlife of the Illawarra region of N.S.W. This book covers the region known as the Illawarra which includes the local Government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven and Wingecarribee council regions. Four hundred and forty-four species have been recorded within the region and, for each species, a photograph, status for species, habitat, breeding, notes, conservation status and threats to each species, is included. Habitats in the Illawarra, history of birding, status and abundance of species, conservation and where to find birds in the Illawarra are also listed.

Recommended retail is \$45.00 (plus postage), members of COG can purchase it online for \$35.00 plus postage of \$15.00. (Please quote COG).

To order please contact Terrill Nordstrom on [terrillnordstrom1@gmail.com](mailto:terrillnordstrom1@gmail.com)



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## Bush Stone-curlew Suveys

**Bush Stone-curlews** were extinct in the ACT from 1970 until their reintroduction at Mulligans Flat in 2014. Further releases were carried out in 2015-16 and 2018-19. COG has been involved in the curlew project since the outset, providing funding, resources, and volunteers for surveys. The last blitz of the curlew population was carried out in 2018 in the western half of the sanctuary. On Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2021, COG conducted a survey of curlews across the entire reserve. We identified nine individuals: Hal (released 2014), Myfanwy (released 2015), Merry and Phil (born in the sanctuary), Narla (released 2016), one unbanded and three unidentified birds. The sighting of Narla is particularly exciting, as she had not been seen since December 2018; she demonstrates how cryptic these birds are!

A second survey was planned for 14 August but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the COVID lockdown. This survey will be run as soon as restrictions are lifted. As always, any sightings are welcome and can be reported at: [curlew.hotline@gmail.com](mailto:curlew.hotline@gmail.com)

Many thanks to the surveyors: Stuart Harris, Steve Read, Lach Read, John Bundock, Alison Mackerras, Anne Fulker, Harvey Perkins, Peter Fullagar, Millie Sutherland Saines, Norman Bowman, Gary Cameron, Sue Beatty, Brian Agnew, Alison Milton, Lia Battisson, Cedric Bear, Duncan McCaskill, Bev Hogg, Michael Hogg, Marc Layton, Shoshana Rapley, and especial thanks to the outing leader Chris Davey.

Shoshana Rapley

## 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.

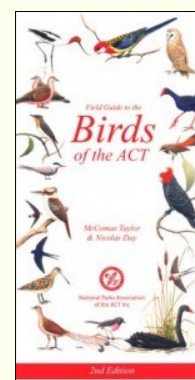
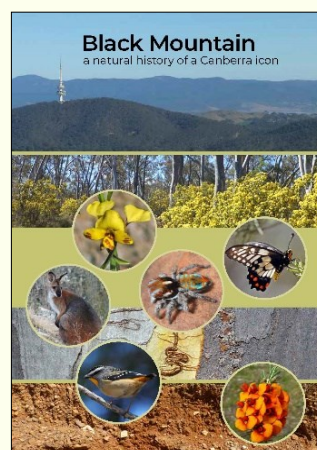
**Members' Price: \$30**

### **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.

The resumption of field trips programme is dependent on the Covid lockdown ending on 2 September in the ACT. There seems to be little chance that NSW will be out of lockdown for some time so it is safe to assume that the first two outings listed are unlikely to take place. If the ACT lockdown lifts on 2 Sep, it may be possible to have outings in the ACT, depending on the rules about group numbers. If you would be prepared to lead an outing at short notice in September, please contact Sue Lashko at [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com)

Check the website for updates.

If the ACT lockdown is lifted, 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 5 September – Reedy Creek TSR, Mt Fairy/Boro area – highly unlikely to occur

**Description:** We will visit this fine Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) in the Mount Fairy/Boro area. It is located along the Goulburn Road north of the Kings Highway. It is a beautiful woodland area that is part of a five-year TSR conservation and restoration project being conducted by the Molonglo Conservation Group. The iconic **Scarlet Robin** is a possibility, along with other box/gum woodland birds, probably including some returning migrant species.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L3895125>

**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

**End time (approx.):** 12:00 noon

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

**Need to register:** Yes, at least 36 hours in advance, by email or text to the trip leader, giving name, mobile number, and emergency contact name and number.

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**Name of leader and contact details:** David McDonald, email david [at] [dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:dnmcdonald.id.au), phone 0416 231 890.  
Numbers limited: maximum 15.

### Sunday 12 September – Pejar and Crookwell - highly unlikely to occur

**Location:** Pejar Dam, Jean Todkill Park Dam (Crookwell)

**Description:** Both dams are hotspots for raptors; Pejar has had 11 species and Jean Todkill 10 including **Little Eagle**, **Black Kite** and **Spotted Harrier**. Many waterbirds are present with highlights being **Great-crested Grebes**, **Musk Duck**, **Blue-billed Duck** and **Whiskered Tern**. **Fairy Martins** occur on St Stephens Road.

**Meeting time and place:** Netball Centre Lyneham at 7.30 am for carpooling.

**Walking distance:** Pejar Dam (St Stephens Road 0.5 km, main picnic area 1 km, North Arm 1 km) and Jean Todkill Park Dam 1 km.

**Degree of difficulty:** easy

**End time :** 4.30 pm at Lyneham

**What to bring:** water, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, sunscreen, water, sturdy shoes, hat. A scope would be useful.

**Participants must register** with the leader at least 36 hours in advance, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact

**Numbers limited** to 16.

**Name of leader and contact details:** Bill Graham at 0466874723 or [graham.br63@grapevine.com.au](mailto:graham.br63@grapevine.com.au)

### Monday 13 to Friday 17 September – Yathong Nature Reserve

**This trip has been cancelled by NSW NPWS due to the Covid lockdown.**

### Sunday 26 September – Bluetts Block

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 9.00am. 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. All are welcome and there is no need to book. In case of questions: **Register at least 36 hours in advance** 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.

### Sunday 10 October - K2C surveys Williamsdale - Bredbo

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws **before Wednesday 6 October**. Email: [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com) or 0408 210736. Please provide your name and phone number, and the name and phone number of an emergency contact.

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# Field Trip Reports

The ACT lockdown from 12 August resulted in a temporary cessation of trips.

## Sunday 8 August – Dalton/Gunning area

The weather forecast of partly cloudy was overly optimistic for this full-day outing to the north of the ACT, but the 13 participants were well rugged up and thoroughly enjoyed visiting birding spots that were new to most people.

The birding began as we crossed the Hume Highway near Gunning when a **Whistling Kite** flew across the road. We drove on to Dalton Cemetery (just outside COG's Area of Interest (Aol)) which is surrounded by a variety of vegetation including mature eucalypts and a good understorey. Of the 29 species recorded here, the highlights were at least 3 **Scarlet Honeyeaters**, attracted by flowering trees, along with 6 other honeyeater species including **Fuscous** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. The call of a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** sent us searching for the bird and it was soon located in a pine tree. **Jacky Winters** and a calling **Diamond Firetail** were also special.

After a quick morning tea break beside Oolong Creek in the village of Dalton, we moved on to Jerrawa Creek TSR, a few kilometres west. Despite the cold wind picking up, this nice patch of woodland produced a good variety in the 28 species recorded, including more **Jacky Winters**, as well as three species carrying nesting materials, **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped** and **Striated Thornbills**.

Lunch was enjoyed at Dalton Showground, followed by a quick visit to Dalton Common, an ex-TSR bordering the village. The temperature had dropped and birds were hard to find but we did think it had potential in better weather.

We then drove back into COG's Aol and visited Berrebangalo TSR between Gunning and Gundaroo. Unfortunately this TSR is grazed and so is almost devoid of understorey, with **Noisy Miners** dominating, but we did find 2 male and one female **Scarlet Robins** and then, just as we were leaving, an **Australian Hobby**, **Grey Currawong** and **Pied Butcherbird** in the total of 27 species. An interesting observation here was a **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** repeatedly visiting an insect cocoon to extract the silk threads to add to its nest.

A quick drive up Lade Vale Road added a dark morph **Brown Falcon** and back on Gundaroo Road we stopped for a light morph bird.

That ended a very productive day's birding with a total of 55 species recorded. Many thanks to Bill Graham for planning a visit to such an interesting variety of birding spots in an area that most of us overlook.

Sue Lashko



Diamond Dove

Shorty



### 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.

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Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road  
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

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



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# New Places: August 2021

Sandra Henderson

Lockdown has made for some challenges with New Places this month. The limit of one hour per day was also a challenge - usually Isaacs Pines would be a two to three hour exploration, but I've instead broken it into two outings, covering separate areas.

My Isaacs Ridge woodland sites are on the other side of the ridge, and much of the Erindale Drive side of the ridge is pine monoculture, but by entering from Long Gully Road I went straight into native bush, with a few scattered exotic shrubs.

## Isaacs Pines - main track from Long Gully Rd to the suburb of Isaacs

This is a straight out-and-back vehicle track, with bush on both sides for several hundred metres. This early morning foray was notable for **Silvereyes**. A large flock flew over as I started, and smaller groups all along the track were foraging high in the foliage. I'm sure I missed quite a few small birds on this outing - a cold morning and the obligatory mask meant frequent fogging of glasses, and my binos were also fogging up in the cold. There is a promising area, yet to be explored, of bush on the left of the track, near an underpass over to Farrer Ridge.

## Isaacs Pines - loop walk

A short walk taking in a small section of Centenary Trail and a section of an equestrian trail. I left the main track (above) by taking a track close to the entrance which leads up to the Centenary Trail. I headed back towards Long Gully Rd, where I knew an equestrian trail would take me back to the entry. Another very pleasant walk, with lots of **Silvereyes**, **White-browed Scrubwrens** and **Superb Fairywrens**. Along the equestrian trail section, two **Eastern Yellow Robins** were courting - both making a single note call before landing together on a branch over the track and one feeding the other.

## Farrer Ridge - north-east corner

This isn't an area I visit on my usual walks on Farrer Ridge, but is quite extensive. The entry on Hawkesbury St, between houses, is quirky, since it is home to a large population of gnomes and other figures, as well as a street library. Only a few metres from the start, a **Satin Bowerbird** black male was singing his heart out, with some impressive mimicry. I'm guessing he had a bower hidden in the thick vegetation, and a green bird did fly in to join him. I passed a number of other tracks into the bush, so more visits are needed once time restrictions are lifted.

## Isaacs Ridge - Long Gully Rd

I've walked straight through to the far end of the reserve, but not previously wandered around the area parallel to Long Gully Rd. It's not a big area, and water running in the big gully prevents access further into the reserve at present. There were plenty of flowering plants, including pretty *Hovea heterophylla* which I'd not noted in the past. The dam (just visible from the road) is overflowing - but was inhabited only by a single **Australasian Grebe** and a pair of **Australian Wood Ducks**. **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Crimson Rosellas** and **Galahs** were all checking out hollows, and an **Australian Raven** and **Nankeen Kestrel** seemed to be taking it in turns to pursue each other overhead. Frustratingly, as I approached the upper part of the gully, a large pale brown bird flushed and flew straight away from me into thicker areas of vegetation - there's always a "mystery bird"!

Sandra Henderson

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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.

## COG membership

2020-2021 memberships:

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

## New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

M Carnahan  
C Henderson  
S Larkin  
C Millington  
J Newton-Howes  
J Teh (rejoining)

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for October 2021 edition:**

**Wednesday 29 September 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.

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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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