



Gang-gang

MARCH 2019

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MARCH MEETING

Wednesday 13 March 2019

7.30 pm

*Canberra Girls Grammar School,
Multi-media centre, corner Gawler Cres and
Melbourne Ave, Deakin*

The first presentation will be by **Alison Russell-French** on “**The East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) – a retrospective 25 years on.**”

The EAAFP has been in existence now for 25 years. The 10th meeting of the Partners took place in Hainan Island China in December 2018 where a review and strategic directions were on the agenda. What has the Partnership achieved over the 25 year period and where is it focusing its future efforts to conserve migratory waterbirds in this very challenging Flyway? Alison will be speaking in her capacity as Acting Chair, Australian Wader Study Group (AWSG), which is one of the Partners of the EAAFP (on behalf of BirdLife Australia).

The main presentation will be by **Janet Gardner**, Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Research School of Biology at the ANU, on “**How are Australian birds affected by climate change?**”

Continued Page 2

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

It was very wet for the first ten days (over 50 mm at my place in Chapman) of the 4 weeks from 29 January covered by this column. However, it has been dry since and relatively cooler, with maximums around 30°C rather than the 40s we experienced in January. Whether this has been the main reason for many summer migrants to delay their departure from the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) and stay longer than usual, is unclear.

One species that has been present for much of February has been the **White-browed Woodswallow**. On 1 February Michael Lenz reported that one of his Lake George sites still had the 3 pairs he had seen there before, each with 2 young. He noted the young looked ready to go, and I thought this may have been the last report of this species this summer. I had to revise this when Julian Robinson reported between 50-70 **White-browed Woodswallows**, many of them juveniles/immatures and some dependent young, at the

Continued Page 2



Satin Flycatcher feeds Brush Cuckoo (refer to page 5)

Lach Read

Everyone welcome

It's becoming increasingly obvious that climate change is having profound effects on natural populations of plants and animals. This talk will focus on how Australian birds are affected by our changing climate and look into the mechanisms that are driving change. Janet will describe how she has made novel use of the time-series available through museum collections and bird banding data from citizen science, with a particular focus on the ways climate change affects the size and shape of birds. This research aims to improve our understanding of species' sensitivities to climate change and their capacity to cope with ongoing change. From this we can hope to develop improved management for species under pressure.

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

Yankee Hut car park on 2 February. However, there have been reports from 5 locations since, with the maximum being 12 birds still at Yankee Hut on 17 February, and the most recent being 8 birds at Campbell Park on 22 February. In contrast there has been only the single report of 8 of the closely related **Masked Woodswallow**, by Alastair Smith, at Campbell Park on 1 February. So please continue to keep an eye out for the last of these two species in March, as autumn reports of them are really unusual.

Horsfield's Bushlarks and **Brown Songlarks** also have stayed longer than I expected as they often have departed by late January/very early February. However, my comments in my December column that the former can be present though silent and very cryptic during winter in suitable habitat should be noted. Kevin Windle paid a short visit to Parkwood Rd on 8 February and noted that both species were still active and showing themselves nicely on the fences. On 15 February Con Boekel noted that activity had quietened down considerably, though both species were still present. Some display singing from **Horsfield's Bushlarks** was still in progress. However, there were only two short display flights by male **Brown Songlarks** in a two hour period, and no sightings of female or juvenile **Brown Songlarks**. Parkwood Road certainly has been the hot spot for these two (and other grassland) species this summer, with the last reports from here on eBird being of 2 and 3 birds, respectively, on 21 and 16 February. So please keep an eye out for any of these in autumn when they are much harder to detect when they are not singing/displaying.

In contrast the **Rufous Songlark**, which too often departs by late January/very early February, seems to have left pretty much on time, with the eBird map showing only 2 reports for February, 2 birds on Ginninderra Creek at Nicholls on 7 February and 1 bird at Parkwood Rd on 10 February. This is consistent with the numbers already dropping in the second half of January as reported in my February column. Again in contrast the **White-winged Triller** has been much more widely reported from 15 locations over the past month, and as recently as 21 February with 3 birds at Bibaringa.

So please also keep an eye out for the last of these two species, as well as for the **Cicadabird** for which I can't find any reports since 3 January. There have also been no reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** since 27 January. The last of the **Brush Cuckoos** often leave during February, but this species has still been reported from 15 locations over the past month, most still from the mountains but also in 3 spots in peri-urban Canberra. As noted below there was a late report of a dependent young from Bendora Arboretum on 24 February.

The **Dollarbird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, and **Sacred Kingfisher** all usually leave, in that order, by mid-March (all 3 were widely reported during February and were still being reported close to the time of writing). Other birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April include **Leadbeater's Flycatcher**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (often very quiet this month), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, **Pallid Cuckoo** (surprisingly there have been reports from only 6 locations during February, all between 17- 24 February, perhaps of birds on their way north), **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** (the latter reported from just 5 locations in February).

Also continue to keep an eye out for the **White-throated Needletail** and the related **Fork-tailed Swift**. Numbers of the latter stayed high while the rain/storms continued, particularly on 30 January when there were reports from at least 6 locations,



Eastern Koel

Gail Neumann

with the maximum being 580 birds over the woodlands loop at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Once the rain dried up there have been reports from a further 6 locations, but with a maximum of only 12 over Weston Creek on 19 February. In contrast there have been reports of the usually more common and numerous **White-throated Needletail** from just 6 locations over the 4 week period, the maximum being around 100 over Macgregor on 7 February. So please keep an eye out for these two species until early April, particularly but not only if there is rain around. They can also often be first seen when driving, but please take care when stopping to view them.

The **Eastern Koel** will also move out of the COG AoI by the end of March. At the time of writing I was aware of 72 Koel fledglings this season, with a distinct slowing of reports of new ones in the second half of February. This number is fewer than the 84 I estimated last season, so their relatively late arrival may have resulted in a shorter season. Adults are still present but are much quieter in many areas now that the breeding season is largely over, though they are still giving the occasional call. So please listen out for them, including any further begging fledglings and adult "ko-el" calling.

Some species will be seen in Canberra during March as "passage migrants" as they move north from their breeding sites in the mountains. These include the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail**. Look out also for the first migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**; this movement usually starts in the last week of March.

Other species move from the mountains but will stay here over winter, so watch out for the first altitudinal migrants, the **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater** (a surprise one was in my garden on 30 January and 1 February) in Canberra's suburbs and peri-urban areas in March (from the eBird map it appears there have been quite a few reports of all 3 species from these areas already during February).



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria

Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

Good birding, good food

2019

Atherton Tablelands, FNQ

8 to 13 June 2019

Gulf of Carpentaria

1 to 18 July 2019

Georgetown, Karumba, Mt Isa, Winton

Now with two places available

South West Western Australia

2 to 11 September 2019

Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

12 to 22 September 2019

Now includes Marla (SA) for

Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Yulara
for Sandhill Grasswren.

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2019

23/24 November 2019

7/8 December 2019

2020

Tasmanian bird and mammal tour

1 to 8 February 2020

Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range NP in two parts.

1 to 14 June 2020

The Pilbara birding tour

24 July to 2 August 2020

Limited places available.

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

There have been a few more “unusual” birds reported in February. The most remarkable of these were the two female **Pied Honeyeaters** observed and photographed by Shorty on 10 February at the corner of Naas and Apollo Roads in Namadgi NP. The birds were reported feeding on the ground using a small bush as a perch to spot their insect prey. This was in cleared farmland with bush nearby. While I have suggested to look out for this species a number of times during past dry spring/summers, it is not listed in the Annotated List of the Birds of the ACT on the COG website, nor is it mentioned in Steve Wilson’s book *Birds of the ACT: Two Centuries of Change*. It has been accepted as **CONFIRMED** by eBird Australia and if accepted by the COG Rarities Panel, it will be the first record in the COG Aol. This is a highly mobile species of the arid and semi-arid inland open woodlands and mallee and mulga shrublands, often in association with flowering shrubs such as *Eremophila*, so to find it in the above habitat is certainly a surprise.



Pied Honeyeater

Shorty

Another unusual species was the **White-throated Nightjar** reported by Brett Allen at Pipeline Road, Cotter River on 3 February. The 2016-2017 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists this as a rare breeding summer visitor from the coastal area which has been reported about 1 year in 3 since 1983. A further one was the **Spangled Drongo** reported from Callum Brae NR by Christine D and Alastair Smith on 19 February. While it was reported in 2017-2018, the above ABR notes this is a coastal species not often recorded in the ACT, with none for the previous 4 years following the increasing records in the prior decade. There has also been a further report of a **Turquoise Parrot**, this time a male, photographed at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by David Dedenczuk on 14 February. A **Black Falcon** was also reported by Steve Holliday at Ainslie on 29 January.

While at most two observers reported the above, six birders reported the **Little Friarbird** present on Black Mountain Peninsula on 2 February. There have also been further reports by 4 observers of the **Australian Little Bittern** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, the most recent being on 12 February. **Great-crested Grebes** have continued to be reported from the Cotter Dam, with a maximum of 8 birds on 11 February. While there have been no further reports of the **Musk Duck** in ACT waters during February, I have a late report from Michael Robbins of one on the small Murrumbidgee Country Club dam off Learmonth Drive in Kambah on 9 December 2018, an unexpected location for this diving duck which prefers deeper waters.

There have also been further reports of **Black Kites** from 5 locations, as well as of **Musk** and **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets**, from four locations for the former, with the latter being regularly reported from Watson. On 21 February Michael Lenz reported 2 **Little Lorikeets** flying past near Gundaroo. The 2016-2017 ABR lists this as a nomadic species feeding mainly on flowering eucalypts, with no records that year and last recorded in 2012-2013, but with records in most years before that.

In addition to those for the **White-browed Woodswallow** and **Eastern Koel** mentioned above, as well as the **Darter/Cormorant** summarised in the separate report on the COG boat trip, as might be expected there has been some continued breeding activity during the period. The following are worthy of reporting in more detail:

On 29 January John Brannan was watching an adult **Dollarbird** feed a fairly recently fledged youngster at the Pinnacle NR, and was a bit surprised to see the adult regurgitating food to give to the chick. Until the parent arrived, he had assumed that they would be feeding the chick whole (undigested) insects. He asked is this a normal thing for Dollarbirds since it is primarily an insectivore. HANZAB notes the feeding of Dollarbird young is poorly known, but does contain a short paragraph which includes that adults carry prey items singly in their bill, crush them and then pass them on to their fledglings.

On the same day John Leonard saw a young bird perched on a branch on Blundell's Creek Road which he couldn't identify at first (even as to type). Suddenly a female **Red-browed Treecreeper** came and perched on the branch next to it and started feeding it. After this the dependent young followed the female but wasn't very sure-footed on the vertical trunk of a smooth-barked eucalypt. The 2016-2017 ABR notes breeding has been recorded for this species in only 8 of 35 years.

On 2 February David Rees posted a video filmed that week at Tidbinbilla of a pair of **Australian Reed-Warblers** that had chosen to build a nest very close to the boardwalk on pond 4 of the Sanctuary. He noted they were not bothered at all with people watching their comings and goings from about a metre away, and how the parents carefully removed faecal sacks from their young.

On 3 February Julian Robinson posted about the extent of breeding at the Yankee Hut carpark. From there up the hill to the east, there were at least 50 **Fuscous Honeyeaters** with many young and begging young (maybe in the hundreds; begging peeps were everywhere), more than 40 **Dusky Woodswallows** including immatures (also could have been hundreds), the **White-browed Woodswallows** noted above, and perhaps 500 **Common Starlings**, about 50% of them young. It was a similar story at Glendale except for no **White-browed Woodswallows**.

On 5 February Lyndon Howes posted a photo of a family of **Chestnut Teals** at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. He believed their breeding was not common there upon which Martin Butterfield pointed out the excellent Birdinfo facility on the COG website which shows there are 85 breeding records for **Chestnut Teal**. While this is roughly 1/3 the number of breeding records for **Grey Teal**, the total number of records for the Chestnut Teal is about 1/4 the number for the Grey Teal. So Martin concluded the Chestnuts are less common than the Grey but a higher proportion of records are of breeding activity. Lindell pointed out that on 1 February she saw the **Chestnut Teal** family of 3 ducklings there and a **Grey Teal** family with 5 ducklings.

Robin Hide posted that at dusk on the evening of 5 February there were three **Southern Boobooks** hawking from the power lines and trees at the end of their garden and in neighbouring gardens in Ainslie. It was too dark and too far away to see clearly, but it appeared that one was being brought food by one of the others. He confirmed that they could hear the cricket-like noises which is the sound juveniles make, and that they'd probably been hearing that sound for a few nights.

On 16 February Steve Read posted that a **Leaden Flycatcher** was carrying food repeatedly to a very young fledgling at Campbell Park that morning, and two of the **Rufous Whistlers** seen nearby also looked very young.

On the morning of 24 February at the Bendora Arboretum, Steve and Lach Read saw a female flycatcher feeding a young cuckoo high in the canopy. At the time their identification was **Satin Flycatcher** and **Brush Cuckoo**, but Steve posted that female flycatchers are not easy and sought advice on the identification. The most reliable pointer to a **Satin Flycatcher** was probably the 1305 m altitude as the convex versus concave colour boundary curve on the breast is a male only feature. This is based on Graeme Chapman's website which states for the female "The density and extent of the rufous colouring on the throat and breast is variable and not a reliable character." So how do we identify the Satin female unless there's a male around?

Steve noted the speckled back of the cuckoo and its size suggested a **Brush** and not **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. It was also

more likely to be a **Brush Cuckoo** fledgling because HANZAB indicates the species prefers to parasitise open nests, whereas **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** prefer to select hosts that build enclosed dome-shaped nests and less often parasitise open cup-shaped nests. To me the greater blotchiness and the barring pattern of the tail on Lach's photos was also more like that depicted for the Brush in both HANZAB and the Australian Bird Guide. After 40 years of pretty serious birdwatching I confess that I still have difficulties with these two sets of species, including with the male flycatchers.



Red-browed Treecreeper

Julian Robinson

Autumn is also the time when the shorter mornings and evenings make it easier to watch roost flights and find roost sites. Over 40 **Common Mynas** are currently noisily roosting in my GBS site in Chapman/Rivett, sometime sharing them with **Crested Pigeons**, **Galahs**, the resident **Magpie-larks** and **Australian Ravens**. More importantly, contrary to the speculation in my February Gang-gang column that the southside **Superb Parrots** may roost north

of the Lake, Chris Davey told me he suspected that they also breed and roost south of the lake. Based on the research on the two northside roosts at Watson and the Belconnen Golf course, he expected the latter would be within 10 km of where they breed/feed. Soon after alerting chatline subscribers it was something for to look out, Ryu Callaway reported around 50 **Superb Parrots** on the Federal Golf Course, Hughes early on the morning of 17 February. He added that they were likely to have been roosting there, as independently confirmed a couple of days later. So this species is certainly no longer unusual south of the lake.

As an example of how counts at roost sites can give an indication of numbers of species present, on 15 February Michael Lenz posted that for the spring/early summer of 2018 **Welcome Swallows** were not as common as in the previous 3 years as the prolonged drought appeared to have impacted their numbers. He noted that sites, such as the Fyshwick Sewage Farm and West Belconnen Pond had only small numbers present (at least whenever he went there). He could now verify that impression. Over the period from the end of January to April, numbers at the Norgrove Park/Kingston Harbour roost site were highest in 2016-2018. A count he had carried out that morning gave only a total of 420 **Welcome Swallows**. While this may seem a large number in absolute terms, he pointed out it represents only 25 to 30% of the numbers at this time of year in 2016-2018, as published in his CBN paper.

Finally autumn is also the time of the mixed feeding flocks (MFF) phenomenon. On 16 February Steve Read posted that summer may not have quite ended, but the breeding season is over for most birds, territories are less important, and MFFs are back. His first of the season at Campbell Park that morning contained ten species: **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Weebill**, **Grey Fantail**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Varied Sittella**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Rufous Whistler** and a **Mistletoebird**. He noted some mistletoe was flowering, and that may also have encouraged the congregation.

I indicated that in my experience MFFs often start in mid-February and sometimes even earlier. I had encountered a rapidly moving one during my survey at Narrabundah Hill the day before. This included his first five species plus **Silvereyes** and a male **Leadend Flycatcher**, the last-named a surprise as very few of this species have been observed in my local patch in recent years. With things drying out since the end of the first week of February, I expect more will be forming, so please watch out for them as they can have unusual or unexpected compositions, with John Harris noting that his MFFs usually contain finches due to the Ginninderra Creek flood plain and the native grasses. As I've mentioned many times before, nothing in bird watching gives me a bigger thrill than a MFF and looking out for the unexpected species lurking quietly in amongst all that activity.

March is the in the middle of the more than 3 month period when there is significant bird movement in the COG AoI. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above that usually leave in March, for the first arriving altitudinal migrants in your local patch, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any further breeding activity. As usual please ensure that all significant observations 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, postings on the COG Email Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia database, as well as some direct correspondence to me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Jack Holland



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

**FOR THE BEST BIRDWATCHING
IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND**

Self-contained Units,
Bunk Rooms & Campground

www.birdwatchers.com.au
sootyowl@bigpond.com
Find us on Facebook

Ph: 07 40941263

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 3 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

The outing was organised to celebrate World Wetland Day and in particular the signing of the Ramsar Convention in Iran in 1971. The Convention was ratified by Australia in 1975 and there are now 66 listed sites within Australia with Ginini Flats Subalpine Bog Complex the only listed ACT site. To obtain listing there are various criteria including Criterion 5- regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds - and Criterion 6- regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird. For further information see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ramsar_sites_in_Australia#Australian_Capital_Territory

The outing was held the day after the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Open Day at which COG ran a stall. Seven COG members and friends met at the Wetlands carpark at 7:30 for an outing which lasted about 3 hours. Interesting sightings included the resident **Black-shouldered Kite**, and a brood of **Chestnut Teal** ducklings competing for food with 2 broods of **Grey Teal** and a couple of young **Pacific Black Duck**. A single **Nankeen Night-Heron** flew over and 7 **Latham's Snipe** were seen including a leg-flagged bird, No. 74. The day was warm and **Australian Reed-Warblers** and **Golden-headed Cisticolas**, although about, were very quiet. A single **Little Grassbird** was heard from a Typha patch in Kelly Swamp. Two adults and a single young **Dollarbird** were present and notable were the large number of **Red-kneed Dotterel** working the mud on the shore opposite the various hides. Otherwise, it was a quiet and enjoyable walk with all of the regular birds present.

Chris Davey

Sunday 10 February – East Basin/Molonglo Reach electric boat cruise

Under clear, still and surprisingly cool conditions for February, 23 members and guests joined me on what was my twentieth time for this now annual trip to view the water and land birds of this area. We left from Kingston Harbour on the electric boat, the EL Gull, first venturing about 500 m into the navigable part of Jerrabomberra Creek and then along the east bank of East Basin, into Molonglo Reach and along the south bank to the newest bridge, before tracing our route back.

Again **Australian Darters** were present in both the Creek and along the Reach. The 7 birds counted were fairly evenly split between males (with limited red on the neck so not in breeding plumage) and females (with clear white breasts and black napes), but with no immatures that I can recall. We had some great views of the former with wings spread out, drying them and thermo-regulating at the same time. Towards the end we saw 3 of them very high on the thermals, noting how easy it is to mistake them for raptors.

The relatively low count was made up for by observing all four cormorant species. There were a total of 4 **Great Cormorants** in both spots, and single **Little Black** and **Little Pied Cormorants** resting along the bank of the creek, and in Molonglo Reach, respectively. Early on we also saw a **Pied Cormorant** sitting perfectly still in a dead tree in the creek, allowing the identification features to be pointed out and pleasing those participants who were able to add this species to their 2019 ACT lists.

This is now the fourth year that no darter/cormorant breeding could be confirmed, and for the first time there seemed to be no older nests in previously favoured spots or birds still in breeding plumage. Given the high water levels from the rain/storms we'd had over the past few months I was hopeful that there may have been some renewed activity, but we can now firmly conclude that the breeding of these species in the area, first discovered in 2003, is over.

The main breeding area in the ACT still appears to be along the Molonglo River west of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass for about a kilometre downstream. On 17-18 February Jean Casburn attempted an accurate count as she waded through the overgrowth down to the river. Her counts of the total number of each species with the number of nests (spread over 6 trees) follow: 34 **Australian Darters** (eleven nests with young at various stages), 31 **Little Pied Cormorant** (9 nests with at least some still sitting on them), 15 **Great Cormorant** (10 nests with again some still sitting), and 17 **Little Black Cormorants**, but with none nesting.

These are very typical of the numbers that were once found on the boat trip. Willows have been/are being cleared from this area too, so it is a question as to how long breeding on this site will continue. Chris Davey is sure that there are a few **Great Cormorants** and possibly **Little Pied Cormorants** breeding at Gungahlin Pond, but notes that it is very difficult to confirm without proper access to the islands.

Other waterbird activity continues to be very low, with the highlights being the three **Australian Pelicans** circling high over the wetlands (they are well known from there, but checking back over my reports, surprisingly it seems that these may have

been the first seen on the boat trip), and the single **Nankeen Night Heron**, seen well only by Ned in a spot in the willows where they have been recorded previously. There were also good numbers of **Australian White** and **Straw-necked Ibis** either feeding on the wetlands or flying overhead. There were also small numbers of the usual species, the highlight being 1 and 2 **Australian Wood Duck** and **Pacific Black Duck** ducklings, respectively, the former paddling as fast as it could to keep up with its parents.

Also seen on the bank were 18 **Greylag Geese**, the majority of them white, and as usual completely unafraid of the canoeists and walkers. This number has grown slightly from the 16 we saw on the February 2018 trip. Again the implications for this further increase in numbers from the 4 seen there in February 2017 are unclear.

Of the land birds, 2 **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, certainly a first for this trip, flew over the boat while we were on the Reach. A **Little Eagle**, identified by its M underwing pattern, seen circling over the wetlands was also a first for the boat trip, though again it is well known from the area. Three species were very numerous compared with previous trips, with many **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Grey Fantails** and **Silvereyes** seen or heard all the way along the Reach, indicative of a very good supply of insects in the bushes/trees from which they were feeding.

The **Australian Reed-Warbler** also seemed to be in higher numbers than usual. Compared with last year, **Dollarbird** numbers were down, with only 2 seen, though we did see four **Sacred Kingfishers**, one being a very bright blue. Again there were at least 250 **Common Starlings** on a couple of dead trees, the wires, ground, etc, near the mouth of the Reach. **Spotted Doves** were also again seen in the Reach.

At 51 the total number of species was about average, in fact the same as last year. Despite the complete lack of darter/cormorant breeding, participants again enjoyed the trip which remains a popular and very pleasant late summer outing. This is despite the configuration of the boat not always allowing everyone, particularly beginners, to observe/identify all the bird species as we glide past. Many thanks to Jean Casburn, who offered to and checked the current nesting along the Molonglo River, to Michael Maconachie, Senior Ranger ACT Parks and Conservation, for allowing us to access the lower parts of Jerrabomberra Creek which always provides some interesting species, and to Jim Paterson for again skippering the boat.

Jack Holland

Sunday 17 February - Lake Burley Griffin

A small group of four COG members and their bikes gathered at 7.30 am on a clear, sunny morning to undertake the glorious 30km ride around Lake Burley Griffin. We proceeded in a clockwise (westward) direction, as this was away from the glaring sun, and meant that one dealt with the four big hills earlier, rather than later. We as a group decided to count species without counting the actual number of birds; to count all the birds, particularly the plentiful **Wood Ducks** and **Magpie-larks**, would take all day – and we only had half a day. There were frequent stops to add species. An interesting incident occurred at Yarralumla Bay, where we observed a dog harassing a distressed kangaroo, both swimming 100m out into the bay itself. We watched as both animals swam back to shore, then intervened to ensure that the exhausted kangaroo had a chance to escape the dog. Somewhere, there is an irresponsible owner. Soon after this drama, we encountered *bird du jour* – a **Yellow Thornbill**, much as had been described in the advertisement. Over the next four hours, and under an increasingly glaring sun, we cycled through several habitats, observing many of Canberra's more common, and less common birds – such as **Sacred Kingfisher**. We completed the circuit with a goodly haul of 64 species, if one is to include **Greylag Goose**.

David Dedenczuk

Wednesday 20 February – Umbagog District Park

About 30 members gathered on the Western bit of Dalley Cr, Latham for a "figure of eight" tour of this reserve. The initial stages of the walk were fairly quiet with a family of **Willie Wagtails** and a small flock of **Red-browed Finches** being highlights as we crossed Ginninderra Creek for the first time. After using the stepping stones to get back across the creek we got into bushier country with a much more diverse avifauna. As well as quite a few of the usual bush birds along this stretch, those at the back of the group saw a **Collared Sparrowhawk** while some of the front runners saw a female **White-winged Triller**.

Although there still seemed to be water in the creek, waterbirds were very few. Two **Great Cormorants** and 2 **Straw-necked Ibis** flew over and 2 **Australian White Ibis** landed briefly. In the stretch to the west of Florey Drive the highlight was the relatively large number of **Sacred Kingfishers** observed. At one point 4 of this species were visible at one time (and 7 were recorded for the whole walk). Returning to the cars a low point was a flock of 11 **Common Mynas** - many of the group noted this to be a very large group in recent times. This was balanced by the pleasing sighting of 3 **Double-barred Finches**.

Overall members of the group recorded 44 species. A full list is at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S52946964>

Martin Butterfield

New Places – December/January

Sandra Henderson

21-27 January 2019

Lower Molonglo Nature Reserve, Denman Prospect

Where is it – from the carpark at Coppins Crossing, follow the track which follows the river to the point where track peters out and the pipeline is above (there is a vehicle track just a little up the slope, which I followed back to carpark).

A very pleasant walk, with the highlight a group of four **Dollarbirds** in a dead tree near the end.

20 species altogether, <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S51973760>

28 January – 3 February, 2019

Pipeline Reserve, Jerrabomberra

Where is it – across the road from the Jerrabomberra Community Centre and its pond.

The key feature of this reserve is another large pond, although that's not visible from the road. There was a family group of **Willie Wagtails**, and **Little Pied** and **Little Black Cormorants**.

23 species, <https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S52279757>

4-10 February, 2019

Mount Franklin, Namadgi National Park

In the past I've gone as far as the site of the old chalet, but the Australian Native Plant Society walk was to the summit, a further 1.5km along the track. A check of eBird showed very few visits, and only 20 species recorded. We walked on a beautiful morning with no wind - the track is very exposed so if the weather was less kind it could be rather unpleasant. There are very few birds along the way, as others have discovered.

Yellow-faced honeyeaters were around in small numbers, and a few **Grey Fantails** flitted about. The only really good birds were a couple of **Grey Currawongs**, at least one of which was a young bird, which moved ahead of us on the track for a hundred metres or so on the return journey. Their calls were quite unusual - nothing like the bell-like calls I've heard previously from this species. I'd not recommend this walk if you want a great bird list, but the views from

near the trig are spectacular, the wildflower meadow at the top surprising given this summer's dry conditions and, earlier in the season when the many grevilleas and pea bushes are flowering, it would be very colourful.

10 species, <https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S52424911>



Grey Currawong

Sandra Henderson

11-17 February, 2019

Saleyard Ponds, Berrima Rd, Moss Vale

There had been some recent reports of Blue-billed ducks at these ponds, so I detoured past them on my last trip to Mittagong. There is no access – the ponds have to be viewed from the road (Abbattoir Rd, between the ponds and the saleyards). Alas, I was there in the middle of the day, and if those ducks were there they were sheltering under distant trees (a problem also mentioned by another eBirder). However, several other species were out and about, including a **Great Egret**, a **Pelican** asleep on a pole, many **Eurasian Coots** and both common species of grebes. Definitely a place to try again!

14 species, <https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S52629243>

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://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>

and trips page of COG website.

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.

Saturday 2 March – Forde Creek and ponds – morning outing

This has been a good spot for rails and crakes in previous years.

Directions: Turn off Horse Park Road into Mulligan's Flat Road between Forde and Bonner. (Ignore any signs to Mulligans Flat itself. Go into the actual, new Mulligans Flat Road). Turn right into Handbury Way. Immediately to your right is the smallish Linear Park. We will meet there at 8.00am. Park in a street there somewhere. The Creek is flowing at present but if hot, dry weather continues, the creek may dry up. Depending on the amount of action in Forde Creek, we will investigate other nearby urban wetlands. That decision will be made on the day so any further directions will be provided then.

John Harris

Saturday 9 to Monday 11 March (Canberra Day long weekend) – Tumut – camping or accommodated

Camping will be on a private property, on the banks of the Tumut River, only a few kilometres from town. Those not wanting to camp could organise to stay in town and join us each day (there are many motels in Tumut, and a pleasant caravan park adjacent to the local wetlands).

Daytime excursions will be to a variety of spots, including some which are regularly surveyed by a COG member for Birdlife Australia's Key Biodiversity Areas project. Places to be visited include the Tumut Common and Wetlands, Shelley's Lagoon, Junction Park, the Thomas Boyd Trackhead and Talbingo.

Register with Sandra Henderson, shirmax2931@gmail.com

Saturday 16 to Monday 18 March — Bournda National Park - Camping

Bournda National Park is on the Far South Coast near Bega, offering secluded beaches, stunning coastal walks, great birdwatching and camping. We will camp at Hobart Beach campground near Wallagoot Lake and do some of the local walks as well as explore the surrounding region's birding spots. Target species are **Hooded Plover, Azure Kingfisher, Glossy Black-Cockatoo, White-throated Nightjar and Yellow Bellied Glider.**

Participants will need to pay their park entry fee and book their own campsite - <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/camping-and-accommodation/campgrounds/hobart-beach-campground>. We are booked on site 45. So, if possible, please choose a site somewhere in that area (which you will find in Map 1 on the website). Activities will start on Saturday morning with the expectation that most people will arrive on Friday 15th.

Please book a place on this outing with Kathy Walter or John Goldie by email on walter.goldie@gmail.com. The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis.

Wednesday 19 March – Gigerline

Hopefully the honeyeater migration will have started and we'll be able to find the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** at the river.

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 23 March – Booroomba Rocks to Mt Tennent Fire Trail – day outing

This is a reasonably easy 7.5 km all day bushwalk in northern Namadgi National Park, involving a short car shuffle. From Booroomba Rocks carpark we will use the Australian Alps Walking Track to slowly walk down Booroomba Creek to Bushfold Flats. After lunch we will then walk out to the gate on Apollo Road via the southern end of the Mt Tennent Fire Trail.

The Booroomba Creek section involves a descent on a narrow track, followed by a flat section around Bush-fold Flats and a steepish descent on the firetrail with loose gravel underfoot, and finally a short climb back to Apollo Road. It should be suitable for reasonably fit folk who are steady on their feet.

At this time of year in these wet creek and dry forest habitats we might expect to see **Eastern Yellow** and **Scarlet Robins**, various thornbills, **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Red-browed Finch**, **Brush Cuckoo** and, if we are lucky, **Superb Lyrebird** and **Pilotbird**. Raptors are a good possibility in the open country.

Meet at 8.30 am at the Namadgi Visitors Centre carpark, where we will arrange the car shuffle logistics and carpool if possible. Bring lunch and water.

Please pre-register with Michael Robbins by email: mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au (preferably), or by phone 6231 7391, to facilitate car shuffle organisation.

Sunday 31 March – Lanyon

A large group of 35 participants, including several birding notables and a smattering of new members, really enjoyed their first outing last year on the 3rd of March 2018.

This time we shall assemble four weeks later in the hope that we can coincide with the customary honeyeater migration as our specially authorised Murrumbidgee riverside walk provides several superb vantage points

Some other attractions can include the Homestead tour (fee payable) but our escorted walk will cover extensive gardens, dams and stone outbuildings containing haunting memories of the convict era so many years ago.

The walking conditions are considered easy, suitable for all ages.

Nature Lodge Optics

Nature Lodge Optics, a family owned business based in Huskisson, Jervis Bay, has been supplying quality binoculars to customers in the Canberra region since 2007.

Originally established in the UK in 1946, the owners established a branch in Australia several years ago and have become the region's leading independent binocular store.

Open 7 Days, the store always has over 100 pairs of binoculars in stock with a particular emphasis on



Birdwatching products.

Major brands such as Steiner, Zeiss, Bushnell, Nikon & Pentax are represented together with smaller hi-tech brands like Weaver, Vortex, Forest Optics, Visionary and Vanguard.

A selection of Spotting Scopes, Night Vision & Tripods are always available.

As a family business and NOT a franchise the owners Daniel and Joanna Payne will always be happy to source the specialist or unusual products that individual customers require having established a global network of suppliers.

The store also specialises in polarised eyewear with brands such as Maui Jim, RayBan & Oakley to name just a few.

The helpful and informative website www.binoculars4u.com.au is regularly updated but is no substitute for personal service and recommendation which is always on hand.

**We welcome customers new and old to call us on
02 4441 7770**

Please arrive by 0830 at Lanyon car park and we expect to finish about 1200 noon when it is expected that many will stay for good value light refreshments and bird count etc.

For bookings please register with Terry Bell by email to terrybellbird@gmail.com with other enquiries (transport, etc) to 0427292298.

Sunday 7 April – Narrabundah Hill – morning outing

Everyone is welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. This walk has been timed for the honeyeater migration season, with the northern and western boundaries of the reserve having some of the few currently known local migration routes. We will walk along these two boundaries, depending on conditions and the species seen possibly along most of the western one, and we'll either return by the same or a different path. We will also look for other autumn birds such as the **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as the gerygones.

This walk will start at 8:30 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning at the end of March/early April (Note this is the first morning when daylight savings has ended). Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 or jandaholland@bigpond.com) at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. **Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care.**

Jack Holland

Sunday 14 April – K2C- Bredbo region – day outing

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 **Brown Treecreeper**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists. 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 10 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210736.

Friday 19 – Monday 22 April – Round Hill – Easter camp

The Easter campout this year is to Round Hill Nature Reserve in central NSW. We should see quite a variety of western birds as there is a big range of habitat types in the area, including mallee, callitris and eucalypt woodlands. Past COG trips have seen **Splendid Fairy-wren**, **Crested Bellbird**, **Major Mitchell's Cockatoo**, **Yellow-plumed**



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.

Discounts available for Birdlife Australia members.

Check our website for comprehensive details, rates, and bookings:

www.feathersnfriends.com.au

Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

MUDBRICK COTTAGE— MALLACOOTA

Our mudbrick cottage (Blue Wren Cottage) is available for rental. It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra).

10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town.

It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry.

Contact: Barbara de Bruine (02) 6174 2171,
or barbdebruine@hotmail.com

Honeyeater and much more. Depending upon how the season is going (and luck) we could see some of harder to find or unusual species as well. Round Hill is between Lake Cargelligo and Mt Hope and is 5+ hours drive from Canberra. I expect we will spend most of our time close to camp with perhaps a couple of short drives. It will be a “bring everything in, take everything out” camp. Note: there are NO FACILITIES.

Being a Nature Reserve, permission is required to camp there and NSW National Parks will not give final permission until about one month before Easter once “operational matters” are confirmed. However, my most recent conversation with the ranger was positive. Participants will be required to provide me with their car registration to forward to NSW National Parks. If you wish to attend, please register at smlashko@gmail.com. There will be a limit of 16 participants. Further details, including directions, will be emailed to participants once the trip is confirmed.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 28 April – Jerrabomberra Hill – morning outing

Meet at 9am in the parking area off Halloran Drive in Jerrabomberra (close to Esmond Ave, on the opposite side of the road). We will walk on the well-maintained vehicle track to the summit of the hill. There is no need to register beforehand.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 12 May -Late autumn mystery bus trip – day outing

Jenny Bounds and Jack Holland are planning another bus trip for this date. Aspects are expected to be the same as previous weekend trips of this kind, ie cost of \$20 for transport by two 12-seater buses, the point of departure will be the National Library car park at 8 am, and it will run until mid-afternoon (please bring morning tea and lunch). To continue to keep it fresh we are again looking at changing the specific objectives of this trip. These are still being discussed but we plan to visit some spots where participants may not normally go and/or will be able to see some interesting birds. The final itinerary will depend on some reccies beforehand, as well as which birds have been reported around the time.

If you are interested in participating please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 H or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com). Don't delay booking your seats if you are intending to participate in this very popular outing.

Invitation to provide your views on COG and its activities via an online survey

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is conducting a survey of the members and friends of the Association to find out what parts of COG's activities matter to you, and what we could usefully change or improve.

You are invited to complete the survey online by visiting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/COG2019>. Responses from both members and non-members of COG will be welcome. Your responses will be anonymous, so please feel free to use the survey to express your opinions directly.

Please complete the survey as soon as you are able, or by Wednesday 13 March at the latest. The survey will close on that date.

If you would prefer to fill in a paper copy of the survey, printed copies will be available at the COG meeting on Wednesday 13 February. Alternatively, contact Steve Read (steve.read123@gmail.com) or David McDonald (david@dnmcdonald.id.au) who will email a pdf of the survey to you that you can print out and complete. If you would like a paper copy mailed to you, please let us know, with your mailing address, and we will arrange this. Completed paper copies of the survey can be handed to a COG Committee Member at the February or March COG monthly meeting, or mail completed paper copies to the COG Secretary, PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608 by 13 March 2019.

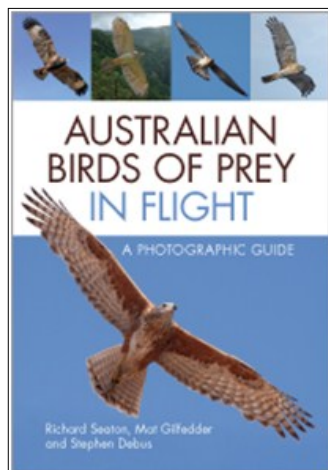
If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please contact either Steve Read (steve.read123@gmail.com) or David McDonald (david@dnmcdonald.id.au).

Publications for sale

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

Below are highlighted a sample of popular publications available from the sales desk at COG meetings. We get new books in all the time and sometimes popular books sell out, but they can easily be re-ordered. If you are looking for a particular book, talk to the sales desk team at the meeting, as they can look at ordering it for you or contact Kathy on

sales@canberrabirds.org.au



Australian Birds of Prey in Flight: A Photographic Guide

Richard Seaton, Mat Gilfedder, Stephen Debus

Identify the eagles, hawks, kites and falcons flying high above you with this photographic guide. Birds of prey spend most of their time in flight and, when viewed from the ground, they are notoriously hard to identify. Individual species profiles describe distinguishing features and the text is supported by detailed images showing the birds at six different angles and poses, using photographs from many of Australia's leading bird photographers. Annotated multi-species comparison plates highlight key features that can help differentiate birds of prey in flight.

This book will provide a useful reference for identifying soaring birds in the field, and also while trying to identify images from your own camera.

Available March 2019. Members' price: \$30.

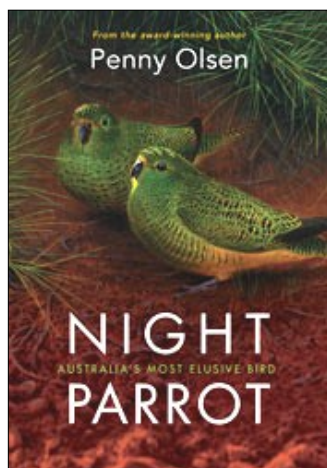


Australasian Eagles and Eagle-like Birds

Stephen Debus

Eagles are awe-inspiring birds that have influenced much human endeavour. Australia is home to three eagle species, and in Melanesia there are four additional endemic species. A further three large Australian hawks are eagle-like. All of the six Australian species covered in this book are threatened in at least some states (one also nationally). This book places the Australasian species in their regional and global context, reviews their population status and threats, provides new information on their ecology, and suggests what needs to be done in order to ensure the future of these magnificent birds.

Members' price: \$35.



Night Parrot: Australia's Most Elusive Bird

Penny Olsen

Night Parrot documents the competitiveness and secrecy, the triumphs and adventures of the history of the bird and its followers, culminating in the recent discovery of live birds at a few widely scattered locations. It describes what we are now unravelling about the mysteries of its biology and ecology and what is still left to learn. Complemented by guest essays, illustrations and photographs from a wide variety of sources, this book sheds light on Australia's most elusive bird.

Members' Price: \$35



**Your own Latham's Snipes— and Blue-billed Ducks with ducklings -
and 96 other species (can provide full list upon request).**

All looking for someone to not destroy their lagoon. So preferably birdwatchers

For Sale

67km from ACT, 247km from Sydney, 35km from Yass. **2 bedroom, 1 bathroom house, 2 car garage,** 2 watertanks and shed. **On 1 acre with private lagoon and also creek frontage.** Many sustainable features. Reverse cycle air-conditioning. Country pine kitchen with Miele dishwasher and double butler sink.

1 block or 5 mins walk from shops (swimming pool, cafes, chemist, pub), 2 blocks from doctor, health centre, newsagent, PO and library, etc.

Unique weekender or retiree's house to downsize to. (Or also plenty of room to extend)

For sale \$315,000 Ph 0401 771 642 (Must sell – sick family in Qld)



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

2018-2019 memberships:

- Singles: \$40
- Family: \$45
- Institution: \$40
- School student (under 18) \$20

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

S Hughes

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for April 2019 edition:

Wednesday 27 March 2019

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

COG information

President: Neil Hermes

0413 828 045

president@canberrabirds.org.au

Treasurer:

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Secretary:

Bill Graham

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

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

Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

lenzmj@hotmail.com.au

COG website

canberrabirds.org.au

COG Webmaster

Julian Robinson

cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

Membership Enquiries & Updates:

membership@canberrabirds.org.au

for change of address or other details.

Gang-gang Newsletter

Editor: Sue Lashko

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann

Publication Sales

Kathy Walter

sales@canberrabirds.org.au

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@canberrabirds.org.au. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

To unsubscribe, either permanently or temporarily, send an email message to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@canberrabirds.org.au.

If you wish to re-subscribe after being unsubscribed temporarily, simply follow the 'subscribe' instructions above.

Copyright in *Gang-gang* articles is retained by the articles' authors.

Gang-gang is published on COG's website in PDF format, as well as being distributed in print format.

ISSN 2208-018X

