



Gang-gang

JUNE 2019

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING

Wednesday 12 June 2019

7.30 pm

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

The short talk will be by **Duncan McCaskill** on: **"The Canberra Garden Bird Survey, a brief overview"**.

Duncan will give an introduction to the Canberra Garden Bird Survey which is about to enter its 39th year of continuous operation. He will introduce the new chart, discuss a few results and provide a reminder of the rules for participants.

The main presentation will be by wildlife ecologist and photographer **Chris Tzaros** on **"Out of the blue – The resurgence of the Turquoise Parrot"**.

Once faced with extinction in the early 1900s, the Turquoise Parrot has made a remarkable comeback and now exists throughout many parts of Victoria, NSW and southern Qld. Although still listed as threatened, there are some areas where it has established secure localised populations. One such area is the hills of north-east Victoria, where a campaign to address key threats and improve the species' habitat has been operating for about 6 years. Community involvement

Continued Page 2

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

As Jenny Bounds and I found while were planning the COG bus trip, during the nearly 5 weeks from 24 April covered by this column, bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) seemed to drop significantly from early May. This wasn't clearly due to the weather which, apart from a cold, wet, foggy second week of May, remained warm for the time of year and, despite some reasonable falls of rain, conditions remained relatively dry, perhaps the reason a number of species have stayed later than usual.

Of the two migratory species usually last to leave, the **Dusky Woodswallow** has been observed from at least 12 locations over the period and was still being reported up to the time of writing this column, particularly from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (25 reported there on 27 May). This is consistent with its liking to be near water in late autumn/winter, as noted previously in this column. Likewise the **Olive-backed Oriole** was last reported from Symonston on 22 May, one of the 8 locations from which it was reported over the period. So keep an eye out for the two species during

Continued Page 3

Julian Robinson

Black-eared Cuckoo (Round Hill field trip)



Everyone welcome

has been instrumental to the program's success, with private landholders actively participating in a raft of activities that will hopefully allow this spectacular little bird to enjoy a bright future. This is an inspiring conservation success story that provides hope for other conservation initiatives.

RENEW YOUR COG MEMBERSHIP

Now is the time to renew your COG membership. Fees remain the same for this year at \$40 for an individual and \$45 for family membership.

The simplest way to do this is to complete and submit the online membership renewal form (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/joining-cog-and-renewing/>) and pay using electronic funds transfer. You can still also renew in person at a meeting (there will be someone taking memberships at the June meeting), or you can send your renewal by mail with a cheque.

Opportunity to contribute to the management of COG

Following the retirement of a long-serving member of the COG Committee the Committee would welcome expressions of interest from members who would like to contribute to the management of COG. An initial appointment would be until the next AGM and would provide an ideal opportunity for some young blood to experience the work of the Committee without feeling that you were committed for the long-term. If you are interested please contact Neil Hermes (email: president@canberrabirds.org.au) or Steve Read(email: steve.read123@gmail.com).

The COG Woodlands database needs your help

Since 1995 bird observations have been collected from woodland sites in the ACT. The observations are collected in a systematic way and have become a very important resource to help in the management of our local woodlands and in the monitoring of bird species trends. The surveys are conducted once a quarter and records are entered into Microsoft Excel for subsequent transfer to the COG Microsoft ACCESS woodland database.

We are looking for someone with a working knowledge of Excel to offer their time to transfer the records created by the input program to an Excel file. This routine job would need to be conducted once a quarter after each survey. On receiving the records input file the task of transferring and populating records would take a couple of hours each quarter. Although not essential it would be an advantage to have ACCESS software available on a computer.

If interested please contact Paul Fennell ([Tel: 02-62541804](tel:02-62541804)) or Chris Davey (MOB 0418 679 847) for further details.

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

June to see if the former will stay over winter this year, with the latter expected to do so in small numbers.

Other summer migrants which were still reported during the period include a **Horsfield's Bushlark** flushed from the dense grasses in the Reservoir Hill Reserve (west of Kaleen) on 23 May by Rainer Rehwinkel. As noted in my December 2018 column, this species can be present but is silent and often overlooked in winter, so this sighting is therefore not too unusual.

There has also been a second very late report for April of the **White-winged Triller** with Chris Davey observing 2 young or females feeding on ground amongst choughs at the Uriarra Traveling Stock Reserve on 24 April. Four late **Sacred Kingfishers** were also reported from the Percival Hill NR by John Harris on 4 May. However, the only report of a cuckoo species has been one of a later staying **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** by Steve Read at Bluett's Block on 4 May.

Of the later leaving summer migrants, there was a report of 5 **Tree Martins** at the West Belconnen Pond by Michael Lenz on 13 May, and reports of the **Australian Reed-Warbler** from 4 locations, the most recent by Steve Read at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 19 May. There was a report of a **White-throated Gerygone** from the Percival Hill NR by John Harris on 4 May, but the related **Western Gerygone** was reported from 3 locations, the most recent by Richard Allen at the National Library on 13 May. Likewise the **Noisy Friarbird**, which also often leaves by mid-April, was still reported from 3 locations, most recently by Shorty at the Cotter Reserve on 11 May.

Migrating **Red Wattlebirds** flocks were still reported early in May (the numbers at the Jerrabomberra Woodland Loop in the accompanying report of the COG bus trip should also be noted). Sandra Lauer still reported 400 each of the **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** at the Baroona Road south of Michelago on 29 April, but very few other reports of flocks of migrating smaller honeyeaters have come to my attention. This is consistent with the majority having moved through by mid-April, as reported in my previous column. However, they were still reported from around 30 and 20 locations respectively, and a number will spend the winter in urban and peri-urban Canberra, as will the **Fuscous Honeyeater**. This species has been part of the honeyeater influx (see below), being reported from 12 locations during the period (and 14 locations in the previous month).

Three species of which some birds stay over winter, but most leave by the end of April, are the **Rufous Whistler**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Grey Fantail**. Surprisingly the former has been reported from only 4 locations, the most recent being by David Dedenczuk from the Central Basin of Lake Burley Griffin on 11 May. However, the latter two have still been reported from around 27 and 35 locations respectively, and were still present up to the time of writing.

Some **Mistletoebirds** and **Superb Parrots** will also stay over winter. The former has been reported from 4 locations over the period, most



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Mob: 04173 10200

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Atherton Tablelands, FNQ

8 to 13 June 2019

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

7/8 December 2019

Tasmanian bird and mammal tour

Bruny Island, Melaleuca, pelagic.

1 to 8 February 2020

Top End birding tour

Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau.

10 to 24 May 2020

Atherton Tablelands & Iron Range NP

In two parts.

1 to 14 June 2020

Gulf of Carpentaria

19 June to 6 July 2020

Now includes Winton for Rusty
Grasswren.

The Pilbara birding tour

24 July to 2 August 2020

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and latest news on our website

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recently from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR by Viv Rolland on 26 May. However, the latter has been reported from close to 40 locations, including around 16 locations south of the Lake Burley Griffin /Molonglo River. On 15 May John Leonard posted that there were still a few around Hughes, Anzac Day being the last day when he heard them constantly, and he wondered if perhaps they were roosting elsewhere but coming back to the area during the day.

So please keep an eye out for the above, and any other summer migrant species, which may still pass through or stay over winter. Of the later arriving altitudinal migrants that move from the mountains but stay here over winter, the **Flame Robin** doesn't seem to have extensively moved into the open peri-urban areas around Canberra, with reports from only 11 locations. I still haven't been able to find them in their usual winter spot to the south-west of Mt Arawang. Perhaps it hasn't been cold enough yet to drive them to the lower areas, as shown by reports of them at 5 locations still west of the Murrumbidgee River.

For the **Rose Robin**, there have been reports of only single birds from three locations in Canberra, the ANBG (the most recently on 24 May by Brian Grinter), Giralang and Campbell Park. However, Gail Neumann reported one from Scottsdale near Bredbo on 11 May. These observations are consistent with them often being considered a passage migrant through the COG Aol. In contrast to previous winters the **Pink Robin** has been reported from 3 locations over the period, a male at the Mount Majura NR on 26 April, and females at the Lyrebird Trail at Tidbinbilla on 1 May and at the ANBG, seen by at least 6 observers from 17-19 May.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported in Canberra from 3 locations, regularly from the ANBG (maximum of 3 birds there on 20 May), with a single bird in Cook and a quiet female in my Chapman garden on 18 May. However, there have been reports from 7 locations on and to the west of the Murrumbidgee River, including the remarkable 12 birds seen on the COG outing to Square Rock and Smokers Flat track on 19 May. This may be part of the influx of honeyeaters in April/May including the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** which has been reported from 10 locations on, or to the eastern side, of the Murrumbidgee River during the period. Together with the 5 locations closer to Canberra earlier in April, this is by far the most sightings I can recall of this species around Canberra in autumn. The latter included my garden for a couple of days, where at the same time up to 4 **White-plumed Honeyeaters** moved in, with at least one staying till the time of writing. At the same time, an influx of this species, which has been increasingly absent in my local area, has been noted in Weston and Jerrabomberra.

In contrast to April, there have been reports of only 3 **Swift Parrots** seen by 2 observers (Ash Allnutt and David Dedenczuk) on 17-18 May in Watson. All reports from the 10 locations so far this year have been of birds moving through rather than having found a food source. Another winter visitor closer to Canberra, the **Restless Flycatcher**, has been reported only from Bibaringa by Alastair Smith on 14 and 21 May. It is unclear whether it's still in Tuggeranong where it has been present in previous winters.

On 25 April John Leonard posted there was a **Grey Shrike-thrush** (GST) in Hughes. His observations were that the inner south was a GST-free zone as he'd never had one at his place in Hughes in 23 years, and he'd only seen or heard one in Hughes/Garran/Curtin that he could recall. I noted that the GST has been an increasing autumn/winter visitor to my local patch of North-west Chapman/Cooleman Ridge/Narrabundah Hill for the past 5 years or so, and had been calling in my garden for the past two weeks. John Harris posted that in Nicholls he could set his calendar by its arrival (1 May this year). At the time the eBird map showed records from around 40 Canberra urban/peri-urban locations in April, mainly in an arc from the south-west to the south-east, and interestingly only a couple of locations in the south. A similar pattern still pertained at the time of writing.

By far the most "unusual" bird reported in May was an obliging wader species seen, not moving very far, by a number of observers in the water at Kelly Swamp on 26 May. It was first identified as a **Marsh Sandpiper**, which COG's 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists as a non-breeding vagrant for which there were no records that year, but reported in 22 of the 36 previous years. However, the Bird Info data on the COG website indicates no previous records for the species in April or May, though there have been some reports in winter.

The other possibility was that it was a **Common Greenshank**, which was later favoured by some observers. COG's 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR) also lists this species as a non-breeding vagrant for which there were no records that year, but reported in 20 of the 36 previous years. In this case the Bird Info data indicates no previous records for the species in March, May, June or July. The final identification was not yet resolved when this column was forwarded to the editors. Either way it



Pied Stilt

David Cook

While we are nearly through autumn, a number of interesting breeding reports have still come to my attention:

On 19 May Shorty spotted a **Rainbow Lorikeet** fly into a hollow at the Justice Robert Hope Park in Watson. When he got closer he could hear a chipping call coming from the hollow, and after a while 2 birds emerged then flew to a nearby tree. One bird flew straight back into the hollow. He stayed about another 10-15 minutes and the bird stayed in the hollow the whole time. The Bird Info data on the COG website indicates birds recorded on/leaving the nest in April, June and July, but not May.

On 25 May Jean Casburn found 3 **Tawny Frogmouths** in the same tree, two together and one which appeared to be smaller on a separate branch, about 200 metres west of the style on the northern boundary of the Narrabundah Hill reserve. She suspected it was a late or second attempt at breeding by the pair (one of three known there) that bred successfully several years ago in this spot, but which had not been seen since. While my experience is that the family groups tend to break up a couple of months after the chicks have fledged, with HANZAB indicating that this can be as late as February, both HANZAB and Stuart Rae confirmed that fledglings may remain with their parents until start of the next breeding season.

On 27 May Steve Wallace posted that the **Australasian Shovelers** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR were paired off and one pair mated. He was surprised to find that there were no records of them mating in the Bird Info data on the COG website. In fact it contains very little breeding information, with display in September and dependent young from October to December and in February, but certainly no winter breeding.

Adding to my notes in my previous column I have observed a number of further **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** dependent young being fed during May, often in association with checking their roosting sites.

was certainly a very unseasonal sighting as most of these species would be expected to be breeding in the Northern Hemisphere, though some do overwinter. Three **Pied Stilts** were also reported from there by many observers on 5 May.

There have also been a couple of reports of a possible **Blue-faced Honeyeater** sighting at the ANU and in Civic on 23-24 May, and 2 **Little Friarbirds** in the company of **Red Wattlebirds** were seen by David Dedenczuk near the Fulica Hide at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 20 May. **Musk Lorikeets** have been reported from 3 locations, including from the Wanniasa Hills Primary School, where on 13 May Sandra Henderson reported the ironbark is now flowering, so the up to 3 birds seen had moved from lerps to nectar. A single **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** was reported by K D Murray at the North Watson Wetlands on 11 May.

Black Kites have been reported from 6 locations, with the maximum being 6 at the Mugga Lane tip, an obvious attraction for this species, on 5 May. Further **Barn Owls** have been reported at the Commonwealth Ave Bridge on 27 April and in Kaleen on 12 May. There were also several further reports of the **Intermediate Egret** from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands in late April.



Black Kite

David Cook

As they did in my garden once the **Grey Fantails** and **Silvereyes**, and then the honeyeaters, had moved on, mixed feeding flocks (MFF) seemed to break up by early May. It is interesting they should do so then when some perceive them to be a purely winter phenomenon. However, a few have still come to my notice, so please keep an eye out for them.

While I have not checked carefully, flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Little Corella** on the median strips, etc, don't seem to be anywhere near their peak autumn/winter size yet. However, I counted over 250 **Galahs** feeding on Rivett Oval on 8 May. On 25 April John Harris reported a remarkable number of at least 60, maybe 100, **Pied Currawongs** on the east side of Percival Hill. They were flying high and returning to the trees, calling loudly and continually, perching mainly in the highest branches of the eucalypts but some lower, chasing each other, etc. Large congregations of **Pied Currawongs** behaving like this in autumn/winter aren't that unusual in my experience. While the 2017-2018 ABR notes a maximum flock size of 104 for that year, what surprised me was that this was well below the 10 and 30 year averages of over 500. Flocks of up to 100 **Little Ravens** have also been reported, again this is not too unusual and are far fewer than the 900 **Pink-eared Ducks** taking off into the air from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment plant that Shorty estimated using photographs on 4 May.

So please watch out for any overwintering spring/summer migrants, for altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any winter 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 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



Yellow Thornbill (Round Hill field trip) *Julian Robinson*



Welcome Swallow (Round Hill field trip) *Lach Read*


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Help wanted for BIGnet conference

14-15 September

Over the weekend of 14/15 Sept, COG will host a gathering of representatives from bird clubs and bird interest groups in NSW/ACT, known as BIGnet. The network meets twice a year to discuss bird conservation issues and projects, and to share/exchange information. The venue is the Yarramundi Cultural Centre on Lady Denman Drive (meeting room in old museum site).

I am seeking assistance to support the event, which comprises a conservation discussion on Saturday morning (10.30-12.30pm), a presentations session on Sat afternoon (3/4 speakers), and a general business meeting on Sunday morning (around 9.30-12.30). Some of the jobs are:

taking and writing up minutes/meeting records for the conservation session (Sat am) and general business session (Sun am)

helping with setting up tables and chairs at the venue on Saturday morning, and packing up on Sunday (approx. 12.30-1.30)

Organising catering - purchasing morning and afternoon tea supplies; setting out food, drinks, utensils for refreshment breaks; picking up lunches from a caterer

on Saturday, someone IT savvy who can help set up the media system for the presentations session (there is a built-in system which we will be able to inspect and test, etc, nearer the time – COG will use its laptop)

prepare a list of local accommodation suggestions for visitors (weblinks, inexpensive hotel/motel, caravan parks options)

2 or 3 bird walk leaders, to take visitors on early morning walks on Sunday (1.5 hours approx.), before the Sunday business session; somewhere near the conference venue is preferred, such as Arboretum, Molonglo River below Scrivener Dam, Aranda Bushland/Black Mountain, ANBG (probably have 2 groups).

Please get in touch with me if you can help - Jenny Bounds bignet@canberrabirds.org.au or phone me 62887802, or speak with me at the next COG meeting.



Thick-tailed Gecko, Hooded Robin, Australian Ringneck (Round Hill field trip)

Lach Read

Field Trip Reports

Friday 19 to Monday 22 April – Easter campout at Round Hill NR

Sixteen members enjoyed an extra long weekend at Round Hill, camping at Whoey Tanks. It was great to have some newer and younger participants, and I think it was the first time we have had three teenagers on a camping trip. After a long dry, rain a few weeks before Easter had partially filled the dam across the road, but most bird life was concentrated within about 200 metres of the tanks, each of which has a slow leak, producing small puddles for birds to drink at and bathe in.

While bird abundance was lower than previous years, the number of species was similar to that recorded on previous COG visits. The earliest riser among the birds was **Eastern Yellow Robin**, calling from 6am while we were all still firmly ensconced in our beds, and the other 2 highlights of the “camp birds” were **Crested Bellbird** and **Shy Heathwren**. There were few parrots in the reserve with just a few **Mallee Ringnecks** coming to the tanks to drink. Other Western birds included **Black-eared Cuckoo**, **Pied Butcherbird**, **Grey-crowned** and **White-browed Babbler**, **Splendid Fairywren**, **Chestnut-rumped** and **Inland Thornbill** and **Apostlebird**. As well, there was a good selection of honeyeaters, including **Noisy** and **Yellow-throated Miner**, and **Singing**, **Spiny-cheeked**, **Striped**, **White-eared**, **White-fronted** and **Grey-fronted Honeyeaters**, but with just a few *Eremophila* in flower, and no flowering eucalypts, food was scarce so there was often only one or two of each species. Nocturnal birds were sparse but our spotlighting forays produced 6 species of gecko and 2 frogs.

Our visit to the Nombinnie Nature Reserve added **Southern Scrub-Robin** and **Chestnut Quail-thrush** but we were disappointed at the absence of Gilbert’s (and Red-lored) Whistler.

We spent one day driving a loop from the reserve, into the surrounding farmland, stopping at Booberoi Creek at two different road crossings, both of which yielded a good range of woodland birds. At Chat Alley, there were no chats but **White-winged Fairywren** put in an appearance. Just down the road, Steve spotted **Ground Cuckoo-shrike** in a paddock some distance from the road before they obligingly flew close to all participants. We lunched at a weir on the Lachlan River, where one large eucalypt held **Great Egret**, **White-faced** and **White-necked Heron**, **Australasian Darter** and **Little Pied Cormorant** all no doubt keeping an eye on fish coming over the weir.

Over the four days, we recorded 91 species, and many of us added more with a stop at the Lake Cargelligo Sewerage Works either on the way to or from Round Hill. The most unusual sighting there was of two **Double-banded Plover** far from the coast.

Sue Lashko

Photos, this page and Page 8
[clockwise from top]: **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater**, COG members at Round Hill, **Hooded Robin** and **Southern Whiteface**, **Australian Ringneck**, Cactus, **Striped Honeyeater**, Feather Horned Beetle, **Shy Heathwren**, **Splendid Fairywren**, **Southern Scrub-robin**

Julian Robinson

Photos on Page 9 [clockwise from top]: **White-fronted Honeyeater**, **Zebra Finch**, **Red-capped Robin**, **Australian Ringneck**, Giant Banjo Frog, Trapdoor Spider, Eastern Beaked Gecko, **Chestnut Quail-thrush**, **Ground Cuckoo-shrike**

Lach Read







Sunday 28 April - Jerrabomberra Hill

Members and guests arrived at the meeting place to discover we were not the only group walking there that morning. When the two groups disentangled we set off, although, rather like a posse of choughs, we managed to steal a lady from the other group - she decided we were much more interesting and joined us for the outing. A total of 29 species was seen, including good views of two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** near the summit of the hill. A good range of bush birds was seen, including **Golden Whistlers**, **White-eared Honeyeaters** and **White-throated Treecreepers**.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 12 May – Late autumn mystery bus trip

Twenty one participants joined Jenny Bounds and me on this annual COG event. Based on the forecast for most of the week I had been expecting it to be in fine, still, sunny weather, but a late change to possible fog was ominous, and in fact we started off in a very low thick one that didn't clear until after lunch.

Jenny and I had chosen a waterbird theme for this year, one we hadn't done before, and our first spot was the West Belconnen Pond. Unfortunately the foggy and wet conditions under foot made it much less attractive, particularly when the slight breeze was blowing over the water, than when Jenny and I had done our reccie under sunny skies a week earlier. Despite that (and with the COG scopes we took proving to be not very helpful) we did manage to find around 40 species here, including all the relatively common waterbird species we'd seen the week before.



COG members on the bus tour at Jerrabomberra Wetlands *Geoff McVeigh*

Unfortunately the two grebe species did not co-operate, with only 2 **Australasian Grebes** seen and only occasionally together with the **Hoary-headed Grebes** to allow comparison of their distinguishing features which had been so striking previously. On the other hand, those for the **Hardhead** were able to be pointed out, including the white eye of the male. Also present were 11 very large domestic-type **Mallards** with a variety of plumages, so tame that they wouldn't move from their resting positions even when approached to within a couple of metres.

Land birds made up well over half of the species, including a couple of late leaving **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** and an immature **Golden Whistler** with very brown wings. **Welcome Swallows** were a delight to watch as they hawked very low over, catching insects above and occasionally dipping into, the water. Unfortunately only those in the front of the buses saw the **Australian Hobby** which zipped over as we were pulling in to park to briefly check the woodland to the south of the pond, where many of the land birds were observed.

Our next stop was not actually at wetlands, along the woodland loop of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, to look for species attracted to the flowering trees Jenny and I had noticed on our reccie there several days earlier. Despite the cold and wet weather in between, flowering seemed to have increased significantly, and it had brought in many **Red Wattlebirds** flying into and in between the unidentified planted gums, a conservative number being 25 but probably many more. These pugnacious birds seemed to have driven all other smaller species away, but after about 20 minutes we managed to find a mixed feeding flock (our only one for the day) in a group of non- or less-flowering gums. This comprised a number of **Fuscous Honeyeaters**, **Striated Thornbills**, **Weebills** and **Silvereyes**, plus a lone late-leaving **Grey Fantail**. As we were getting back to the buses we found a number of **White-naped** and a single **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, but unfortunately the 2 **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** Jenny and I had seen on our reccie could not be located.

We also ducked into Fulica Hide to view some waterbirds, including a lone **Freckled Duck** loafing on a log in the water and a distant **Pink-eared Duck**, the only one for the day. Outside the hide there was an **Australian Raven** eating a flying fox, allowing a very close approach, with many photographs taken.

Our final stop was the main area around Kelly Swamp. Jenny had arranged access to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands offices where we had anticipated sitting on the benches in the sun above the swamp watching out for birds while we had our lunch. Instead, due to the still very cold, foggy conditions we were able to have it inside in the comfort and warmth, and we emerged only when the sun finally came out.

Most participants then did the Kelly loop using the COG scopes and the hides to view the waterbirds to which 2 species were added, around 12 **Australasian Shovelers** loafing on logs or upending while feeding, with the males showing their very orange legs, as well as a single **Red-kneed Dotterel** feeding on the far bank. We also added a **New Holland Honeyeater** (and some more **White-plumed** to those we saw at West Belconnen Pond), as well as 8 late-staying **Dusky Woodswallows** using a security fence as a launching post to hawk for insects. While all participants were able to observe the temporarily resident **Black-shouldered Kites**, only a few saw the raptor identified as a **Peregrine Falcon** as it flew strongly overhead.

Counting all the species, including those seen at the early toilet stop at the Kippax Centre, morning tea on the shores of Lake Ginninderra, and the **Grey-lag Geese** on the turf farm and Molonglo Reach as we drove back to the National Library, we reached a total of 61, a surprisingly good tally given the conditions. Twenty two of these were accepted as waterbirds, with Lynne McVeigh winning the mystery prize for the closest number. I had some misgivings about choosing two well-known spots, including spending more than half of the day at the most birded place in Canberra, but checking other smaller waterbird spots showed that they lacked the variety we were able to find. Also land bird activity, including in my own garden, seemed to drop significantly from the beginning of May.

My very sincere thanks again to Jenny Bounds for her considerable help in planning and leading on the day, and for driving the second bus. Special thanks also go to Lori Gould of the Wetlands and Woodlands Trust for allowing us access to the Jerrabomberra Wetlands offices, making lunch a much more enjoyable affair. These bus trips have always very much been social occasions, and are therefore enjoyed even if the weather conditions disappoint.

Jack Holland

Wednesday 15 May- Murrumbidgee River from Tharwa Bridge

This walk provides good views of the log and rock structures placed in the river at several spots to enhance fish habitat. The walk is 1.5km (3km return) on a vehicle track, and on a very pleasant morning we managed 38 species. A fast-disappearing raptor proved tricky - later examination of the photographs indicated it was an **Australian Hobby**. Good numbers of **Crimson Rosellas** and **Crested Pigeons** were feeding on the path, although we couldn't determine just what was being consumed. **Striated** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Red-browed Finches** were seen in a couple of places.

Sandra Henderson



Crescent Honeyeater

Tee Tong Teo

Sunday 19 May – Square Rock

On a glorious, sunny morning, fourteen members met in Kambah to carpool before driving to the Square Rock car park located within Namadji National Park on the Corin Dam Road. The light cloud was just lifting as we arrived and the bush was fairly quiet. During the 9.2km return walk we saw 21 species, the most notable being an estimated 12 **Crescent Honeyeaters** seen and heard in a number of locations along the track. Other sightings included a **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Grey Butcherbird** and two **Superb Lyrebirds**. Numerous **Striated Thornbills** were seen at several spots and lesser numbers of **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **White-throated Treecreepers** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**.

While lunching on a rocky outcrop looking over the valley to the Brindabella Mountains, two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were observed in the distance. We encountered a number of hazard reduction burns on both sides of the track and few birds were observed in these areas.

Prue Watters

New Places: May 2019

Sandra Henderson

Molonglo River track, from North Weston Ponds towards Scrivener Dam

On visits to the Scrivener Dam lookout I had noticed tracks both sides of the river towards the new Molonglo suburbs. I started at North Weston Ponds, where the cycle track heads behind the RSPCA towards Civic. It's possible to walk on the cycle track, or go down to near the river's edge. I know Jean C. had previously reported nesting cormorants along the river, but I had not anticipated seeing several groups of **Great Cormorant** nests, many with chicks in them. About 2km along the track there is a small causeway (probably impassable when the river is up) which leads back to the starting point. The return track is closer to the nesting birds, but they are not so visible because of the vegetation, but I was able to see a darter nest which is invisible from the other side. (A repeat trip on another day had the added bonus of a **Little Eagle** circling above the nesting birds). I plan to do this walk again soon to see how the nesting is progressing – it seems much later than in previous years. eBird list - <https://ebird.org/australia/view/checklist/S55615293>

Uriarra Travelling Stock Reserve

Several COG members have visited this reserve in recent months. It is on Uriarra Road, on the left past Bluett's Block. There is a sign near the gate, which is locked. The reserve itself is well worth a visit, and should be great in the breeding season. I saw 26 species, which included several **Speckled Warblers**, four thornbill species, and both **Scarlet** and **Eastern Yellow Robins**. The reserve extends some distance back from the road.

Isaacs Ridge, O'Malley

I undertake COG's woodland surveys in Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve on Mugga Lane, but had never birded in the woodland on the other side of the ridge. There are several places within O'Malley where there is access into the reserve. I was there late morning, so didn't get a big species list, but it's a very pleasant walk and there is much more to be explored – I walked a fairly short loop. There are some impressive large eucalypts in the reserve, none of which were in flower.

Cascades Trail at Tidbinbilla

The trail starts at Mountain Creek carpark, and I was hoping to add one or more species to my year list. It soon became apparent that with a very noisy family group about 100m in front of me my chances were not good. The trail has some steep-ish sections, with damp, mossy rocks, which made me very cautious. For those with an interest in fungi there were lots to marvel at, but the birds were very scarce. I was almost back at the start when a **Bassian Thrush** walked across the path, then flew back. This is a very pretty walk, which needs to be taken slowly in places if conditions are damp.



Cockatiels and Galahs (Round Hill field trip)

Julian Robinson

A Big Year in the ACT

In 2019, I again seek to see 200 bird species in the ACT in a calendar year. After getting close last year (198 species), I thought I would try again. It is a most enjoyable challenge, made all the more possible by the generous birders that kindly report the uncommon and rare birds that they encounter, either on the Chatline or on Ebird. This May, in fine autumn conditions, I have enjoyed something of a purple patch, seeing four uncommon species in a little over a week, three of which have added to my 2019 list. The three **Swift Parrots** that I saw at the Justice Hope Woodland in Watson on Saturday 18 May were the first of the four, and represented for me ACT bird species #183 for 2019. I have a special fondness for 'Swifties', the both of us hailing from Tasmania, but choosing to come to an equally lovely destination in Canberra. The Swift Parrots were not easy to see, hidden among the foliage in a Yellow Box near the dam, but some slight movement betrayed their presence.

On the Sunday, following another kind report and with the assistance of a young birder in attendance, I was able to get onto a female **Pink Robin** in section 18 at the wonderful Australian National Botanical Gardens. This for me is another bird with strong Tasmanian associations, as I have seen the more recognisable males in Tassie locations at Fern Glade in Burnie and at Fern Tree on Mt Wellington.

The following week I developed a bad head cold and was too sick to be at work, but too stricken with birdwatching fever to stay in bed. Accordingly, I dragged myself to Jerrabomberra Wetlands to see what was about. I was gratified to see a good diversity of birds, with the birds du jour being two adult **Little Wattlebirds** sitting among some **Red Wattlebirds** in a dead tree near Fulica Hide. I had seen Little Wattlebirds earlier in 2019, having worked long and hard to get onto the one reported from Hall. When one has seen an uncommon bird, it is much easier to recognise them subsequently and to identify them with confidence. I was interested to see the two Little Wattlebirds sitting quietly in the tree, periodically being chased by the Red Wattlebirds and I was intrigued to see them so late in the season. Perhaps the sighting was not so unusual in that I had just seen an Eastern Brown Snake nearby (at the site of the former trestle bridge), so the unseasonably mild weather conditions might be conducive to unusual sightings.

My headcold continued into the following day, but so did my purple patch. In that Tuesday morning, I went in search of a **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** at Bluett's Block. After three hours of searching, and intent listening, I was lucky enough to encounter the little beauty alternately zipping then skulking amongst the Burgan. This was ACT bird species #185 for 2019. There was at least one CRHW, and I recognised it from its jizz immediately. Again, it was a bird that I had seen previously, so I knew it when I saw it – noting that their colouration is just a little bit like **Brown Thornbills**. My rule is that 'if you see a bird and you think it might be a heathwren, it is not a heathwren. If you see a bird, and you know it is a heathwren, it is a heathwren'. It has a cocked tail like a Superb Fairywren, but the CRHW is larger, and it has the chestnut brown feathers. Luckily, I was able to photograph this (and other uncommon birds) to satisfy myself that the birds were not just hallucinations associated with my headcold. What a wonderful birdwatching week in the glorious autumnal Canberra woodlands.

David Dedenczuk



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 2 June – Uriarra loop

Join me for a 3.5km loop walk over undulating terrain which, at birdwatching pace, may take 3.5 hours. From the Uriarra East Reserve car park, we will walk the loop in a clockwise direction, down to the Murrumbidgee River, past the remains of the former Camp Sturt to the intriguing Sturt Island. Thence it is south to the Molonglo River, up to the Uriarra Road and back to the car park. We should see a variety of woodland and riverine birds. **Scarlet Robin** is a possibility as is **White-faced Heron** and **White-bellied Sea-eagle**.

Meet at the Uriarra East Car Park at 8:00am. Bring warm clothes. Morning tea and water.

For enquiries contact David Dedenczuk by email: ddedentz@bigpond.net.au or mobile phone: 0417 222 154.

Saturday 15 June – Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve -Superb Lyrebird surveys

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

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. For previous survey results see *Gang-gang* p7, July 2018.

Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au) MOB 0418679 847

Saturday 22 June – Nelanglo TSR

This will be a morning visit to a TSR north of Gundaroo. It is a small but lovely woodland site with a good chance of uncommon bush birds such as **Brown Treecreeper**, **Jacky Winter** and **Crested Shrike-tit**. Final details will be sent out to

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**

participants closer to the date. Registration is essential; numbers may be limited: roostcensus@canberrabirds.org.au

Ryu Callaway

Sunday 6 July - Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge, with possible side trip

The well-made and maintained path between Kambah Pool and Pine Island offers a clear and fairly easy walk to Red Rocks Gorge along (although mostly well above) the Murrumbidgee River. It is about 2.5 km to the Gorge with a steepish down and up (roughly 30 metres elevation) about half way along, where the path dips to the river. There is potential for interesting sightings, including the famed Peregrine Falcons that nest at the Gorge, although it is a bit before their nesting season. Bring water and something for morning tea.

Also, if you wish to explore across the river, bring something for lunch. NOTE: We will only cross the river if the weather is good and the flow through the rapids near the lookout down river from the Gorge is low enough to get across without wading. If we do cross, we'll explore a bit of the east side of the Bullen Range before crossing back across the rapids and then walking back to Kambah Pool.

If we do cross the river, those who don't feel so inclined could take the path back to the Kambah Pool earlier than those who cross.

Meet Michael Robbins at 9 am at the car park at the south end of Kambah Pool, second turning left after you cross the cattle grid at the entry to the Bullen Range Nature Reserve.

Sunday 21 July – The Pinnacle Nature Reserve

The Pinnacle NR is one of a chain of Canberra Nature Park reserves in the Belconnen hills. Heavily planted with trees in the 1980s and 1990s, it now offers a lovely mix of woodlands and open areas, including a largely undisturbed patch of remnant Red Stringybark woodland, and expansive views across the Molonglo Valley. July is a good time to spot the **Scarlet Robins** that regularly over-winter at the reserve, and the local **Speckled Warblers** are enjoying a bit of a resurgence in recent years.

Meet at 9 am at the reserve gate at the southern end of Dungowan St, Hawker and feel free to bring something for a spot of morning tea at the Pinnacle summit, weather permitting.

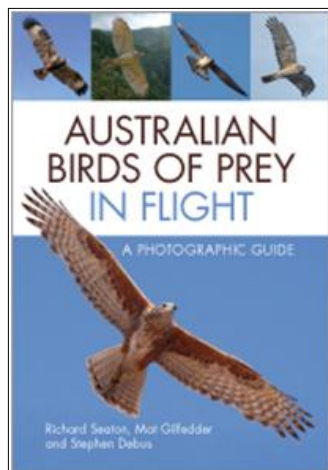
John Brannan

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



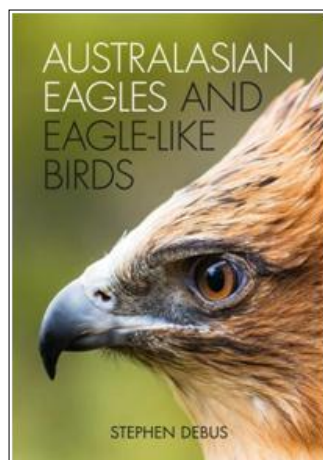
Australian Birds of Prey in Flight: A Photographic Guide

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.

Members' price: \$30.

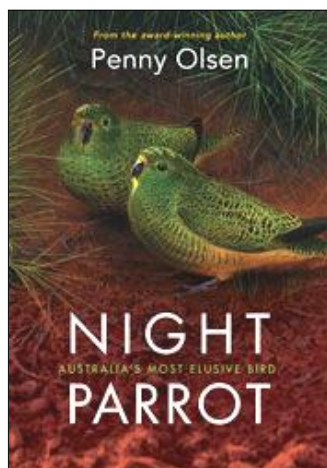


Australasian Eagles and Eagle-like Birds

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

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

2019-2020 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

A Etheridge
J Gordon
C Reiher
J Coleman

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for July 2019 edition:

Wednesday 26 June 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: Prue Watters

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.

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