



# Gang-gang

**MARCH 2020**

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## MARCH MEETING

**Wednesday 11 March 2020**

**7.30 pm**

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

The first presentation will be by Geoffrey Dabb on "Encounters with the Regent Honeyeater, in books and in the field, with comments on the occurrence of the species in the Canberra area".

The main presentation will be by amateur wildlife photographer Danny McCreadie and is entitled "A photo record of Square-tailed Kites nesting in the Adelaide Hills."

Danny will present a series of photos, taken over two successive breeding seasons, of a pair of Square-tailed Kites nesting in the Para Wirra Conservation Park near Adelaide. The Square-tailed Kite, listed as endangered in South Australia, has been the subject of recent studies, including research into identifying prey items brought to the nest. This information is being used to understand the environmental conditions the kites need to successfully raise their young.

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

Compared with the previous three months the weather has been much more variable during the four weeks from 29 January covered by this column. It remained very hot until 3 February while the out-of-control Ororua Valley fire burnt the majority of Namadgi NP. While cooler it was still smoky and remained dry until 7 February, after which it became much more humid with storms etc dropping varying amounts of rainfall over a 12 day period. Most areas received at least a couple of significant falls during this period of floods at the South Coast, as well as some local flooding. These both restored green conditions and finally put out the fires. It then dried up again over the last week, with temperatures back to around 30°C at the end.

While this rain came too late to affect the spring/summer pattern of birds in the COG area of Interest (Aoi), the major storms on the coast had the unexpected side effect of blowing some seabirds way off course including into the COG Aoi. These include a **White-bellied Storm Petrel** (which

*Continued Page 2*



Australian King Parrot

*Julie Clark*

**Everyone welcome**

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

normally flies barely above the surface of the ocean and breeds on Lord Howe Island!) picked up in the Fyshwick industrial area of Canberra, a **White-tailed Tropicbird** in a paddock somewhere in Canberra, and a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** in a paddock in Murrumbateman as well as one in Goulburn. All were alive but exhausted and underweight, and taken into Wildlife Care.

Initial details were hard to come by as all were posted on the Australian Bird Identification (ABID) page on Facebook on 11 February. This is a private “members only” site which as noted below I have had difficulty accessing. On 13 February there was a general article on the ABC news (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-13/seabirds-rescued-after-wild-weather-pushes-them-far-inland/11957734>) which indicated that the juvenile **White-tailed Tropicbird** had died. However, an article in the Canberra Times on 22 February indicated that the **White-bellied Storm Petrel** had been taken to the coast, rehabilitated and successfully released 10 km out to sea. May I extend our sincere thanks on your behalf to the dedication of Melissa Price of WildCare Queanbeyan and others for this remarkable rescue.

Hopefully there will be enough details available to the Rarities Panel to allow confirmation of these three new species records - none of them are currently included in the [Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT – November 2017](#) available on the COG web site.

Other summer migrants have started to move away from Canberra, though it doesn't appear in general that the hot, smoky conditions to early February have caused them to do so earlier than usual. There have been no more confirmed reports of the **Regent Honeyeater**, it appears no one was successfully able to follow up Denise Kay's chatline post on 14 February that she had reasonably reliable information one was in North Lyneham, at the Kaleen end of the suburb. There have also been no further reports of the **Painted Honeyeater**, **Crimson Chat** or **Black-eared Cuckoo**. However, there were two late reports of single **Cockatiels** at the ANU on 24 February, and at the Royal Canberra Golf Course on 25 February. Both were in wild colouring, with the second bird said to have been seen in the vicinity before.

The above are all irregular summer visitors, and of those that visit each year the **Brown Songlark** has been reported from just 2 locations over the period, the last being 2 birds at the Gungaharra Grasslands NR on 2 February. **Horsfield's Bushlarks** were reported from three locations, the most recent one being a single bird at the Parkwood Road, Wallaroo on 7 February. The **Rufous Songlark** has been reported from six locations (compared with only five in January), including regularly at West Belconnen Pond, with the most recent being a single bird at Callum Brae NR on 14 February. Despite the poor summer for this species, it does not seem to have left early.

Similarly, the **White-winged Triller** has not left early as it has been recorded at 12 locations on the eBird Australia map during the period, the most recent being a single bird at the Gungaharra Grassland NR on 21 February. The **White-browed Woodswallow**, usually also an early leaver, has still been reported from two locations, the most recent being four birds at Uriarra East reserve on 11 February. There have been no reports of the closely related **Masked Woodswallow** since 12 January.

The very poor year for local cuckoos has continued, except for the breeding record noted below, and a late one on the Corin Road on 25 February, there were no reports of the **Pallid Cuckoo** from mid-December. The **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** has not been reported since 20 January, and there has only been the single report, a bird at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 21 February, of the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** in the period. Likewise the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** was reported from only two locations on 22 and 23 February, respectively. There were a couple of reports from the mountains which were submitted late for the **Brush Cuckoo** on 14 and 21 January, but none since. This is possibly due to the lack of access to their summer habitat because of the bushfire restrictions, though they are also reported as they come through Canberra on their return migration in February. A **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was last reported from Hume on 29 January.

In the period there have been reports of the **White-throated Needletail** from nine locations, all from the beginning of the time when there were storms around, with easily the maximum being the 90 over Garran seen by Alastair Smith on 16 February. There have been reports from five locations of the related and usually less numerous **Fork-tailed Swift**, the maximum being eight birds over the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 10 February, plus a couple of reports of up to 10 unidentified swifts over Ainslie and Williamsdale.

So during March please keep an eye out for the above and other spring/summer migrant species such as the **Dollarbird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Sacred Kingfisher** which all usually leave, in that order, by mid-March (all three were still widely

reported during February, up to the time of writing). Other birds that mostly leave by the end of March/early April include the **Eastern Koel**, **Leadon Flycatcher**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (often very quiet this month), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, all of which were still widely reported in February. However, not reported at all have been the **Cicadabird**, **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail**, probably due to the lack of access to their mountains summer habitat. It will therefore be especially important to see how many of these come through as "passage migrants" this March.

Other species move from the mountains but will stay here over winter, so watch out for the first altitudinal migrants, the **Scarlet Robin**, **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater**. For 2 years in a row I've now had the last-named present in my garden in early February. I also had a **Golden Whistler** pass through on 14 February, but apart from these there is limited evidence on the eBird Australia maps that they have begun to move into urban, or even peri-urban Canberra, so please watch out for the first arrivals of these as well as the **Grey Shrike-thrush** which also moves into these areas in autumn.

Apart from the seabirds mentioned above, a number of "unusual" species have been reported over the four-week period. An intriguing observation has been the chat line post of 8 February by David McDonald that a neighbour, who lives on a bush block in Wamboin, reported that afternoon, he had glimpsed, and heard, three **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. He did not get a definite visual ID but advised that he knows the call well from his time on Kangaroo Island. David wondered perhaps they are on the move following destruction of their coastal feeding areas in the bushfires? The next day Lia Battison posted that a member of her cycling party reported that he had seen one in Monash 7 February, unfortunately they were well past before he mentioned it. There have been no follow up reports of this species for which there have been very few recent records.

Interesting too was the female **Blue-billed Duck** reported from the West Belconnen Pond by a number of observers on 4 February. This is listed in



Glossy Black-Cockatoos

Geoffrey Dabb



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Good birding, good food

### Top End birding tour

10 to 24 May 2020  
Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,  
Mitchell Plateau.

### Atherton Tablelands 1 to 5 June & Iron Range NP 5 to 14 June 2020

### Gulf of Carpentaria birding tour

19 June to 6 July 2020  
Cairns to Mt Isa via Karumba. The tour  
now includes Winton for rusty  
grasswren.

### The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

13 to 22 July 2020  
Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price,  
Newman

### The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

24 July to 2 August 2020  
Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price,  
Newman

### Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

7 to 17 August 2020

### Adelaide to Nullarbor Plain

5 to 20 September 2020

### Plains-wanderer Weekends 2020

24 & 25 October 2020  
14 & 15 November 2020  
28 & 29 November 2020

Please see itineraries, checklists  
and latest news on our website

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



the 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR) as a rare, breeding resident for which there are mostly records of single birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. However, it seems there have been few records over the past couple of years (in 2019 they were reported to eBird only in January and March).

Also of interest has been the **Azure Kingfisher** first reported from the Cotter River on 15 February and seen by a number of observers since. It has raised again the previous question about whether it is a resident in the area (the ABR lists it as a non-breeding vagrant), including on the Murrumbidgee River. All have been single birds except for the possibility of two birds raised on one occasion. Another bird was then reported from the Scrivener Dam on 23 February.

**Great-crested Grebes** continue to be present and have been reported from two different locations during February, including from the Cotter Dam where they are probably resident. The **Glossy Ibis** has also been reported from four widespread locations, but interestingly not from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. The **Common Sandpiper** was still present at the Isabella Pond on 22 February, having been first reported there on 7 October 2019. Three **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 21 February and then from the adjacent Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant on 23-24 February.



Azure Kingfisher

David Cook

A number of the less usual raptors have also been reported, including a **Spotted Harrier** by Ash Allnutt on John Gorton Drive on 14 February (he had great views of an adult as it flew low across the road). A single **Black Falcon** has been reported from four locations, including around the Mugga Lane tip, while a single **Black Kite** has been reported from five locations during February. On 21 February Philip Veerman saw a white morph **Grey Goshawk** amongst a very noisy flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos over his Kambah house. It was a similar-sized all white bird with a very different flight style, straight flat (not curved or bent) wings and a clearly very long tail.

**Musk Lorikeets** have been reported from four locations in February, while six **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** were reported from Macarthur on 13 February. Finally, two **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from the National Zoo and Aquarium on 23 February.

Despite the initially dry conditions there has still been breeding activity reported, some highlights follow:

- On 4 February Steve Wallace located a **Leaden Flycatcher** nest containing very small young at Hall. While the parents were obviously feeding young and at one point the female ate a small faecal pellet, the young were so small that they could not be seen while being fed.
- He noted that according to the BIRD INFO information on the COG web site for all 35 years, there were only two COG records for **Leaden Flycatcher** nests with young in February, and only two 'on nest' records for February, so it was a very late breeding record. The area was so dry he found it surprising that any birds were breeding, but dependent young **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were also located.
- On 8 February Ryu Callaway drew my attention to a young **Pallid Cuckoo** which had just been submitted to the Canberra Nature Map (CNM). It was photographed at the corner of Ginninderra and Kingsford Smith Drives Florey on 4 February, with **Brown-headed Honeyeater** hosts. It was observed for about half an hour during which the host only came over to feed once, both then moving to a tree nearby and the cuckoo eventually stopped begging.
- This is a very interesting record, including the rather urban location, since as noted above there had been none reported on eBird since mid-December (or on CNM since 14 Nov 2019). There must have been some around, with the egg laid around or after New Year given the incubation period of 12-14 days noted by Morecombe, which is shorter than its host.
- The continued **Australasian Darter/Cormorant** breeding along the Molonglo River W of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass mentioned in my separate report of the COG boat trip should also be noted – these species have a very long breeding period, from about September to May.

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Several chat line subscribers posted that dependent young **Australian King-Parrots** were begging and being fed in their gardens for the first time. Others noted this was a relatively common occurrence in their gardens, as it has been in mine in Chapman. Interestingly almost all the breeding information over 35 years in BIRD INFO on the COG web site is for inspecting hollows or dependent young, with only a single record for nest building and two for on/leaving the nest.

Again last, but certainly not least, reports of **Eastern Koel** fledglings were reduced sharply over the past month, with only around 16 new ones coming to my attention. This depends on how many I have observed in Rivett where they have been much more mobile than usual and it's been very hard to uniquely identify them as they have not stayed at the same spot. This contrasts with three gardens where they have been closely observed for a long period and where they became very bold, including through the supplying of mince. The 62 so far is well down on the 86 fledglings in each of the two previous seasons. This year Mark Clayton has been my chief source for them, including from his monitoring of posts on the ABID page on Facebook, from which both he and I have found it difficult to obtain information from other than the photo and location.

More mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have also come to my attention, though probably not as many as might have been indicated by their previous early coming together due to the poor food availability. While it's a little early for large single flocks to form, I have observed flocks of up to 80 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** associated with their local roost sites, where numbers were unchanged at just under 500 birds in February. **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** have been reported from well over 50 locations, but to my knowledge in nowhere near as big and conspicuous flocks as they were after the 2003 fires, possibly due to the much lesser extent of pine forest burnt.

Indeed, despite some suggestions on the COG chat line on the possible effects of the Orroral Valley fire on movement of species, in my analysis I have been able to find no clear evidence so far. However, movement of the first migrating **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** usually starts in the last week of March, and numbers of these could be impacted due to the extensive area of their summer breeding habitat having been burnt. So please keep a special look out for them and any other migrating honeyeaters such as the **Red Wattlebird**.

March is the middle of the more than three months when there is significant bird movement in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above, including those that usually leave by the end of March, for the first arriving altitudinal migrants in your local patch, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any breeding activity. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, posting on the COG e-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

*Jack Holland*

### COG subscriptions 2020-2021

The COG Committee has decided to raise the membership fees for the coming financial year. The fees will be@

Individual: \$50

Family: \$55

Fees are payable on or before 1 July. To renew your membership, go to the **Join COG (or renew)** page under the **About COG** tab on the website. [canberrabirds.org.au](http://canberrabirds.org.au)

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## COG : a 2019 Landcare Citizen Science Winner

On the 17 November 2019 ACT Landcare Winners projects were announced at the Landcare ACT Awards at the historic ‘Lambrigg’ property beside the Murrumbidgee River, where community Landcarers from across the Territory came together to celebrate their impressive achievements.

COG was highly commended in the ACT Citizen Science section. The award was received by Jenny Bounds and Neil Hermes on behalf of COG.

COG congratulates the very worthy Aaron Clausen (Volunteer Developer Canberra Nature Map – NatureMapr) who won the ACT Government Citizen Science Award. We also congratulate all the other award winners in the various categories and wish them the very best at the national awards.

The 2019 State & Territory Landcare Awards profiles individuals and groups from urban and rural communities who are working together to care for our country.

In its entry, COG highlighted the range of citizen science activities we are involved in from surveys that we started in 1995 on our vulnerable woodland birds, Surveys of Travelling Sock Reserves, 39 years of Canberra Garden surveys, Jerrabomberra Wetlands, Latham’s Snipe, and Lord Howe Island.

This prestigious awards program acknowledges landcare projects that are focused on sustainable farming, biodiversity and conservation, community and wellbeing, Indigenous land management, Coastcare, youth participation and leadership.

The awards celebrate the incredible efforts of individuals and groups, young and old, to protect the ACT’s natural resources, stewarding a more resilient landscape for the future. We were delighted to amongst such worthy other Landcarers.

Neil Hermes



**Minister Suzanne Orr, Neil Hermes and Jenny Bounds** at the Landcare ACT Awards held at “Lambrigg” near Tharwa ACT on 17th November 2019

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## Volunteer needed!

Are you looking for a way to volunteer with COG? The publications desk is looking for a part time volunteer to look after the publications sales desk at meetings on an ad hoc basis. Kathy and John normally administer the publication sales, but are sometimes away travelling when COG meetings are on.

### What would be required:

We are looking for someone willing to bring the publications to meetings and manage any cash sales on the night. Anyone interested wouldn't need to commit to doing it every meeting, just be available a few times a year when needed.

### Advantages of getting involved:

- Often the sales desk is a bit of a focus for members, so it's a great way to meet and chat to people at the meeting.
- Learn about new birding books and get first dibs on sale items.
- Help COG through volunteering.

Contact Kathy Walter for further information  
[sales@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:sales@canberrabirds.org.au) or phone 0421 708 603.



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## NSW Bird Atlasers seeking help in 2020

The NSW Bird Atlasers have just completed the mammoth task of publishing a 3 volume Atlas of the Birds of NSW and the ACT. The final volume will be released in about April.

The Group has now set themselves the task of comparing the changes in bird species over six decades from 1970s to the 2020s. To complete this task they will be collecting data from across NSW and the ACT up until the end of 2020. The base data are collected on 10 minute grids. The NSW Bird Atlasers have put out a call for anyone doing birding in harder to reach corners of NSW to provide bird lists.

The NSW Bird Atlasers (NSWBA) was established in 1982 as an independent, volunteer-based, non-profit group with the joint aims of monitoring the distribution of birds in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, preserving habitats, providing a proper basis for environmental impact studies and for other ornithological reference purposes. Their aims enable the NSWBA to address key issues in the status of birds within the defined area of study, to identify changes in bird populations, and to disseminate information about birds and their conservation whilst encouraging a wider appreciation of birds in the community.

More information is available at <http://www.NSWBirdAtlasers.org.au>



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## Field Trip Reports

### Sunday 2 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

World Wetlands Day 2020 had the theme of “Wetlands and Diversity”. While Kelly Swamp is currently a dry wetland, the 10 participants in this annual outing enjoyed plenty of diversity. A highlight was close views of a **Black-shouldered Kite** eating a mouse in a dead tree close to Bittern hide. With no ducks to focus on there, we spent time watching **Australasian Reed-warbler**, **Golden-headed Cisticola** and **Red-browed Finch**. A **Royal Spoonbill** was spotted on the billabong and then flew to Jerrabomberra Creek to join two others. **Great** and **Little Pied Cormorant** were spotted on the silt trap, and a **Dollarbird** did circuits around the swamp; by the end of the morning, we had recorded at least three.

Jerrabomberra Creek had a good array of waterbirds, including more than 80 **Australian White Ibis**, 4 **Latham’s Snipe**, 2 **Great Egret**, at least 8 **Red-kneed Dotterel**, 2 **Pink-eared Duck** and 2 **Black-winged Stilt**. The woodland was alive with **Grey Fantail** and a single brightly coloured **Yellow Thornbill** gave great views.

Despite temperatures in the low 30s, we recorded a very pleasing 54 species.  
Sue Lashko



**Black-shouldered Kite** with mouse

*Sandra Henderson*



**Wedge-tailed Eagle**

*Duncan McCaskill*

### Sunday 9 February – Campbell Park

On an overcast February morning with very light rain-showers, nine COG members gathered early at Campbell park. Conditions continued to be very dry in the reserve, with no water visible in the creeks or dams - not even the deep dam in the NE corner. Barbara's Tree appears to be in poor condition, probably as a result of a hot, dry summer. Despite the dry conditions, the party observed a good number of birds, small and large. A highlight was an encounter with a family party of four **Wedge-tailed Eagles**, which made forays close to the COG party for several minutes, affording excellent views. Two new COG members had their first ever encounters with **Dusky Woodswallows** and a **White-eared Honeyeater** - it is always a special occasion to see new species for the first time. The party returned with a reasonable tally of 31 species for the morning.

*David Dedenczuk*

(Ed. For some of us, a stop at “Barbara’s Tree” (a huge *Eucalyptus rossii* – Scribbly Gum) was interesting. Some readers will know that Barbara Daly from the Native Plant Society passed away only a few days later.)

### Monday 10 to Friday 14 February – accommodated trip to Guthega, Snowy Mountains

Despite a summer of continuing bushfires, and now threatening rain, nine set off for the Brindabella Ski Lodge in Guthega. Heavy winter snowfalls had resulted in rich and dense vegetation not seen for many years. Intermittent rain showers, low cloud and warm humidity, did not deter this enthusiastic group. Each day walks to locations within the region resulted in a total of about 40 bird species, swamp and other wallabies, kangaroos and plenty of blue



**Satin Flycatcher**

*Sandra Henderson*



flatworms. As for the previous trip to Guthega, the most birdy area was the Pallaibo Walking Track from Sawpit Creek down to the Snowy River – here 33 species included 5 mostly male **Satin Flycatcher** (NB), **Olive-backed Oriole**, **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Yellow Robin** and **Silvereye**, but no Lyrebird this time. Elsewhere immature **Flame Robin** and **Brown Thornbill** were the most visible species and widespread. Most surprising was one sighting of a dark morph **Little Eagle**. Otherwise great food, jigsaw puzzles, Scrabble, reading and some chores kept us all gainfully occupied. By all accounts a successful and enjoyable trip.

Jean Casburn

### Sunday 16 February – Molonglo Reach boat trip

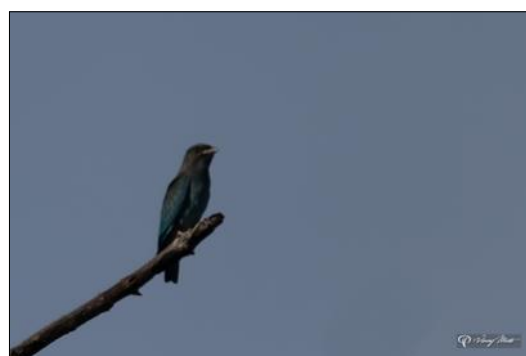
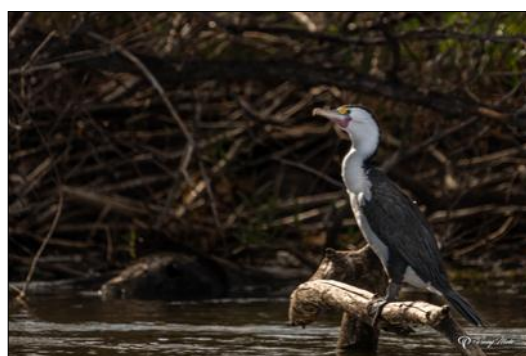
Under clear, still and cool conditions, 16 members and guests joined me on what was my twenty first time on this now annual trip to view the water and land birds of this area. As usual we left from Kingston Harbour on the electric boat, the EL Gull, but due to the still low water levels we didn't first venture up Jerrabomberra Creek. Instead we spent some more time in East Basin which had contained quite a few species due to the dry conditions, before moving into Molonglo Reach and along the S bank to the far bridge, and then tracing our route back.

Only four **Australasian Darters** were recorded, the lowest number I can recall. One was a male close by and low down, with limited red on the neck (so not in breeding plumage), and had its wings spread out, drying them and thermo-regulating at the same time. The other was a female sitting much higher (but with a clear white breast and black nape), these were well separated along the Reach. We also saw two of them very high on the thermals, again with some participants first mistaking them for raptors.

We saw a total of five **Great Cormorants**, three together in a dead tree allowing good views, and the others in flight and above or in the water, respectively. However, no **Little Black** or **Little Pied Cormorants** were seen, despite rafts of the latter being reported from East Basin in the past month. Making up for this was a very clean-cut **Pied Cormorant** sitting in one of its favourite spots perfectly still and low in a dead tree as we returned to the harbour, allowing very close views and the identification features to be pointed out.

This is now the fifth year that no darter/cormorant breeding could be confirmed, and for the second year where there seemed to be no older nests in previously favoured spots or birds still in breeding plumage. This was not unexpected given the low water levels for 2020 so far, but it is further support that the breeding of these species in the area, first discovered in 2003, is over.

The main breeding area in the ACT still appears to be along the Molonglo River west of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass for about a kilometre downstream. Early breeding there for four species was covered in the December issue of Gang-gang in the report of the COG Wednesday Walkers outing there on 20 November. During February Rod MacKay followed up activity there and reported breeding was still on going for these four species at all levels, from mating/bonding behaviour to fledged young. Interesting was that breeding for the **Little Black Cormorant** and **Great Cormorant** was



EL Gull, Darter, Pied Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Dollarbird

Vinay Mote

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noted by Rod for the first time on 18 February, possibly due to the rain earlier that month. A second impromptu COG Wednesday Walkers outing there on 19 February corroborated these results (see separate report in this issue – many thanks to Jean Casburn for providing a more detailed analysis which was largely consistent with Rod's.)

Activity there may be a bit down compared with last season, but it is still significant given the very dry conditions and low river water levels for December and January. A new spot for the breeding of the **Little Pied Cormorant** with up to nine nests at the "Tuggeranong Marsh" south of the Greenway oval was discussed in my February 2020 Gang-gang column. Breeding there finished in January and my checking on 21 February revealed it had not re-commenced despite the recent rain and a very full pond.

While the number of species seen in Molonglo Reach were easily higher than those on East Basin, most of the highlights came from the latter. These included 2 separate **Black Swan** nests with eggs and a bird sitting, as well as several quite advanced cygnets (this species can breed all year round). A single **Australasian Shoveler** was seen there (including on the way back), a first for these boat trips and unexpectedly deep and extensive water for this dabbling duck. Perhaps this was due to the easier accessibility of weeds with the low water levels. Not quite so unexpected was a lone female **Hardhead**, though checking my records this was the first recording of this species on one of these boat trips since 2004.

The most numerous species on East Basin was the **Eurasian Coot**, at least 150 were estimated. Though there were many fewer they were also the most numerous waterbird species on Molonglo Reach, with only low numbers of 5 other common waterfowl species. Most of the land birds were also well-known species, easily the highlight was six **Dollarbirds** in two groups including some immatures. Notable was the absence of some expected species, even the **Greylag Geese**, usually seen around the canoe club house, were missing for the first time since they were first recorded in 2014.

At 38 the total number of species was well down compared with the 51 for the previous two years. This probably reflects the very dry year despite the good rains of the previous week, the effect of this may have been for the waterbirds to disperse but with land birds still to move in. Despite this the participants again enjoyed the trip which remains a popular and very pleasant late summer outing. The lower numbers than usual also allowed for better viewing, including beginners, as we glided past.

Many thanks again to Lia Battison for having done the very tricky task of keeping the eBird list. Being on a moving boat and having up to 16 people calling out the birds they see makes the job doubly difficult, particularly when we start a new recording area. Many thanks also Rod MacKay and Jean Casburn for providing the detailed breeding records for the Molonglo River below the Tuggeranong Parkway bridge, and to Jim Paterson for again skippering the boat.

Jack Holland

### Wednesday 19 February – Coombs Pond and Molonglo River

The target species for the Coombs Pond outing were the **White-fronted Chats** and **Spotted Crake**, both of which were found without too much trouble. The odd couple of a **Hoary-headed Grebe** and **Australasian Grebe** were still together, as they seem to have been for some time now. Since the wander round the pond did not take much of the morning, we moved down to the RSPCA to walk along the river to look at the nesting cormorants. It was a bonus to see that the **Cattle Egrets** I'd noted at North Weston Ponds earlier in the morning were still sitting on the wall of the further pond. The walk along the Molonglo (from near the RSPCA to the causeway 2.5km upstream) provided us with great views of nests of **Great Cormorants**, **Little Pied Cormorants** and **Little Black Cormorants**, all with young in the nests, as well as **Australasian Darters**. An immature **Dollarbird** followed us up the river, and we encountered a very confiding **White-faced Heron** at the causeway. At the same spot we had three raptors in view – a distant **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, a **Nankeen Kestrel**, and a **Black-shouldered Kite**.

Sandra Henderson

### Sunday 23 February – Cotter Reserve

17 COG members and guests met at Cotter Reserve on a very pleasant morning. We started by wandering down to Cotter Bend, hoping to find the **Azure Kingfisher** which had been seen there recently. Unfortunately the bird did not put in an appearance. The Discovery Trail was more productive, with bush birds and quite a few **Pacific Black Ducks** admired. We also admired some Eastern Water Dragons (one lying on a casuarina branch several metres up the tree), and skinks (later identified as Yellow-bellied Water-skink). The Honyong-Cotter walking track up to the dam was quiet, with highlights being three **Emus** and two **Olive-backed Orioles**. The anticipated **Great Crested Grebes** were as far away from us as it was possible to be, but were able to be identified (just!) in distant photographs.

Sandra Henderson



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# New Places: February 2020

Sandra Henderson

## Bromell Cct, Wanniasa

There is a small park in the centre of Bromell Circuit, and some of the birds seen at Wanniasa Hills Primary School were seen flying in that direction. There's a path from near the school, between houses, up to the park. The highlight of ten minutes of observation was a group of **Superb Parrots** flying up from the school and through the park. The park was very dry, with no obvious flowering. Several other parrots were seen, and **Common Mynas** were seen entering a hollow. There is no understory, but in a better year there should be more parrots and honeyeaters around.

## Pallaibo Track, Sawpit Creek to Thredbo River

In the past I've walked the Waterfall Track, which has the same starting point. The Pallaibo Track (6.6km) passes through a variety of habitats and finishes at the Thredbo River. Along the way we saw five honeyeater species, including **Fuscous Honeyeaters** and dozens of **White-naped Honeyeaters**. The obvious highlight were the **Satin Flycatchers**, which were active and calling. One appeared to be building a nest, and they were seen in several places. While we heard a **Red-browed Treecreeper** several times, the bird did not appear.

## Waste Point, Lake Jindabyne

On the return trip from the COG outing to Guthega, Prue and I stopped at Waste Point, after good reports from those who'd visited on the way to Guthega. We spent 25 minutes around the carpark area and looking out over the lake, which is very low. There were many **Little Pied Cormorants** scattered around the lake on rocky outcrops. The most obvious birds in the trees were **Fuscous Honeyeaters** – we counted six in a very small area. A spot well worth another visit, although I'll try to do better at avoiding the many ants.

## Jerrabomberra Avenue, Symonston

There's a 1km section of Jerrabomberra Avenue which runs from a locked gate near the dog training club to a dead-end just past the model railway site. I've visited it a couple of times in the past month and found something interesting each time. On 8 February there were two **White-winged Trillers** moving along the fence – a begging youngster and a busy adult. A couple of weeks later a group of **Dusky Woodswallows** was snuggled up together in a tree next to the dog training paddocks. A quiet, easy, pleasant walk.



White-winged Triller feeding young

Dusky Woodswallows

Sandra Henderson



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# Future Field Trips

## COG Trips

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

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

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

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

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

### Saturday 7 March - Yass River Private Property (Rugosa)

This will be a visit to a private property at Yass River. There should be a mix of open and closed woodland habitats.

Meeting time and place: 7:45am behind Hall primary school on Hoskins St (-35.167406, 149.068472) for carpooling.

Suggested contribution to drivers: \$10 per passenger

Walking distance: 5km

What to bring: Bring water, sunscreen, hat, walking shoes, and morning tea to have on the go if you wish. Bring your own lunch which we will be able to enjoy on their large deck with access to coffee, crockery, and food reheating facilities.

Degree of difficulty: medium

End time (approx.): We should be back in Hall early to mid-afternoon.

Need to register: Yes, email me to confirm attendance so we have some idea of numbers.

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Ryu Callaway, ryu\_is\_gr8( at) [yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp)

### Tuesday 10 to Thursday 12 March - Ulladulla

This mid-week trip will be over 3 days and 2 nights. We will visit reserves in and near Ulladulla. Book at Ulladulla Headland Tourist Park (ph 02 4429 8982; email [ulladulla@holidayhaven.com.au](mailto:ulladulla@holidayhaven.com.au)) which has cabins and campsites. Please book your own accommodation.

We hope to find a variety of heathland, forest and wetland birds including **Glossy Black Cockatoos**. The walks will be easy/moderate.

Please book a place with Bill Graham on [graham.br63@grapevine.com.au](mailto:graham.br63@grapevine.com.au). Present numbers are less than 5 so we could do with a few more. Requirements for the trip will be forwarded upon receipt of application.

### Sunday 15 March - Molonglo River Walk from Weston

Meet in the carpark near the RSPCA, next to North Weston Ponds at 9.00am.



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We will walk along the river to look at the nesting cormorants (the **Great Cormorants** should be on nests). This is an easy walk, about 5km in total, mostly on tracks. It will take 2-3 hours, as we walk towards Scrivener Dam on one side of the river, cross at a causeway, and return on the other side.

Sandra Henderson

### Wed 18 March 08:30am. March Wednesday Walk to Bluetts Block

Bluetts is a densely forested reserve with extensive heath in much of the understory. A fire trail leads up a steep hill from the white gate and there are some pleasing views across Denman Prospect development towards Black Mountain. Bird and flower species vary throughout the year, and the forest rings with birdcalls in spring. **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** have been seen to breed here. The walk will also traverse some grassland off track. Sturdy boots or shoes are suggested because stones on the slope of the fire trail can be slippery.

How to get to Bluetts: Go to Stromlo Forest Park roundabout and turn on to Uriarra Road. Travel about 2.5km to the place where a bicycle path enters the roadside on the left hand side of the road. This would be a useful place to turn your car and travel back towards Stromlo Forest Park to park outside a gateway clearly labelled Denman Prospect Gate 3. Be careful if turning across the road at this point as traffic flows swiftly.

Martin Butterfield, Jean Casburn

### COG pelagics

#### Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 March, and Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 October 2020

COG will be running two weekends of pelagics in mid-March and in mid-October. There will be a Saturday and a Sunday trip each weekend. The idea behind both trips is to hit migration time for the seabirds. March trips tend to have a more summer flavour with fewer winter albatrosses but with one memorable trip in 2015 getting both **Herald Petrel** (very rare) and **Kermadec Petrel**. The October trips are timed to try and see the passage of **Cook's** and **Mottled Petrel** (both rare) but also offer a great selection of winter albatrosses and petrels.

Cost is not finalised but is likely to be around \$130 per person per day. You need to be in Eden ready to board the boat by 7am (we are usually back in Eden around 3pm). If you are interested, please email me at [tobiashayashi@hotmail.com](mailto:tobiashayashi@hotmail.com), stating the date you wish to go; you may choose any or all days. Please note that these trips are advertised to COG members first, and financial members are given priority. I have recently advertised the March trip to non-members and, in late June, will advertise the October trips to non-members, so if you are keen to come, please make sure you contact me soon.

Tobias Hayashi

### Saturday 28 March 8:00am. South Googong

We will carpool from Calwell and start with a loop to London Bridge Homestead, mostly open with scattered trees and fringing woodland. The area around the Homestead can be good for declining woodland species such as **Hooded Robin**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Brown Treecreeper**, and **Southern Whiteface**. We will then visit Tin Hut Dam for lunch where **Yellow Thornbill**, **Musk Duck**, and **Australian Shelduck** are possibilities. Wombats are almost guaranteed. If there is a Total Fire Ban the reserve will be closed and the walk will be cancelled.

ebird hotspots: [London Bridge](#); [Tin Hut Dam](#)

Meeting time and place: 7:40am at Calwell Playing Fields Car Park ([-35.439122, 149.121231](#))

Suggested contribution to drivers: \$5 per passenger

Walking distance: 5km

Degree of difficulty: medium

End time (approx.): We should be back in Calwell early to mid-afternoon.

What to bring: Bring water, sunscreen hat, walking shoes, and morning tea to have on the go if you wish. There are toilets at London Bridge carpark. Bring lunch to have at Tin Hut Dam, undercover picnic tables available.

Need to register: No

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Ryu Callaway, [ryu\\_is\\_gr8\( at\)yahoo.co.jp](#)

### Sunday 5 April - K2C surveys near Bredbo

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be

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visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws **before Wednesday 1 April**. Email: [ntaws@bigpond.com](mailto:ntaws@bigpond.com) or 0408 210736.

### Saturday 11 April - Narrabundah Hill

Those members who will be staying at home this Easter and/or who will have visiting birder friends are welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. It has been timed for the honeyeater migration season, with the northern and western boundaries of the reserve having some of the few currently known local migration routes. We will walk along the northern boundary and, depending on conditions and the species seen, possibly along most of the western one, and we'll either return by the same or a different path. This will be around 4 km on relatively flat ground. We will also look for other autumn birds such as **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as the gerygones.

This walk will start at 8:30 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning in early April (we saw over 2500 birds there at a similar time last year). Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 or [jandaholland@bigpond.com](mailto:jandaholland@bigpond.com)) at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care.

While it is a relatively shaded area, please take water as well as morning tea to have on the track.

Jack Holland

### Saturday 18 April - Wandiyali-Environa Conservation Area (Private Property)

Description: This will be a repeat of last year's successful visit to this restoration property that is privately owned and not usually open to the public. Their work and eventual aims are comparable to Mulligans Flat.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L7467465>

Meeting time and place: 7:45am at Jerrabomberra Village (shops) car park near the big roundabout.

Walking distance: 3km

Degree of difficulty: Medium/Hard - Note it is mostly cross-country with some steep slopes.

End time (approx.): We should be back by lunch time.

What to bring: Bring water, sunscreen hat, walking shoes, and morning tea to have on the go if you wish. No toilets.

Need to register: No

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Ryu Callaway, ryu\_is\_gr8( at)[yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp)

### Sunday 26 April - The Settlers Track, Namadgi National Park

Description: On this trip we will visit one of the most historically significant parts of Namadgi National Park: the Settlers Track/Grassy Creek area. It will be a comfortable 6 km walk. This area is highly recommended both for its natural history properties and its European cultural heritage. It helps the visitor to gain some understanding of how the pioneers lived from the time of settlement of that area in the mid-1830s until the 1980s when the land was incorporated into the National Park, and sheep and cattle grazing ceased. An excellent brochure covering the Track is available from the Namadgi NP Headquarters, or online at [https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/404591/The-Settlers-Track.pdf](https://www.environment.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/404591/The-Settlers-Track.pdf).

Meeting time and place: Meet in the Kambah Village car park, corner of Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent, Kambah at 8.30 am for carpooling. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10.

Walking distance: 6 km

Degree of difficulty: easy to medium

End time (approx.): mid-afternoon

What to bring: water, morning tea, and lunch. Be prepared for changeable weather conditions.

Need to register: Yes

Numbers limited: yes, maximum 15

Name of leader and contact details: David McDonald, telephone (02) 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, email [settlers2020@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:settlers2020@canberrabirds.org.au).

## Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 October 2020 – Green Cape

For some time now, COG has visited Green Cape every second year to stay in the former lighthouse keepers' cottages and enjoy the wonderful wildlife watching (birds and whales, in particular) in Ben Boyd National Park and in the surrounding seas. With the likely privatisation of the cottages from 2021, we have booked the cottages in October 2020 for a final visit. There are only 14 places available for this trip. The commitment is for a 4-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. Accommodation costs are \$326. There is also an \$8 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival. An alternative is a single park pass which costs \$22 and is available online.

To register, email [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com). This trip is now full but there are likely to be cancellations between now and October so if you would like your name added to the waiting list, please contact me. More detailed information will be sent to participants closer to the date.

Peter Fullagar and Sue Lashko



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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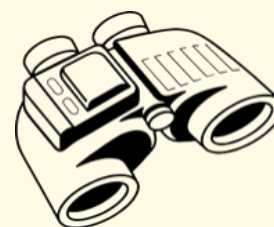
Julie Clark

## 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**

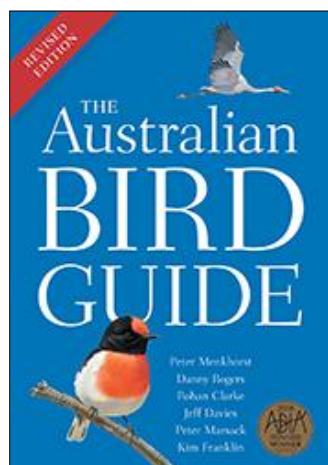
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## Publications for sale

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)

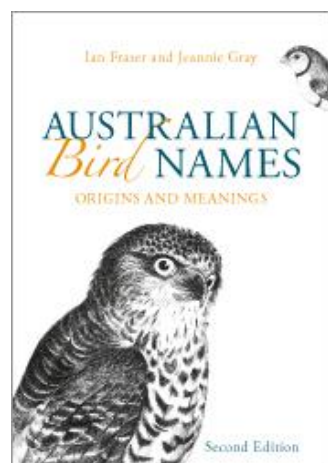


### **The Australian Bird Guide—Revised Edition**

*Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin*

This Revised Edition includes updated maps, artwork and species accounts, reflecting current knowledge of the biology and distribution of Australia's birds. It features around 4700 specially commissioned colour illustrations of over 900 species, with particular emphasis on providing the fine detail required to identify difficult groups and distinctive plumages. Comprehensive species accounts have been written by a dedicated team of ornithologists to ensure identification details, distribution and status are current and accurate. A new easier-to-use index is also included.

**Members' price: \$38.** RRP 49.99



### **Australian Bird Names**

*Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray*

An entertaining account of the stories behind the names of Australian birds. This second edition is a completely updated checklist of Australian birds and the meanings behind their common and scientific names, which may be useful, useless or downright misleading!

**Members' Price: \$42.** RRP \$54.99



### **Plains Wanderer Pin**

*Julian Teh*

This hard enamel pin is a durable piece with a smooth finish, perfect for adorning shirts, coats, bags, hats or even binocular straps.

The Plains-wanderer is Australia's most unique bird.

**Members' Price: \$11**



## 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:

T Palmer  
D Fowler  
M Rixon  
M Pekin

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

**Deadline for April 2020 edition:**

**Wednesday 25 March 2020**

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

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

or

**c/- The Secretary COG,**

**PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608**

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

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

## COG information

**President:** Neil Hermes

0413 828 045

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

**Treasurer:** Prue Watters

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

**Secretary:** Bill Graham

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

### Address for correspondence

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

### Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

[michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com](mailto:michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com)

## COG website

[canberrabirds.org.au](http://canberrabirds.org.au)

### COG Webmaster

Julian Robinson

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

### COG library

### Membership Enquiries & Updates:

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

for change of address or other details.

### Gang-gang Newsletter

**Editor:** Sandra Henderson

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

**Lay-out Editor:** Gail Neumann

### Publication Sales

Kathy Walter

[sales@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:canberrabirds-unsubscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).

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