



# Gang-gang

**FEBRUARY 2019**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## FEBRUARY MEETING

**Wednesday 13 February 2019**

**7.30 pm**

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

The first presentation will be by well known recorder **David Rees** showing a video entitled **"Birds of the wetlands at Warren, NSW"**.

On the northern outskirts of the small central NSW town of Warren lies the community run Tiger Bay Wetlands. Water levels are managed with water from the town sewerage works close by. The local council has built a network of paths through the area and also an educational centre and cafe, which is open at times. The wetland, and the town, in general is a magnet for birds, especially when things in the region are dry. Birdwatchers are welcomed and those travelling through to inland Qld and outback NSW/SA could do well to support this community initiative with a visit and maybe an overnight stay. The film showcases many of the birds David has come across there over the last few years' worth of visits.

The main presentation will be by **Michael Guppy** on **"Cracking the Code. What regulates breeding in the Bird Community at Moruya."**

*Continued Page 2*

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

The weather over the two summer months covered by this column, December 2018 and January 2019, has been one of contrasts. First, the former month was much wetter (over 100 mm at my place in Chapman) than we had experienced in the spring. Second, since Christmas it has been very hot, with few days under 30°C and at least 5 days over 40°C (including four in a row). Despite the December rain following reasonable falls in November, initially bird numbers seemed to be low. For example, often very few small bush birds were reported from the Woodland surveys, and over the New Year there was concern expressed that the main reason for this was that there was very little bird food available, both fruit and seeds. However, as shown by this column in many ways it has been a remarkable two months, perhaps not right across the board, but at least for some species including some rarely seen. This may be because despite the heat sufficient rain at regular intervals (over 60 mm at my place) was received in January to sustain the recovery of

*Continued Page 2*



Nankeen Night Heron

*Lyndon Howe*

**Everyone welcome**

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## FEBRUARY MEETING

*Continued from Page 1*

Michael has presented data on this study to COG twice previously. The second half of the long-term study by Michael, his wife Sarah, her brother Richard and father Stephen Marchant, was concluded at the end of the 2014-2015 breeding season. Since then they have been analysing the data from the entire study. This analysis has uncovered a surprisingly simple system, whereby one factor is the main determinant of how many pairs breed on the site each season, the length of the breeding period, and nesting success.



Spotted Harrier

*Lindsay Hansch*

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

the green growth begun in December, despite it being severely stressed at times, and also that in general the inland has remained dry.

Most remarkable to me is that it has been the best breeding season for the **Superb Parrot** in the 4 years that this has been closely monitored, as outlined in the Canberra Times article published on 13 January. While this referred to the known breeding areas of Throsby and the Molonglo Valley, breeding may have also occurred South of the lake, if so this may be the first time to my recall. The first report was by Sandra Henderson of a group of at least 12 birds, of which at least eight were begging youngsters, around Erindale on the evening of Christmas Day. In the New Year John Leonard (and others) reported up to 30 birds off Kent St Hughes, including at least two begging and being fed. John noted they seemed to be very young and only just out of the nest. Dependent young have since been reported from Ainslie (several spots), Watson, O'Connor, and most recently up to 40 birds at the ANU with many begging young.

On 23 January Isobel Crawford posted that she had been hearing/seeing **Superb Parrots** with young feeding on the fruits of *Fraxinus velutinus*, an Ash species widely planted in Canberra's streets and parks. They were along Sullivans Creek below the Lyneham wetland to David Street, and in Boronia Drive, Pedder St etc in O'Connor, and also along the Dickson tributary of Sullivans Creek. She noted that if they come to accept this and other commonly planted, and now quite weedy, *Fraxinus* species as food sources, Canberra could continue to attract **Superb Parrots**, especially in seasons as harsh as this breeding season when the dry winter had inhibited fruit production by the wattles and grasses they might more normally use.

It is possible that at least some of the dependent young seen Southside may be from birds roosting Northside with Steve Read counting 44 **Superb Parrots** (in three groups of 16, 16 and 12 birds) at North Weston Pond at 17:40-18:40 h on 27 November. They were flying over fast and high, northwards along the Molonglo, possibly towards a roost site in Belconnen. He also saw at least 14 heading south in the opposite direction, calling as they were flying at some speed, in Devonport St Lyons at about 7.30 h on 10 January.

Species whose breeding season in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) doesn't seem to have been as successful are the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**. In my December 2018 column I reported their widespread presence, including in mixed flocks of up to 300, but limited breeding to date. While the species remained in the area for the first half of December, again only small numbers (usually in the low single figures per site) of actual breeding observations for both species were reported. On 23 December Martin Butterfield could no longer find either species on the Hoskintown Plain where over 300 birds had been reported mid November.

On 5 January Michael Lenz noted that one of the features for this season was that numbers kept dropping, even when birds had been seen previously nest building or already sitting on eggs, with some sites even completely abandoned. He had checked his 11 Lake George/Bathurst sites the day before; just several pairs of **White-broweds** had fledglings or were feeding young in the nest. Two sites were abandoned, and numbers had fallen further at other sites. Only 2 sites had

included nesting **Masked Woodswallows**, but only 1 site still had 3 pairs of this species. On 7 January at the TSR near Gundaroo only one pair of **White-broweds** was still present, and he had to watch them for a long time before he could confirm they had a fledgling. These observations support my belief that once the inland conditions (at least somewhere) get better they will leave, including abandoning nesting attempts, though it's probably worth a few delaying this until their young are strong enough to accompany them.

Pleasingly the site at Campbell Park seems to have produced at least a couple of **White-browed Woodswallow** juveniles around New Year, and the species seems to have remained there, with 7 last reported there on 25 January, as well as at the nearby Jerrabomberra Wetlands (8 reported there on 20 January), in the 7 locations from which they have been reported in the COG Aol this month. However, no **Masked Woodswallows** have been reported from the ACT this January, but note Michael Lenz's COG Aol report above. So please keep an eye out for the last of these two species over February, late summer reports of them are quite unusual.

Two species that have been widely observed in the reporting period have been the **White-throated Needletail** and the related **Fork-tailed (Pacific) Swift**. There already were some sightings in mid December, but in January especially the latter has been widely observed (often in association with the storm fronts moving through), and certainly in much greater numbers than I can ever recall. For example on 8 January up to 100 **Fork-tailed Swift** were reported on the chat line widely across the COG Aol by at least 13 observers, and similarly on 19 January up to 400 birds (in two waves each of approximately 200) were reported by 8 observers.

Harvey Perkins posted that this species had been his ACT bogey bird for years. Every time there have been reports of them previously, he was never able to catch up with them, but finally, with all the current activity, he had recorded them over Gleneagles. Unfortunately, despite keeping an eye out I was not so lucky, and this species still remains my bogey bird anywhere in its range. This time I've also not been able to find the **White-throated Needletail** which has been less widely reported (from 12 locations according to the eBird map as opposed to



Fork-tailed Swift

Lindsay Hansch



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Good birding, good food

**2019**

### Tasmanian bird and mammal tour Includes Melaleuca and pelagic

2 to 9 February 2019

Only a few places left.

### Gulf of Carpentaria

Georgetown, Karumba, Mt Isa, Winton  
16 May to 2 June 2019

### Far North Queensland: Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range

8 to 21 June 2019

The Pilbara 2019 tours are full.

### 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

26/27 October 2019

23/24 November 2019

8/9 December 2019

Please see itineraries, checklists  
and latest news on our website

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

over 30 of the related species), with a maximum of 120 over Garran on 18 January. So again please keep an eye out for these two species during February and March.

A species that generated a lot of interest was the **Australian Little Bittern**. This was first reported to me from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands by Steve Wallace on 23 December, but it was not until around New Year when there a flurry of posts on the COG chat line. One of the earlier ones was by Denise Kay of a photo of a juvenile which turned up at the Canberra airport, trapped in the airlock part of the Departure doors, with Marg Peachey later noting she loved the way they were a statue with their beak pointing up but their eyes seeing everywhere. Mary Anne Gates then posted that they turn up at the strangest places – they had found one wandering in the industrial area of Queanbeyan recently.



**Australian Little Bittern**

*Marg Peachey*

In the New Year attention turned back to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands where first an adult male was seen several times coming out to the edge of the reeds, grabbing some unknown prey and returning into the reeds with it. The possibility of a nest or young inside the reeds was mooted but as far as I can tell this was never confirmed. According to the Bird Info on the COG web site it would have been a first record despite it being listed as a rare, breeding visitor. The juvenile photographed subsequently was the subject of much discussion as to the plumage differences between it and the adult female in the various field guides/handbooks etc, particularly as the former's plumage gradually transitions.

Other rarer waterbird observations which have generated interest have been the longer staying 2-plumed **Little Egret** present presently there from the 4<sup>th</sup> to at least 26 January, and the single **Plumed Whistling Duck** seen there only on 7 January (up to 40 have been reported from the Trucking Yard lane dam Bungendore during January). Four **Australian Shelduck** were reported from there on 11 January, as well as 3 at Parkwood on the 13<sup>th</sup>, this species is also rarely recorded in the ACT itself. Three **Intermediate Egrets** were seen at the Cork Oak plantation on 18 January, and a single bird at the West Belconnen Ponds on 22 January. **Great-crested Grebes** have continued to be reported from the Cotter Dam with a maximum of 7 birds on 16 December. Around the same time a **Musk Duck**, again unusual in ACT waters, was reported from the North Weston Pond.

At the same time as the bittern another species recorded at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands was an **Australasian Figbird** first noted there by Shorty on 2 January, but then the subject of much discussion and comparison of photos made by a number of observers with the young **Olive-backed Oriole**. However, in the end it was accepted as CONFIRMED by eBird Australia and if accepted by the COG Rarities Panel it will only be the second record in the COG AoI following the presence of a young bird in Richard Allen's Curtin garden in December 2010. Up to 6 **Zebra Finches** were also reported from there at much the same time, the majority of them of the wild type. The 2016-2017 COG Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists them as a rare breeding visitor/escapee, noting that most sightings have been from these wetlands.

Another unusual bush bird was the **Black-faced Monarch** first reported and confirmed by an audio recording by Kim Larmour on Warks/Blundells Creek Roads in the Brindabellas on 2 December. Then on 10 December it was reported by Andrew Cockburn at the ANBG, which allowed a few more birders to also observe it on that day only. The distribution map in Bird Info on the COG web site, where it is listed as a non-breeding vagrant, shows records mainly from Tallaganda State Forest and to the south of there, but 5 previous records are scattered through Canberra, with one in the Brindabella Mountains to the West.

Other unusual bush birds include a **Blue-faced Honeyeater** in Belconnen on 11 December, and a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** reported at the Mount Majura Nature Reserve--Federal Hwy on 24 December (and possibly in the Orroral Valley on 8 January). A **Square-tailed Kite** was observed at Goorooyaroo on 9 December, only the second record from the ACT, though there have been a few more in the COG AoI. **Channel-billed Cuckoos** were reported from Curtin and Hawker on 10 and 27 December, and from Belconnen on 16<sup>th</sup>, Wanniassa on 17<sup>th</sup>, Cook on 21<sup>st</sup> and Swinger Hill on 23 January, respectively. There was also a late report of a **Black-eared Cuckoo** at Rendevious Creek in Namadgi NP on 28 January.

After a quiet start this season, possibly associated with the low fruit availability due to the dry winter/spring, with females not arriving in many areas until the second half of November, the **Eastern Koel** has become much more prominent. In keeping with the females' late arrival, the first fledgling (just out of the nest) was not reported until 3 January. However, there have been plenty of reports since, and at the time of writing 37 fledglings had been reported. This is actually more





Eurasian Skylark

Brown Songlark

Horsfield's Bushlark

Lindsay Hansch

than the 33 I reported in my February 2018 column, despite the month later start and that I have only found 1 locally, with Diana White also reporting one in Narrabundah so far.

Of the species which mostly leave by the end of January, Parkwood Road has been the mecca for viewing the **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Brown Songlark** (and other grassland species), with other reports of the former only from the West Belconnen Pond and The Morass east of Lake Bathurst, and the same spots for the latter plus the Kama and the Gungaharra Grassland NRs. On 24 January Michael Lenz, who in my experience is better than anyone at identifying them and other grassland species, counted 22 of the former (4 singing in the ACT, and 14 in NSW, including 1 bird carrying food and 1 begging young) and 10 of the latter (1 in the ACT, 7 in NSW, including 2 females carrying food) in a 3.2 km stretch of the road. The latter number has been since topped by Steve and Lach Reed with 12 seen there on 28 January. Clearly the two species were still present in relatively big numbers, so it will be interesting to see when the bulk of them leave.

Interestingly this appears not to be the case with the **Rufous Songlark**, which despite being reported from 17 locations during January, was last reported from Bibaringa on 25 January (and before that a single bird on 19 January). Interestingly on 3 January Michael Lenz noted that for the first time this season at 2 sites at Lake Bathurst the **Rufous Songlark** was in full song. He noted the area had received a bit of rain in storms, not enough to result in surface water on the lake, but enough to promote late grass growth. He thought it amazing that these birds would still turn up so late in the season, but it seems they soon left as he couldn't find them on 10 January. It is unclear whether this is also the case for the **White-winged Triller** which has been more widely reported over the past week, despite from only 14 locations in January.

So during February please keep an eye out for the last of the above species, and also for the **Cicadabird** for which there were records from 3 locations only in December (2 from the Brindabellas and one from the Tallaganda State Forest), but has been reported only once in 2019, on 3 January. The last of the **Brush Cuckoos** also often leave during February, this species has been reported from a surprising 21 locations so far in January, most in the mountains but also in 4 spots in peri-urban Canberra.

In addition to those for the **Superb Parrot**, **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**, **Eastern Koel**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Brown Songlark** mentioned above, as might be expected there has been much breeding activity during the period, despite the initial less than ideal conditions. The following are worthy of reporting in more detail:

On 6 December Sandra Henderson posted that a tiny black fluffy chick was seen running along edge of reeds next to an adult **Buff-banded Rail** at a newish wetland at the corner of John Gorton Drive and Wyndham Ave in Coombs. She noted from the ABR that breeding is seldom recorded in the ACT for this species, only in 6 years since 1984. It also points out the value of these wetlands which are increasingly being introduced on the Southside.

On 7 December Terry Munro posted a photo of a **Pied Currawong** feeding an **Australian Magpie** fledgling. John Harris noted he'd had other way around a couple of years ago. Chris Davey wondered who was the most confused, the Magpie or the Currawong, as begging calls are very similar between the two species. However, in my experience the **Grey Butcherbird's** is even much closer to the Magpie's. Like the latter **Pied Currawong** breeding was delayed in my local patch this season, with the first fledgling being found in my GBS site on 20 January, though some were seen in December.

On 8 December Nick Payne posted a photo of a **Black-fronted Dotterel** nest with two eggs about half a metre off the bitumen surface of Forest Drive at the Arboretum. He'd been seeing the birds at the same spot for a couple of weeks. This species is known to favour gravel roads and the like for nesting.

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On 28 December Martin Butterfield posted that there are still a number of **Banded Lapwings** on the Hoskintown Plain with chicks of various ages. He attached a photo of a young bird trying not to be spotted in some mud. He later noted that the species may be more common than usually accepted as they are easily overlooked. Michael Lenz agreed noting they will call only when alarmed, and in the vast area of the plains/Lake Bathurst where he surveys you may often only make a chance discovery of a whole flock on a paddock.

On 25 January Matthew Larkin posted a photo, taken in the Aranda bushland that morning, of a young **Brush Cuckoo**, attended closely by a pair of **Leadhen Flycatchers**, who were keeping it quiet with a steady supply of cicadas. HANZAB notes that this is one of the 3 main species playing host to the **Brush Cuckoo**, as compared with the related **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which prefers dome-shaped nesters for hosts.

There have been some interesting flocks reported. On 5 December Michael Lenz counted a flock of 47 **Striated Pardalotes** at Lyneham Ridge. They were spotted as they moved between two trees. I found it interesting that you would get a flock at this time of the year, as opposed to autumn to early spring. But Michael's view was that a lot of things that we were seeing at the time was still drought related, conditions being far from ideal.

On 14 January Ryu Callaway counted around 100 **Australian Ravens** in 3 groups on a walk over Wanniasa Hills and through Fadden. As far as he could tell from their calls they were all of this species, with none confirmed as **Little Ravens** which would be more likely to be seen flocking. Michael Lenz pointed out big gatherings of the former are usually associated with a good food supply, e.g. many cicadas, and noted Sandra Henderson's 2015 Note in CBN of many hundred ravens feasting on cicadas at Callum Brae. Also if an area has, for example, several kangaroo carcasses **Australian Raven** groups will also gather at them, as he noted happened a couple of years ago at Mt Ainslie.

Even more interesting to me was Alison Rowell's post that loose groups of 30-40 **Australian Ravens** are often recorded at Canberra Airport, mostly between April and August. No **Little Ravens** have been identified from the airport in the last few years that she is aware of, based on frequent field observations, calls and examination of carcasses.

Last but certainly not least, Parkwood Rd also has a claim to be the current raptor watching hot spot in the ACT/neighbouring NSW, with the grassland species watchers noting 7 species there on 28 January (which didn't include the **Black Kite** seen there the day before). Species seen there have included both a **Swamp** and up to 2 **Spotted Harriers** together.

So please watch out for the above-mentioned species, including the soon to depart spring/summer migrants, as well as 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 E-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") 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*

### Books for Sale

The following books are for sale. If interested please Contact Don or Betty Wood on [wood-book@optusnet.com.au](mailto:wood-book@optusnet.com.au) or [chris\\_davey@aapt.net.au](mailto:chris_davey@aapt.net.au)

Charles Stoneham "The Birds of the British Islands" London, Grant Richards Ltd (1910)

Richard Lydekker (ed) "The Royal Natural History" London and New York, Frederick Warne & Co (1896)

Mrs Loudon "Loudon's British Wildflowers" James Nelson & Co, Paternoster Road (1859)

Witherby, Jordan, Ticehurst, & Tucker "The Handbook of British Birds" H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London (1941)

F. O. Morris "Morris's Nests & Eggs of British Birds" John C. Nimmo, London (1892)

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# 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](mailto:steve.read123@gmail.com)) or David McDonald ([david@dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto: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](mailto:steve.read123@gmail.com)) or David McDonald ([david@dnmcdonald.id.au](mailto:david@dnmcdonald.id.au)).

## COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2018

We were blessed with fairly good birding weather and a good turnout of participants, though some were mildly disappointed in the lack of variety of species they encountered during COG's fourteenth bird blitz last October. The 2018 blitz was most notable for the range and number of woodswallow records – yes, we were blessed with another irruption of Masked and White-browed Woodswallows. Other less-common species recorded included Cattle Egret, Pied Butcherbird, Diamond Fire-tail, Wonga Pigeon, Rose Robin, Bassian Thrush, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Southern Whiteface, Rufous Fantail, Crested Shrike-tit and White-fronted Chat.

The following "lucky draw" prizes were awarded at the January COG meeting.

The "blitzed-every-year" prize, a bottle of wine donated by Trevor and Joan Lipscombe, was won by Bruce Lindenmayer.

The "special effort" prizes (for blitzing behind locked gates or >10 datasheets), a sea-eagle painting and a Yellow-nosed Albatross photograph, donated by Susan Robertson, were won by Sue Lashko and Julian Robinson.

The "best bird" prize, a copy of "Night Parrot" donated by author Penny Olsen, was won by Roger Curnow for his Diamond Firetails at Jaramlee.

The "best breeding" prize, a bottle of wine donated by Stuart Harris, was won by Con Boekel for his Collared Sparrowhawks at the ANBG.

And all blitz participants enjoyed selecting from the feast of books and plants donated by Alison Mackerras, Robyn Black, Sandra Henderson and Wendy Whitham.

Blitz no. 15 will take place on 26-27 October 2019 – put the dates in your diary NOW!

*Barbara Allan*

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# Field Trip Reports

## Sunday 2 December – Monga NP

The COG party arrived at Monga to be met with challenging conditions. As we commenced birding the Dasyurus picnic area, we were met by a delegation of very raucous local cicadas. So loud was the racket made by the cicadas that barely a bird call could be heard. This noise, combined with a breeze, and light diminished by some high cloud, gave rise to feelings of pessimism in the leader. Nonetheless, as COG members are known to do, they persevered. With some patience and determination, the party was able to find 25 species at this site. Highlights included a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, a **Rose Robin** and a **Crested Shrike-tit**.

The party then drove around to the Mongarlowe picnic area and did the short, but scenic, walk down to the happily babbling and pristine river, and then proceeded along the road and bush track to Penance Grove. In this area, the cicadas were fewer in number, but the leeches were common, with the latter taking an unhealthy interest in the birders' ankles. This irksome distraction aside, the party found 24 species along at this site. Highlights included both **Yellow-throated** and **Large-billed Scrubwrens**, a **Red-browed Treecreeper** and a **Black-faced Monarch**.

We were rewarded with encounters with wonderful rainforest flora, including ancient plumwood trees, tree ferns and Monga Waratah. The enthusiastic cicadas and leeches notwithstanding, we had a good day.

David Dedenczuk

## Sunday 9 December – Gilmore Horse Paddocks

Eight members and guests gathered for a 7am start at Gilmore Horse Paddocks on a pleasant, sunny morning. The horses were off in a side paddock, so we were able to explore a larger area, walking 4.5kms in 3.5 hours. Highlights included **Satin Bowerbird** (first for the site), prolonged views of a **Mistletoebird**, an **Australasian Pipit**, and a **Double-barred Finch**. **White-plumed Honeyeaters** were abundant, and seen visiting a nest. We also located nests with young for **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Red Wattlebird**, and an eagle. A total of 44 species were detected, a very good result for the site.

Ryu Callaway

## Wednesday 19 December - West Belconnen Pond

Eighteen COG members participated in this last outing of 2018. A very respectable 47 species were seen, including several **Latham's Snipe**, a **Great Egret**, **Double-barred Finches** and an **Australian Hobby** which flew over as we were preparing to leave.

Sandra Henderson

## Sunday 20 January – Uriarra

The 2019 field trip programme began with the customary outing to Uriarra, led so ably by Bruce Lindenmayer. We began at the big dam at Uriarra Homestead and everyone had a spring in their step in the very pleasant 18°C after surviving the very hot week before. A steady stream of **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** flew past in both directions, mostly in silence. Two **Great Egrets** were perched in a tall tree above the dam; one was very black-billed, while the other's bill was a duller black and then only on the tip end. The dam contained five duck species, including a pair of **Australasian Shovelers**, and at least 27 **Hoary-headed Grebes**, many with a cinnamon tinge to the sides of the breast. A **Brown Quail** was flushed from the roadside grass as we walked to view the dam from a different angle. The only waders seen were a single **Latham's Snipe** and 3 **Black-fronted Dotterel**. We recorded 35 species in and around the dam.

Our next stop was at Uriarra West and the temperature had risen noticeably by 10.00 am. While bird numbers were low, we did have wonderful views of a **White-throated**



White-throated Treecreeper

Duncan McCaskill



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**Treecreeper** feeding on the ground, as well as **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **White-throated Gerygone** and a striking male **Mistletoebird**. We recorded 26 species here.

The final survey was done at Uriarra East and it was very noticeable that the number of parrots in particular was greatly reduced. In previous years, **Red-rumped Parrots** have been common but none were recorded; nor were there any rosellas and even **Galah** numbers were low. Bruce surmised that the resident **Collared Sparrowhawks** may be the culprits. A pair of **Dollarbirds**, which had a recently fledged young on the ground, put on some impressive aerial displays. Just as we were about to settle in the shade of the Casuarinas to eat lunch, one eagle-eyed participant spotted a pair of **Tawny Frogmouths** above us – a lovely way to end the outing.

The combined total for the 3 sites was 54 species.

Sue Lashko

### Yerrabi Track, Sunday 27 January

11 COG members joined Steve Read and myself to walk the Yerrabi Track in wonderfully cool conditions with a few spots of rain a couple of times. The tall eucalypts were full of **White-naped Honeyeaters** and **Striated Thornbills**, and **Superb Lyrebirds** were calling from two directions. As we enjoyed our morning tea on the rocks at the top, a group of seven **White-throated Needleetails** appeared overhead. One appeared a little different, and advice from Mike Tarburton is that it looks like a genetic mutation - he's not seen anything like it previously. Just as we approached the end of the walk Lach and myself got a brief look at a female **Pink Robin**, but it did not stick around to be photographed, or to be admired by those behind us.

Sandra Henderson



White-throated Needletail

*Tee Tong Teo*

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## New Places – December/January

Sandra Henderson

### 26 November – 2 December 2018 - Murrumbidgee downstream of Tharwa Bridge

If you turn right straight over the bridge, there's a track down to a locked gate into the river reserve. Once you climb over the gate, there's a track which runs for about 1.4km along the river. The highlight was a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circling low over the hill towards the end of the track. There are lots of exposed sandbars, making it a good spot for **Black-fronted Dotterels**, and a number of **Wood Ducks** and **Pacific Black Ducks** were also on the sand. Close to Tharwa Bridge, there are some constructed logjams to slow the river and provide fish habitat. Further along there are two major rock barriers which have been built to have the same effect. There are plenty of blackberry thickets to shelter small birds. Forty species were seen on a cool, windy morning.

### 3 - 9 December - Gilmore Horse Paddocks

The COG outing report is elsewhere in this issue, and the bird list appeared on eBird. This site is well worth a visit, as there are a number of horse paddocks, so always several you can walk in without being in with the horses. There were several breeding species, with **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Noisy Friarbird** being the highlights. There were other sightings that were probably breeding-related, such as **Willie Wagtails** attacking an **Australian Raven**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** gathering in a bush, **Striated Thornbills** calling in a dead tree, and a male **Mistletoebird** sitting quietly in a dead tree above a very bushy patch. We started at Louisa Lawson Crescent and walked a wide loop around the area.

### 10 – 16 December - Federal Highway, Anderson VC rest area

This rest area is at one end of Lake George, below the lookout, but accessed by going under the highway. It was cool and overcast when I called in, and there were large puddles. The highlight was a group of **European Goldfinches**, moving from the tops of the tall conifers to the ground, to other trees and to a drainage pond. **Magpies** and **Magpie-larks** were feeding young in various places on the edge of the roads within the rest area. **Rufous Whistlers** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush** were calling from the pine trees.

### 17 – 23 December - Wallaga Lake entrance

This is quite a different area to the caravan park on the other side of the lake where COG had an outing several years ago. This was a one-day trip with a couple of friends to see if we could find the Terek Sandpiper being reported at the entrance (currently closed to the sea) to the lake. On the sandbars we could see hundreds of **Crested Terns**, as well as a few **Little** and **Caspian Terns**. Despite great location information from birder Ash, we dipped on the target species, but were delighted to see a juvenile **Double-banded Plover**, as well as both **Hooded Plovers** and **Pied Oystercatchers** with tiny chicks. I'll certainly drop in there again if I'm in the area.

### 24– 30 December - Woden Cemetery

On the day I visited, a large group of **Little Corellas** (with four **Long-billed Corellas**) was having a lovely time chewing up pine cones from the very large conifers. They were stealing them from each other, jumping up onto gravestones, playing with fragments of cones and generally having a fun time. **Superb Parrots** were heard but not seen, but a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** perched in the top of a tall tree in full view.

### 31 December – 6 January - Banyulla Close, Jerrabomberra

This little dead-end street runs down to the Banyulla Close Basin – a small pond which overflows to Jerrabomberra Creek, which is only 50m away. I wandered around the pond, looking down into the small pools in the creek, then up a vehicle track beside the houses closest to the creek. The highlights of 28 species seen or heard were breeding records for both **Eurasian Coot** and **Pacific Black Duck**, a number of **Red-browed** and **Double-barred Finches** down at the creek, and a **Nankeen Kestrel** hunting over the hillside across the creek. The lowlights were the large numbers of **Common Mynas**, **Common Starlings** and **House Sparrows**, with four **Spotted Doves** putting in an appearance as well.

### 7 – 13 January - Poplars Biodiversity Conservation Area, Jerrabomberra

Despite the enticing name, this did not turn out to be a worthwhile visit. I'm not sure why this area is the property of Airservices Australia, with a rather forbidding fence on the suburb side, lots of forbidding signage, and no access. I walked the fence on the Jerrabomberra side, noting **Eastern Rosellas** enjoying a bath in a puddle created along the fence, and a **Dollarbird** in a dead tree in the centre of the area.

### 14– 20 January - Conderstormwater ponds (Conder Community Wetland)

This is a series of reedy ponds, with houses close by, but also bordering part of the Tuggeranong Hill Reserve. Some lovely large eucalypts unfortunately provided lots of hollows for the **Common Mynas** and **Common Starlings**, but also hosted **Weebills** and a single **Fuscous Honeyeater** on the morning I was there. Plenty of **Australian Reed Warblers** were flitting between the reeds, and also into nearby gardens. In 30 minutes, 26 species were recorded.



After one year of this endeavor, I've discovered quite a few places to visit again, some I won't return to, and am enjoying the challenge of finding new places. Many thanks to all those eBirders who put their lists online – they are a good source of inspiration!

Sandra Henderson

COG members and guests at the 2018 Christmas BBQ, Black Mountain Peninsular  
Kathy Walter

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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://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.

### Sunday 3 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

To celebrate World Wetlands Day (2 February), during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope. Meet at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick. No booking required.

Chris Davey

### Sunday 10 February 2019 - Molonglo Reach Boat Trip

This outing/cruise will be on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River Reach, where late summer/early autumn is historically the peak time for nesting, with darters as well as three species of cormorant known to have bred there. The area also has a variety of waterbirds, and a range of land birds can be seen on the banks.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We will again be travelling in the electric boat "MV Gull" which can carry around 22 people. The boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas difficult to get to from the land. **The point of departure will again be from Kingston Harbour using the wharf at the end of Giles Street.** There is plenty of all day free parking close by, particularly in Eastlake Parade. Alternatively participants can park their cars in the SE corner of the Glass Works/Bus Depot Markets car park, which will involve about a 200 m walk.

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 or by email on [jandaholland@bigpond.com](mailto:jandaholland@bigpond.com)).

### Sunday 17 February – Lake Burley Griffin by bike

Lake Burley Griffin is home to over twenty birding hotspots. Cycling around the entire 30km periphery of the lake affords an opportunity to see a considerable number of species in several different habitats. On a recent reconnaissance trip, I saw 60 species, with a standout species being **Yellow Thornbill**. At birding speed, the cycle takes about 3-4 hours. Leave from Mall

Road West parking area, in between Questacon and the Lake at 8:00 am. Contact David Dedenczuk on 0417 222 154 or at [ddedentz@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ddedentz@bigpond.net.au) by Thursday 14 February 2019 to register interest.

### Saturday 2 March – Forde Creek and ponds

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](mailto: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](mailto:walter.goldie@gmail.com). The trip will be restricted to 20 participants and filled on a first reply basis.

### Saturday 23 March – Booroomba Rocks to Mt Tennent Fire Trail – All Day

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.

## 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](http://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**



The Booromba 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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

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](mailto:terrybellbird@gmail.com) with other enquiries ( transport, etc) to 0427292298.

### 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](mailto:barbdebruine@hotmail.com)



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

Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road  
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# Woodland Surveys- late spring/early summer 2018 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

## Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 2 December. A Koel called near the Forde entrance as they arrived, but it was a less than optimum morning for the survey, with windy conditions starting up by 7am. Later, the clouds came over and a rain and lightning squall came in from the NW just as they drove out of the reserve around 10am. The total species count for the morning was well down on the usual at this timing, at 48 species; this reflected not only the windy conditions, but also the low levels of water in dams especially the large dam (only Wood Ducks recorded there). Jenny had arrived much earlier than the team before the winds started, to survey site 10, isolated at the northern end of the western ridge, a dry ridge site. She was rewarded with a Brush Cuckoo calling in the site, and also a Common Bronzewing. Brush Cuckoo was also recorded later, near a site north of the Woolshed. Another good record was Jacky Winter near site 16 (eastern side, not far from the large dam - Jacky Winters had also been recorded on the ANU bird survey in mid October in that general area). Only two records of Scarlet Robin. Olive-backed Orioles were calling at a number of sites. One Pallid Cuckoo. Numbers were low for Grey Fantails, only a couple of medium sized honeyeaters, and very small birds were scarce. Red Wattlebirds and Noisy Friarbirds were around in reasonable numbers, as were Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes. A Yellow Thornbill near sites 21/22 on the eastern side was a nice record.

This was the 99th survey since beginning in 1995. Someone mentioned bringing champagne for the 100th survey on Sun 31 March!

## Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook did the summer survey in the southern half of Gooroo on Sunday 9 December, in rather warm weather. The reserve was looking fairly dry, although a couple of the dams had a reasonable amount of water, and there were plenty of weeds in flower, along with a few native forbs. 56 species were recorded for the morning with a few standouts. A rather tatty Square-tailed Kite flying over site 5 was, unsurprisingly, a new species for this survey. Other raptors included Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk and Nankeen Kestrel. A Southern Boobook was unintentionally flushed at site 2, and sat out for a while before disappearing. A male Red-capped Robin was another good record. Elsewhere there was a reasonable number of thornbills, gerygones and other small birds, including Speckled Warblers in a few places, Sacred Kingfishers, plenty of Noisy Friarbirds, a couple of Dusky Woodswallows and Superb Parrots. A Buff-rumped Thornbill nest was found; other breeding records included Weebills with dependent young, and young Kookaburras audible in a hollow with an adult keeping watch nearby.

## Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill and John Goldie did the survey over 3-6 December. The weather was fine and still, although cloudy one of the days. They had quite a mixed outcome for the 9 sites – some of them were so quiet that the first bird didn't appear until the 9th minute of the 10 minute survey, while other sites had a very good range of birds. Rainbow Lorikeets are now starting to appear on Mt Majura – they have become regular in Watson in the past 12 months (& uncommon before that), and are obviously expanding into the woodland. They also recorded Gang-gangs in one site which is unusual for the survey even though they are common on Mt Majura. Other less common survey records included Grey Shrike-thrush and Varied Sittella (which was carrying food). One site was especially rewarding with Speckled Warbler, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Weebill and Mistletoebird being present. Leaden Flycatcher was also just outside the survey area.

## Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell reported on the survey on Monday 3 December, accompanied by Barbara Allan. It was quite warm pleasant weather, but a little bit more breezy earlier on than usual. It was not a great haul, 35 species in or heard from sites. There were 7 only species between sites – Galah, Eastern Rosella, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Willie Wagtail, House Sparrow, Aust. Pipit and Pacific Black Duck. The highlight of the morning was the sighting of a pair of Red-capped Robins, possibly nesting.

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Most sites had ranges of species more limited than usual for this time of year. Site 1, a well wooded site on the side of a hill at the southern end of the range had only 2 Sulphur Crested cockatoos within the site, with seven species heard outside, including Leaden Flycatcher, Laughing Kookaburra and Striated Pardalotes, which were one of the few species heard at most sites. Site 2, the Grenade Range just to the north of the northern boundary of Canberra Airport, had richer pickings than usual, including 12 Tree Martins, some Red-rumped Parrots and a Rufous Whistler. A single Pallid Cuckoo was heard during the morning, while other summer migrant sightings included Olive-backed Oriole, Leaden Flycatcher and Noisy Friarbird.

At Site 4, as well as the Red-capped Robins, there was a reasonable range of woodland species, including Common Bronzewing, Brown-headed Honeyeater, and the only site with little brown birds including Weebill, White-throated Gerygone, Striated and Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Striated Pardalotes. Surprisingly, no Buff-rumped Thornbills found, and precious few Spotted Pardalotes about. Site 8 and Site 9 (Mick's Dam) were rather disappointing. The only waterbirds a pair of Australasian Grebe, while there were few other species, all the usual suspects. 4 White-winged Choughs also at Site 8, the only site this survey of a species generally quite prevalent over the range.

### **Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park**

Michael Lenz and Robin Hide carried out the survey of the 9 sites on the eastern lower slopes of Mt Ainslie on 7 December, under fine, almost still, warm conditions. The area is heavily overgrazed by kangaroos and many areas of soil are disturbed where the animals rest. With the warm, sunny weather, most kangaroos had moved from the grassland into the reserve. The foliage of many of the older eucalypts has thinned out considerably. They recorded 34 species at sites and another 13 while moving between sites. The most widespread species was the Noisy Friarbird (7 sites), followed by Crimson Rosella, Noisy Miner, Striated Pardalote, and Leaden Flycatcher, each at 6 sites. Of note, Brown Goshawk, a total of 9 White-winged Trillers (8 males, 1 female, the latter on a nest) (but only 1 Triller at a site), Varied Sittella and Brown-headed Honeyeater (off site), and 3 pairs of White-browed Woodswallows (also off site, but 2 nests with young). Also on nests Magpie-lark, Dusky Woodswallow and Willie Wagtail, and Rufous Whistler nest-building). A Wedge-tailed Eagle, circling quite high, was harassed repeatedly by a single Dusky Woodswallow.

### **Newline**

Sue Lashko surveyed on Saturday 1 December, a calm, sunny morning. While the grass was green after recent rain, only one dam contained water. Despite this, there was plenty of bird activity with more than 20 species recorded at 2 of the 9 sites. The migrants were quite vocal with White-throated Gerygone, Dollarbird, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Olive-backed Oriole, Tree Martin, Mistletoebird, Rufous Whistler and lots of Grey Fantails. A pair of Sacred Kingfishers at one site were kept busy flying to a nest hollow with food for their chicks and, at another site, a pair appeared to be still excavating the hollow as they made repeated flights to a hole, staying for a short time and then swapping over. One pair of Dusky Woodswallows had a nest with eggs, while another had a recently fledged chick to feed. Other species showed signs of breeding including Common Starling, Common Myna, White-winged Chough, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Noisy Miner and Welcome Swallow. However, the breeding highlight was a nest with young Southern Whiteface. Sue initially spotted an adult feeding on the ground, gradually filling its beak with food, and then it flew to a nest deep in a thick hawthorn from where the excited calls of the chicks could be heard. This is now an uncommon species at Newline. A low-circling, pale morph Little Eagle got the Noisy Miners and the black and white birds excited, and a Collared Sparrowhawk was seen with a downy chick in its claws. The total count for the morning was 48, which is about average for the timing.

### **Red Hill NR**

Harvey Perkins and Stuart Harris did the survey in perfect calm conditions on Sunday 9 December, although it did warm up very quickly and by the time they finished, at 8:30 it was already 26°C. The rains in November had some impact, with a sparse and low emergence of green in the otherwise fairly barren ground, and the occasional flush of fresh shoots on a few of the still struggling trees. The smattering of flowering that was evident was generally by weeds, including St Johns Wort and Patterson's Curse, but also the odd Black Wattle. Bird-wise it was surprisingly active, with the total number of species (36) and individuals (308) slightly up on the 21 year average for summer surveys on the Hill (32.1 and 282). Twenty-two species were recorded on sites, and an additional 14 off-site. Still relatively low numbers of small bush birds, a trend across pretty much all woodland sites this survey, but noted about the possible impact of the ever-increasing numbers of walkers

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and joggers, and their dogs (although the vast majority of the latter are on leash). Summer highlights included a pair of Sacred Kingfishers, a pair of Dollarbirds, a male Leaden Flycatcher, and Olive-backed Oriole and Fan-tailed Cuckoo. For those following Noisy Friarbird numbers this season, only three were recorded (including a pair seen carrying food to a nest). Otherwise very little evidence of recent breeding.

### **Jerrabomberra West NR**

Jenny Bounds did the survey on Sunday 9 December, the second attempt to do this survey, after a problem with access to the woodland patch due to a high locked gate/fence. A very early start paid off as birds were very vocal early, and this may have been a factor in a good species total of 45. Highlights were Dusky Woodswallows and White-winged Trillers (several pairs of each) active in the Blakely's Red Gum woodland patch, and also a pair of White-browed Woodswallows in the same area. The usual Crimson and Eastern Rosellas were around, Red-rumped Parrots, a pair of Pallid Cuckoos (not calling though), and a few of the small bird species, including Rufous Whistler and Leaden Flycatcher vocal early, and Southern Whiteface calling. Interestingly, Buff-rumped Thornbills were absent this survey. One of the resident Wedge-tailed Eagles flew through and a Skylark displayed over the grasslands.

### **Symonston area sites (Callum Brae NR, Isaacs Ridge NR)**

Sandra Henderson conducted the survey in Callum Brae NR in fine but overcast conditions on 5 December. Callum Brae is very dry, and the bird count was down on usual results. Rainbow Lorikeets were more numerous than usual, and several were looking into hollows, but some usual suspects, such as White-throated Treecreepers and Red-rumped Parrots, failed to put in an appearance. All survey sites were quiet with no more than 10 species at each site. A total of 39 species for the morning.

Isaacs Ridge NR was very dry, and there were very few small birds about. There were quite a few rosellas, both Eastern and Crimson, feeding on Patterson's Curse, but very few in actual survey sites. No thornbills, no mistletoebirds, no cuckoos and no finches at the three sites there. The only species in greater numbers than usual seemed to be the Grey Butcherbirds, calling in the background. There was very little flowering, other than weeds, and no small honeyeaters.

### **Tuggeranong Hill NR**

Lia Battisson surveyed on Wednesday 5 December, an overcast, but mild and still morning. Many of the species observed were sitting very quietly, although surveys were all completed by 08:45. For the third year in a row Noisy Friarbirds have bred on site 4. Other breeding records were begging Australian Magpies, juvenile Australian Ravens and a Common Myna exiting a hollow. It was a quite morning with just twenty-four species observed during the surveys, and a further ten elsewhere on the Hill. A little excitement was injected into the morning at the last minute of the last site, when a Dusky Woodswallow came out of nowhere to harass a Nankeen Kestrel which also appeared out of the ether.

### **Rural leasehold near Tharwa**

David McDonald conducted the survey on 5 December 2018. As others observed this survey, both species diversity and abundance were low. Very few small bush birds and honeyeaters were in evidence. On the other hand, a number of the migrants were observed, including (pleasingly) White-browed Woodswallows in three sites, with one breeding record (carrying food). Mixed in with them, feeding at tree level, was a single Masked Woodswallow. Other migrants included Rufous Whistlers (by far the noisiest birds in the woodland), Dusky Woodswallows, Olive-backed Orioles, White-throated Gerygones, one Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and one Sacred Kingfisher.



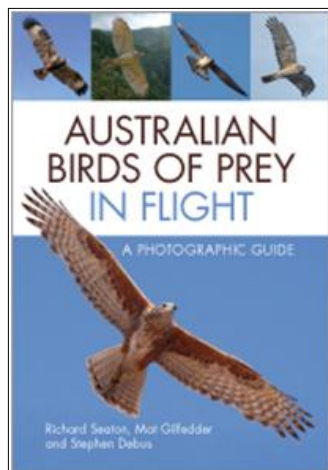
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## Publications for sale

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](mailto:sales@canberrabirds.org.au)



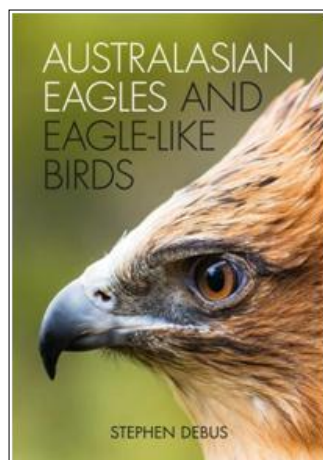
### **Australian Birds of Prey in Flight: A Photographic Guide**

*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: \$32.**

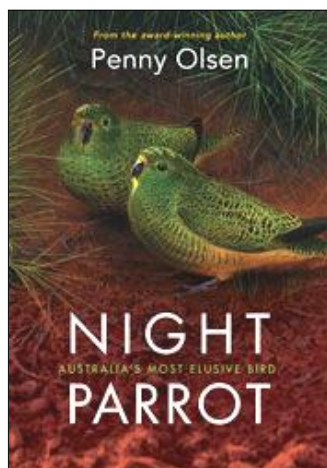


### **Australasian Eagles and Eagle-like Birds**

*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**

## 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:

J Harris  
M Fyfe  
C Newman  
K McGrath  
D Kenway  
S Woods  
L Finch  
J Hales

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for March 2019 edition:**

**Wednesday 27 February 2019**

**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@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au). The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

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