



Gang-gang

DECEMBER 2022

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JANUARY MEETING

Wednesday 11 January 2023

7.30 pm

COG MEMBERS' NIGHT

The traditional COG Members' Night will again be held as a face-to-face meeting at:

VENUE – St James Uniting Church Hall, off Gillies St, Curtin

Attendees should heed social distancing and good hygiene etc., and use their common sense and stay home if they have COVID symptoms.

Mask wearing is recommended.

Tea/coffee/biscuits will be available afterwards.

There will be the usual monthly raffle.

Parking and entry details

There is parking for at least 30 cars in the car park off Gillies Street, and further parking in Gillies St itself, or across the road at the Curtin shops.

Please use the entrance on the eastern side next to the Good Shepherd Anglican Church and by going under the Chocolate Bear Playgroup sign.

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Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the more than 5 weeks from 24 October to 29 November inclusive covered by this column continued to be very wet with rain events every week, except for the last ten days, which were largely dry except for one severe local thunderstorm. While my impression was of higher bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) than in the previous months (possibly due to the interest in the four "Unusual" species discussed below), this is not really supported by my deeper analysis below. That local bird activity was already set by the very wet spring is underlined by the few reports of sightings of the later arriving inland spring migrants, due to the very wet conditions out there. Apart from those discussed below, there have again been relatively few "Unusual" birds reported.

Much of the interest over the period has involved sightings of four of the more "Unusual" species in the COG AoI. The first of these was the **Little Egret** first reported by Shorty at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 29 October. Quite a few other observers managed to see and photograph this bird, in breeding plumage with plumes on its head, back and chest, just for that day.

Continued Page 2

COG CHRISTMAS BARBEQUE

**Black Mountain Peninsula
(John Cardiff Close)**

6.00 pm Wednesday 14 December 2021

Sausages, bread, onions, beer, wine and non-alcoholic drinks provided.

Please bring either a salad or a dessert, plus serving spoons, to share.

You will also need to bring plates, cutlery, glasses, table and chairs.

There will be the usual monthly raffle.



The program

A program will be drawn up allowing COG members to contribute short presentations (about 10-15 minutes long) on a range of bird-related topics.

If you have a favourite birding moment for 2022, some special photos to share with members, a birding story to tell, or anything that you think might be of interest to other members, please:

Contact Jack Holland by E-mail on jandaholland@bigpond.com) as soon as possible.

Members who have not presented to COG before are especially encouraged.

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

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A few more birders saw it in the same area on 18 November when it seemed to be particularly flighty (this species is usually very active in its movements). COG's 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists it as a rare non-breeding visitor very occasionally seen in the margins of waterbodies. Checking eBird it was last reported from this same location on 17 May 2020, with a number of reports from there in the previous January.

On 11 November Kim Farley reported a **Whiskered Tern** with its typical dipping flight over the water at the pond nearest the waterworks buildings at the Fyshwick end of Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant. Again quite a few birders managed to observe and photograph this bird just for that day. The 2018-2019 ABR lists it as a rare non-breeding visitor usually found on inland waterways and marshes. While the eBird map shows many more sightings than the above species since January 2015, clustered around but certainly not restricted to the Lake Burley Griffin area, I can't recall many (if any) in the recent much wetter times.

On the evening of 15 November Steve and Lachlan Reed reported a **Red-necked Stint** from the Canturf Turf Farm. Later that evening and over the next 2 days many observers were able to see and photograph up to 3 birds of this wader species, often associated with **Black-fronted Dotterels**, both there (including from along Dairy Road) and at the adjacent Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. Again the 2018-2019 ABR lists it as a non-breeding vagrant occasionally seen in summer at the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant, Lake George (from where eBird indicates they were last reported in October 2021) or Lake Bathurst.

The final species was the female **Turquoise Parrot** first reported by N Froelich from Glendale Depot on 14 November. Many birders then made the trip down there and were able to find it up to 26 November. While not always successfully found, to my knowledge it has been one of the most reliable birds of this species, which is often characterized by single or just a few sightings, to observe. The eBird map shows this is the case for the two previous reports in 2022, with single sightings first at Bluetts Block on 6 February, and then from the woodland loop walk at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 10 October. Note that the 2018-2019 ABR lists it as a non-breeding vagrant/escapee, an occasional nomadic visitor from eastern coastal areas. It certainly would be expected to be a wild bird so far south in the ACT.

The third wet spring in a row has meant that some of the later arriving inland spring/summer migrants are present in the lowest numbers for quite a few years. During the period the **White-winged Triller** has been reported from 5 locations only (Kama



Turquoise Parrot

Victor Braguine

NR, Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR and nearby Eyre St wetlands, Campbell Park and Glendale Depot). The only sightings for the period of **Rufous Songlarks** were the two birds reported from Tin Hut Dam (Googong) on 9 November, and one around 3 km north of Bredbo on 23 November.

Sightings of the **Horsfield's Bushlark** have been at 3 locations, with up to 3 birds at Parkwood Road, Wallaroo, just over the NSW border between 2-6 November. Michael Lenz indicated that this year there are many cattle in the paddocks, hence the area is not as suitable for this species as in other years, but on 26 November Shorty saw one there and also heard one just inside the ACT border. The day before Kim Farley had seen one sitting on a gate at Molonglo River Reserve.

There have been no reports in the COG Aol so far this spring of the **Brown Songlark** (the closest reports being from near Lockhart and Orange about 200 km to the west and north respectively), or of the **White-browed** (closest report is from Tarcutta 120 km to the west) and **Masked Woodswallows** (surprisingly the closest report is a single bird from Sydney on 27 October). The few or lack of any reports for the above six species is as expected given the very wet conditions inland.

Of the more coastal spring migrants which were present only in low numbers in October, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were reported from over 20 locations during the period, and the **Brush Cuckoo** from around 17 locations, so both are well established. The **Rufous Fantail** was reported from around 12 locations, half of them while still in passage through Canberra, and the **Satin Flycatcher** from 8 locations, again half of which were within Canberra. The **Common Cicadabird** was reported from 5 locations, one of these being from Mt Majura while still on passage through. The **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was reported from 8 locations, 7 of them from within Canberra, continuing the very high number of reports this spring.

So perhaps it is going to become the next **Eastern Koel**. The latter is certainly well established and reported from around 70 locations during the period. These include a number of relatively rural locations, from Kambah Pool NR on 26 October, Cuumbeun NR on 9 November, Stony Creek NR on 13 November, and from around Tharwa, the most southerly observations, from 5-26 November. After the 10 days of frantic activity in mid-October it has been relatively quiet in my local area and other places I've visited, with still much *ko-el* calling. Very interesting was a report in the Guardian on 9 November indicating that unlike the ACT experience both Birdlife Australia's Birdata and eBird were said to show a much lower reporting rate in October with the peak rate about 2 weeks later than usual. There had also been many complaints about calling throughout the night, presumably the males *ko-el* call trying to attract a mate, with many females assumed still having to arrive.

So please watch out for the remaining spring/summer migrants noted above which are here only in small numbers or still haven't arrived. The latter include the **White-throated Needletail** and the related **Fork-tailed Swift** which are mostly seen in the COG Aol after the New Year.

Of the species that return to the mountains and higher country after spending autumn/winter in Canberra and its surrounds, there were still a few reports from urban and peri-urban locations of the **White-eared Honeyeater**, and a few more of the **Golden Whistler** (4 and 10, respectively), during the period. There were still reports of **Scarlet Robins** from 4 such locations, but none of the **Flame Robin**. **Rose Robins** have been reported from 5 locations in the period, one of which may be described as urban/peri-urban (2 birds at Campbell Park on 30 October), with the remaining locations from west of the Murrumbidgee River. There were no reports of the **Pink Robin** or the inland species, the **Red-capped Robin**, the closest being Lockhart 200 km to the west, over the period.

The only reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** were of 3 birds in Tallaganda State Forest on 12 November, and also 3 birds on Bendora Dam/Warks Rds on 26 November. There has been a report of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** from just one location, with on 5 November David Cook posting that they had one in their garden in Wamboin. He had been hearing it for several days but couldn't catch sight of it, but that afternoon he saw it in one of their birdbaths. He noted it is only the second record of this species in their garden. A **Bassian Thrush** was still reported from the ANBG on 4 November.

So, during December and January please keep an eye out for any of the above species still in the urban or peri-urban areas of Canberra.

Apart from the **Little Egret**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Red-necked Stint** and **Turquoise Parrot** mentioned above there have again been few other "Unusual" species reported. The only report of **Plumed Whistling Ducks** was the two observed by Paul Gatenby in the pond at the Trucking Yard Lane on 31 October. Again, no **Freckled Ducks** were reported during the period. In addition to 7 flying over Parkwood Road Wallaroo on 5 November, **Australian Shelducks** were reported from 7 locations to the east and northeast of Canberra. Again, these were mostly in small numbers, a maximum of 12 ducks seen at the Trucking Yard Lane

Dam on 14 November. A single **Blue-billed Duck** was reported from West Belconnen Pond from 24 October to 3 November, and 2 ducks at The Morass east of Lake Bathurst on 5 November. Apart from Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary up to 6 **Musk Ducks** were reported from 6 locations over the period.

Surprisingly up to 3 **Stubble Quail** were reported from only 3 locations (West Belconnen Pond, Campbell Park and Glendale Depot). I certainly haven't heard them calling yet at their usual places, and it unclear to me why so few seem to be present given the lush grasses available for the third year in a row. In contrast **Brown Quail** were reported from 15 locations, similar to October. Up to 3 **Painted Button-quail** were reported from 6 locations in the period (well down from October), but again there were no reports of **Little Button-quail**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **White-headed Pigeon**, **Brush Bronzewing**, **Peaceful** or **Diamond Doves** during the period.

Up to 4 **Spotless Crakes** were regularly reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR over the period, as well as up to 5 from the nearby Eyre St wetlands, and a single bird at Franklin Ponds on 4 November. On 26 November John Hurrell taped 4 birds, each separated by several hundred metres, at the edge of the swamp at Yankee Hut car park and track. A **Baillon's Crake** was heard at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 25 and 27 October, from where single **Australian Spotted Crakes** were also reported between 24 October to 18 November, as well as one bird from Eyre St wetlands on 22 November. A **Lewin's Rail** was photographed at the former on 27 October, but most reports of it during the period, usually aural, were from Ginninderra Creek in Giralang from 12-29 November. On 26 November John Hurrell taped 2 birds, separated by approximately 500 m, at the edge of the swamp at Yankee Hut car park and track. Surprisingly during the period there were reports of **Buff-banded Rail** only of a single bird from Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 31 October, and two birds at the nearby Eyre St wetlands on 27 November.

No **Banded Lapwings**, **Red-necked Avocets** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were reported during the period. The **Common Sandpiper** was recorded only from the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong including the Village Creek gross pollutant trap up to 28 November. Sandra Henderson has informed me that she hasn't been able to find it this season at Isabella Pond, so it seems very likely there is only one bird present. Two **Caspian Terns** were photographed at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 13-14 November, from where an **Intermediate Egret** was also photographed on 27 October. An **Australian Little Bittern** was observed flying low across the road from the north to south side of Ginninderra Drive Bridge on 28 October.

There were no reports of the **Barn Owl** during the period, and numbers of the **Black-shouldered Kite** also have dropped sharply, reported from around 8 locations compared with around 30 in October. However, numbers of the **Nankeen Kestrel** seem to be holding, reported from around 55 locations (compared with 75 in October) during the period. There were no reports of the **Grey Goshawk**, **Spotted Harrier**, **Pacific Baza** (where has it gone?) or **Black Falcon** during the period. Single **Black Kites** were reported on 2 occasions from the Yass area, as well as from Majura Parkway on 20 November.

The two (always together) **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** were last reported from Mt Majura NR on 12 November, with 3 birds also seen at Scott NR on 6 November. However, there were no reports of the **Azure Kingfisher**, **Cockatiel**, **Greater Bluebonnet** (again to where has it gone?), or **Little Lorikeet** during the period. Two **Musk Lorikeets** were photographed at Lake Tuggeranong on 5 November, and 2 **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** were reported from Tuggeranong Park on 4 November.

No **Blue-faced** (where has the breeding group gone to?) or **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were reported during the period. A male **Scarlet Honeyeater** was reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 25 October and a **Singing Honeyeater** from Bonner on 10 November. Up to 3 **White-fronted Chats** were reported from Coombs Pond between 1-8 November, as well as 3 birds, suspected to be nesting, from the National Arboretum on 28 November. On 6 November single **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** were reported from Kowen Forest and Wamboin. However, no **Little Friarbirds**, **Zebra Finches** or **Tawny Grassbirds** were reported during the period.

Of the birds I have continued to ask readers to keep a special lookout for in 2022, there were many reports of up to 4 **Jacky Winters** from Glendale Depot throughout the period, including when people were looking for the **Turquoise Parrot**. Apart from here there were only 3 birds reported from the known spot, the rural lease near Tharwa on 23 November. However, there have been no reports at all of **Hooded Robins** during the period, very concerning even if they are often quiet while breeding. From 5 November up to 2 **Restless Flycatchers** were regularly reported from Glendale Depot, as well as from 3 other locations, a single bird at Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 9 and 26 November, one at the new spot of Diddams Park on Lake Ginninderra on 19 November, and 2 birds at Nelanglo TSR, with Michael Lenz noting that the nest no longer appeared to be occupied.

In terms of other interesting bird observations, on 8 November Suzi Bond told me that she had the male and female **Eastern Koels** back in her yard Gungahlin that week. They weren't calling, just perched next to each other, preening themselves on the

fence and looking around. She had the same experience of a male and female hanging around her yard for at least 3 weeks from the last week of January earlier this year. Then they were pretty nonchalant about her presence, and she noted she was not used to seeing them out in the open and so relaxed in human company before. Most interesting is that then and now they seemed to be behaving as an actual pair, something I've never really witnessed as they are usually very active flying around calling/duetting and chasing each other. HANZAB under SOCIAL ORGANISATION indicates that this is poorly known, though there is some evidence that they appear to breed in pairs. Also interesting is the possibility that they may have returned to the same place, though this couldn't be confirmed without marking them in some way.

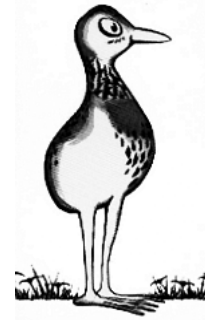
At 20:10 h on 16 November 2022 at his home in Holt, John Layton heard the loud, repetitive *wirra wirra* calls of a male **Eastern Koel** together with the grunting, hissing sounds of an agitated Brush-tailed Possum. He went outside where the light was receding rapidly and, with cautious use of a torch, located the possum crouched on a power cable above his property boundary. With its shoulders hunched and head thrust forward while hissing and snarling, it manifested extreme aggression as it crept towards the Koel perched three metres away. When the possum came to within two metres, the Koel moved to a higher strand of cable and gave two more penetrating *wirra wirra* calls before flying away. Scarcely had the male departed than a female landed on the same spot, gave three extremely strident, brassy *keekking* calls and left. When the female Koel alighted and called, the possum immediately inverted and, with its prehensile tail looped around the cable, scurried away into the gathering dark. Soon after John went indoors, Koels began calling from several locations in the nearby area, or perhaps there may have been only one or two birds moving around. He could hear the calls until at least 23:00 h. Around dawn they were still calling although less frequently as the light increased, ceasing some 20 minutes after sunrise.

These are a very interesting set of observations. **Eastern Koel**/possum interactions have not come to my attention before. Also, it seems to have been a significant one for several Koels to continue calling so late into the evening, my local experience is up to about an hour after dark, though they do more often call from early in the morning. They are certainly very mobile and my experience is that often the same few birds moving around are making the calls from different places.

Compared with October, **Red Wattlebirds** have been very quiet around my local area both in terms of adults and begging young, so I suspect they are busy with their second brood for the season. So please watch out for any begging young including **Eastern Koel** fledglings the first of which may be expected early in December.

Other interesting breeding observations include:

- In the pouring rain on 31 October Susan Robertson was at Nerang Pool where 10 days earlier she had seen 3 **Purple Swampheens** with 5 tiny babies. That day the same chicks were in the same area. One of the adults walked away from the group towards the Pool. Immediately all the babies rushed to it and they all squashed under



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Good birding, good food

2023 tours

Kutini - Payamu (Iron Range) Wet Season

4 to 10 January 2023

11 to 17 January 2023

Cairns to Lockhart River
flight included.

Gulf of Carpentaria

16 June to 3 July 2023

Cairns – Georgetown – Karumba –
Burketown – Cloncurry – Mt Isa – Winton
– Hughenden – Cairns

2023 Plains-wanderer Weekends

07 & 08 October 2023

21 & 22 October 2023

04 & 05 November 2023

18 & 19 November 2023

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Deniliquin – Hattah NP – Port Campbell

Please contact Patricia Maher for
information and itineraries.

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the adult, presumably in an attempt to keep dry and warm. This stopped the adult from moving for quite some time. They were still there and looking healthy a fortnight later. **Purple Swampheens** certainly seem to be breeding successfully in the wet conditions we've had for the past few years; they are easily the most common Rallidae young I see when walking around the local lakes.

- On 4 November Shorty posted that there was a report and photo on Facebook the week before of a young **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** being fed by a **White-browed Scrubwren** at the ANBG. That day he spotted one being fed there by a **Brown Thornbill** so it looks like the cuckoo species is doing well this year.
- It has been difficult to confirm whether the **Willie Wagtails** that built the nest within my GBS site are actually breeding. They are still around but have only fleetingly been seen on the nest. It is possible this is a decoy nest and they have another nearby.
- In the interim a pair of **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** arrived, rapidly built and then have been sitting on a typical shallow nest in a horizontal fork of a dead branch in the large gum above this spot. This is the first time I can recall this species breeding within my GBS site. Very interesting too is how quiet they are; I have not heard them call and have only had fleeting views of the non-sitting bird.
- After in my previous column praising the male **Pied Currawong** with half the top of its bill missing, and its breast and belly feathers all sticking out like a skirt, he seemed to be barred from any further feeding duties for which the normal bird seemed to be solely responsible. He could only occasionally be seen slinking around, but since the 2 chicks fledged (amazingly given the nest was on a very thin branch very subject to blowing madly in the wind) he now seems to have been allowed to feed them, at least some of the time.
- On 29 November Philip Veerman posted that for the first time in 37 years (as far as he could remember) a pair of **Magpie-larks** had taken advantage of the mud and built a nest in his big eucalypt tree. Most years, either ravens, currawongs or magpies nested in this tree, and the **Magpie-larks** in the local park (which he counts in his GBS). That day he found nest number three on the ground, the third one at least half to $\frac{3}{4}$ constructed that had fallen down, it would appear each in exactly the same position, probably due to the wind, within one week. As I have mentioned several times previously over the past 9 years **Magpie-larks** in and around my GBS site have had a very poor breeding success. Of the 3 nests within my GBS site this season the few chicks produced have barely made it past fledging, with the most recent one only a day or so out of the nest not surviving the very violent hailstorm we had on the evening of 27 November.

In respect of roosts **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** are still roosting at the two sites I have checked and in higher numbers than they were in November 2019. This provides evidence that their year-round roosting in the western half of Weston Creek during the severe drought conditions then was not an outlier due to their staying around Canberra rather than to move to the mountains to breed in spring as is documented in the COG Atlas of ACT Birds.



Jacky Winter

Victor Braguine

So please watch out for any more of the remaining returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last of the leaving altitudinal migrants, and in particular for any early summer breeding activity. Please also continue to keep a special look out for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** and **Hooded Robin**. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

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

Jack Holland

Committee News

Committee members look forward to seeing you at the December barbecue. The details are in this issue of Gang-gang.

The Canberra Birds (COG) committee met by Zoom on 17 November.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 9 November. The committee for 2022-23 is:

President: Neil Hermes
Vice-President: Steve Read
Treasurer: vacant
Secretary: Margaret Robertson

General Members: Jenny Bounds, Brittany Brockett, Kathy Eyles, Bill Graham, Clare Henderson, Alison Mackerras, Prue Watters.

As you can see, we need someone to volunteer for the treasurer's role. Prue will be happy to help you find your feet and has taken steps to simplify the processes.

Chris Davey and Nick Nicholls did not stand again and the committee thanks them for their long service to COG through the committee and other activities.

We congratulate Jean Casburn who was recently named the ACT Environmentalist of the Year by the Conservation Council for her efforts to get Bluetts Block given protected status.

Vale Bruce Lindenmayer

COG members were saddened to hear of Bruce's recent death. Details of his long association with and immense contribution to COG will be published in a future issue.

Recent Submissions

Canberra Birds has made submissions in relation to the draft Natural Resource Management Plan 2022-2042. The submission can be found here: <https://canberrabirds.org.au/conservation/cog-conservation-strategy/>.

Neil Hermes *President* Alison Mackerras *Minutes Secretary*

Postal Address

Because the Civic Square post office is closing this month COG has opened a new PO box in Jamison.

The address is

COG
PO Box 331, Jamison
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Our mail will be forwarded for 12 months.

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ACT Environment Awards 2022

Congratulations to COG member Jean Casburn, who was awarded ACT Environmentalist of the Year 2022 by the ACT Conservation Council in October. Jean was given the award for her work highlighting the flora and fauna values of Bluetts Block, and publicly advocating for its conservation and protection.

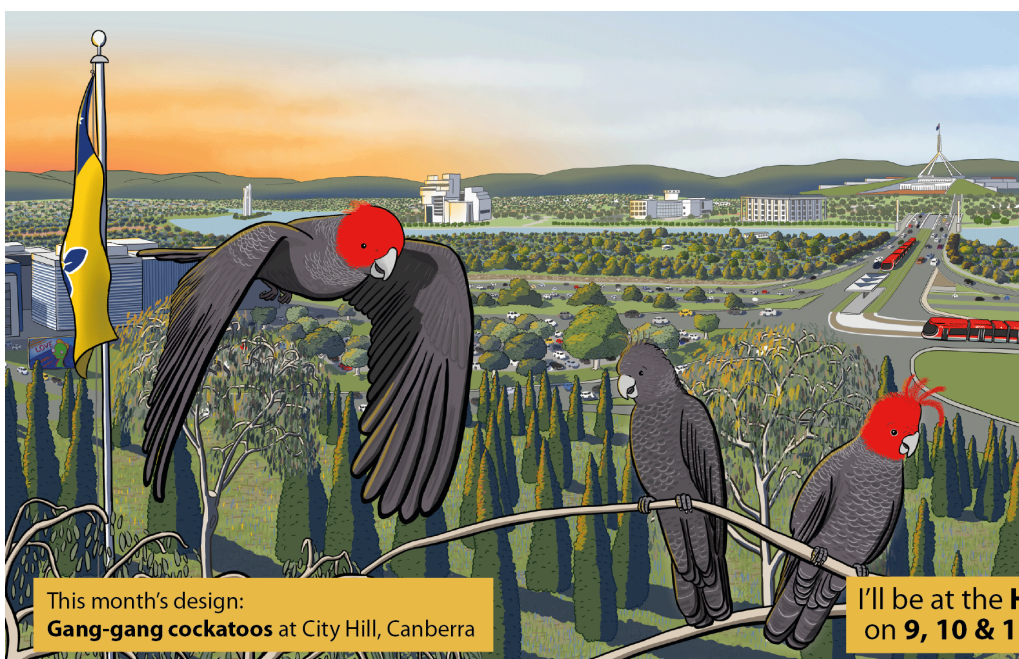
Bluetts, also known as Blewetts or Piney Ridge, formally comprises Stromlo Blocks 402 & 403. It is an area of intact grassland, heath and forest centred on a ridge just north of Mt Stromlo, between Uriarra Road and the Molonglo River, and has become increasingly popular as a birding location over the last few years. Checklists for Bluetts are available at <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L2542387> - it is known as one of the best places near to urban Canberra for **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren**.

However, Bluetts is within the Western Edge Investigation Area (<https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation>) which the ACT Government is currently reviewing for future land-use decisions, and so as yet has no formal protection status. It also abuts the dense housing development of Denman Prospect, and there have been issues concerning exemption from environmental impact assessment of a proposed development in a 'Deferred Area' immediately adjacent to Bluetts. The COG submission on this issue is at <http://canberrabirds.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/COG-submission-Denman-Prospect-Block12-EIS-exemption-08Feb22.pdf>.

Over the last few years Jean has done significant work, assisted by Alice Wells, to publicise the conservation values of Bluetts and threats from this expanded urbanisation. She recognised the significance of its diversity of habitats, number of bird species, and diversity of plants (especially orchids) and fungi, together with its amenity value to local residents and its value as a wildlife corridor, and catalysed and commissioned citizen-science campaigns and community surveys. Jean also developed the Bluetts Block Canberra ACT Facebook page, and has undertaken extensive lobbying and organising, including exposure on the ABC, guiding public walks at Bluetts, and talking several politicians around Bluetts, with the result that the values of Bluetts have been raised in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Thanks to Jean's efforts, Bluetts is now on the map amongst many naturalists and the wider public.

Congratulations also to Annika Reynolds who was awarded the ACT Young Environmentalist of the Year 2022, for founding GreenLaw, a youth-led Think Tank and legal advocate in the environment space. Annika is also a COG member.

Steve Read



This month's design:
Gang-gang cockatoos at City Hill, Canberra

Canberra Birds

artworks by **Stuart McMillen**

Stock up on **greeting cards**, and be ready for all occasions!

Each fun and vibrant design pairs a different bird species with an iconic Canberra location.

Drawn by local cartoonist **Stuart McMillen**, a resident of Gorman Arts Centre, Braddon.

Greeting cards **\$6 each** or **8-packs for \$40**.

Archival art prints also available.

Shop directly via **stuartmcmillen.com/shop**

I'll be at the **Handmade Markets** at EPIC on **9, 10 & 11 December**. See you there!

Future Field Trips

COG Trips

Each participant must register prior to their chosen trip with their name and contact number and, before proceeding on the trip, must comply with the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An emergency contact name and phone 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."

New birders and visitors are welcome. If you do not have your own binoculars, COG can lend you a pair, so please advise the trip leader when you register.

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.

Be Covid safe on COG field trips:

Maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres

Maintain hand hygiene

Wear a mask in shared cars if carpooling (Note: carpooling is voluntary)

DO NOT ATTEND if you have tested positive for Covid, have been a close contact within the past 7 days, or have any Covid, cold or flu symptoms.

Sunday 6 November – Sherwood Forest

Meet at 7am at the Kambah Village Shopping Centre carpark (corner Drakeford and Marconi) for carpooling. Maximum 16 participants (four cars). Some driving through the day will be on a dirt road, best suited to AWD/4WD.

We will travel southwards towards and then through Namagdi National Park until we nearly reach the NSW border, parking at the junction with the Grassy Creek Firetrail.

Bring morning tea with you, as well as the usual water, sunscreen, sunglasses, hat and sturdy shoes.

We will explore the birds around the firetrail and creek, noting that at the time of writing in September, conditions are still a bit soggy. This sogginess may affect our progress. We should see a good range of woodland birds, including honeyeaters and thornbills.

Register by COB Friday 02 December, with David at david.dedenczuk@gmail.com or at 0417222154, with your name and number, as well as name and number of an emergency contact.

David Dedenczuk

Sunday 11 December - Barren Grounds NR, NSW

Description: We will walk through the heath and forest of the Griffiths Loop track from the carpark, stopping for morning tea at stone bridge that crosses Lamonds Creek and for lunch at Saddlebacks Trig. Previous highlight species include **Gang-gang Cockatoo, Pilotbird, Eastern Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristlebird, Beautiful Firetail, Southern Emu-wren, Black-faced**

Monarch and various honeyeaters and cuckoos. We will also stop for any interesting wildflowers, butterflies and other wildlife we might encounter on the walk, with Varied Sword-grass Brown, Macleay's Swallowtail, Eastern Water Dragon and various orchids recorded here on previous visits.

Please note there is limited mobile reception at Barren Grounds and there are toilets at the carpark where we will meet. In the event of rain, this walk will be cancelled.

eBird hotspots: Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, Barren Grounds Nature Reserve -- Griffiths Trail

Meeting time and place: 9 am at the Barren Grounds carpark, with a carpooling option from Canberra.

Walking distance: Approximately 8 km (return)

Degree of difficulty: Medium; track is an undulating vehicle track with some small hill sections.

End time (approx.): 3 pm

What to bring: This is an open exposed location with little to no mobile reception. Ensure you bring sufficient water and food (including morning tea and lunch), and rain and sun protection.

Please register your interest **by Monday 5 December**, to Suzi Bond, email chowchilla29@yahoo.com providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Carpooling arrangements will be advised once registrations have been received.

Numbers limited: Yes, limited to 12 people.

Wednesday 21 December - Queanbeyan Bush Cemetery

Meet at 8.30am in the carpark of Queanbeyan Cemetery, on Lanyon Drive between Hume and Queanbeyan. The bush cemetery is the woodland area behind the carpark. There are graves scattered through the bush, but there are also plenty of birds to be found there. This walk will be mainly on dirt tracks, with some detours into the bush. **Register with Sandra** at shirmax2931@gmail.com, with your name and number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Wednesday 18 January 2023 - Campbell Park

Meet at 8.30am at furthest parking bays, next to the woodland. Drive into the Campbell Offices precinct on Northcott Drive, and follow the road right around the right side of carpark. The walk will be mainly on dirt roads. If regular rainfall persists, there will be some muddy spots.

Register with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com, with your name and number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sunday 22 January – Gilmore Horse Paddocks

These horse paddocks are usually good for species such as **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Red-browed Finch**, various honeyeaters and raptors.

Meet at 8.00am on Louisa Lawson Cr (near #53). Over 90 species have been seen at this site. It will be an easy walk, on the tracks between the paddocks. As usual, bring water, hat, sunscreen and wear sturdy shoes.

Register with Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com) with your name and number, and name and number for an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 29 January - Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR – World Wetlands Day

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope.

Meet at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

NB: this walk is flat and is wheelchair-friendly.

Leader required – check website for updates. Registration required.

Sunday 5 February – Mulligans Flat NR, Border Track

Note: This is not the Centenary Track which is in North Mulligans. The track follows the NSW border and begins at the Duke Road car park in NSW. The walk is about 5 km of medium difficulty, with three up and down walks returning through three gullies. Of the 83 species recorded the highlights include **Scarlet Robin, Grey Currawong, Varied Sitella** and **Common Bronzewing**.

Meeting place: Meet in the main carpark for North Mulligans on Mulligans Flat Road past the last roundabout between Bonner and Forde on the left-hand side. We will carpool, and go to Duke Road carpark.

Meeting time: 8:00 am. Walking distance: 5.4 kms. End time (approx.): 11:30am

What to bring: Water and morning tea, sunscreen, hat and sturdy shoes.

Please register with the leader, Bill Graham by email to graham.br63@grapevine.com.au, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Register before 7pm on Friday 27 January 2023.

Numbers will be limited to 15.

Friday 10 to Wednesday 15 February – Capertee National Park

Capertee National Park is situated NNW of the Blue Mountains near Lithgow. We will do plenty of exploring around the National Park and areas near Glen Alice and Glen Davis. We will camp at Capertee campground which is pleasantly situated along a Casuarina-lined river. Target species for the trip will be **Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Rock Warbler, Plum-headed Finch, Diamond Firetail, Turquoise Parrot, Barn Owl, Barking Owl** and Squirrel Glider among others. Numbers limited. **To book for this trip** and receive further information please contact Kathy and John on walter.goldie@gmail.com

Sunday 12 February – Molonglo Reach boat trip

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

We will again be travelling in the electric boat “MV Gull” which allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas difficult to get to from the land.

Meeting time: The boat will depart at 8:00 am and the trip will last about 2 hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding.

Meeting place: **Kingston Boat Harbour at Trevillian Quay.** Participants will need to leave their cars in Eastlake Parade, where there is free all-day weekend street parking, or in the Glass Works/Bus Depot Markets car park and walk across Eastlake Parade and down Trevillian Quay. Once you have crossed the canal keep going straight ahead for around 50 m till you reach a gap between the buildings. Turn right and Wharf 6 and the boat should be clearly visible after 20 m once when you reach the harbour.

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your mobile and your emergency contact name and number. There will be a maximum of 20 passengers.

[Jack Holland](#)



Neil Hermes Safaris

2023 June TBA **PARADISE BIRDS - TASTE OF NEW GUINEA**

7 day 6 nights exploring the birds of Cairns and Port Moresby
Highlights Birds of Paradise, bowerbirds and Palm Cockatoos
Led by Mark Clayton and Neil Hermes Tour is open for
expressions of interest, details to come.

Book at neilhermes.com.au/safaris/

Enquiries at neil@neilhermes.com.au

Field Trip Reports

Tuesday 18 to Saturday 23 October – Green Cape

With commercial activities threatening future visits by group such as COG, this year's visit to Green Cape was a memorable one.

As usual, we made the effort to rise before sunrise each morning and make our way to the Cape lookout to observe seabirds. On the first morning, some were able to spot both **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** between the cottages and the lookout. A small but steady stream of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** were well out to sea, with just a few **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters** passing by. On the second morning the birds were much closer, and it was estimated we could see about 5000 birds, mainly **Short-tailed Shearwaters**, with many sitting on the water just off the point. This was a sight most of us had never seen before – truly breathtaking! **Fluttering Shearwaters** could be seen among them, and **Crested Terns** were diving through the rafts of Shearwaters. On the third morning there was still a steady stream of **Short-tailed Shearwaters**, and we also saw several **Shy Albatross**, a **Northern Giant-Petrel**, and three **Arctic Jaegers** flew over our heads and out to sea. The resident **White-bellied Sea-Eagles** were seen regularly, and on one occasion one picked a shearwater off the water.

On Wednesday evening we took our drinks and snacks down to Pulpit Rock Road hoping to add **Eastern Ground Parrots** to our bird list. We were welcomed by a group of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, and several **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters**. At dusk, our target birds could be heard calling on both sides of the road, but none were seen.

A walk from Pulpit Rock Road to the lighthouse gave us wonderful views of **Striated Fieldwrens**, **Southern Emu-wrens**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Whipbirds**. The other major walk, from Pulpit Rock Road to Bittangabee and back, yielded **Scarlet Honeyeaters**, a **Black-faced Monarch**, **Crescent Honeyeaters**, a **Rose Robin** and **Superb Lyrebirds**, among others. There were also quite a few Small Duck Orchids and Sun Orchids along the way.

We also visited City Rock, where there's been quite a bit of work done to improve the track, and Pulpit Rock, where the adventurous could explore the rock pools and we could all admire the wonderful views.



Green Cape Lighthouse

Kathy Walter



Some of the 5000

Tee Tong Teo

As usual, the shared evening meals were great, and one afternoon several took advantage of the offer of a lighthouse tour with ranger Gus. On the last full day, the weather turned quite nasty, with driving rain, and a bird-themed jigsaw filled in many hours.

Many thanks to Peter Fullagar for expert assistance with bird identification and counts, and to the drivers who helped with transport during the week. Sandra Henderson



Teo



Teo



Teo



Teo

Spotted Harrier, Shearwater taken by White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Southern Emu-wren, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater Green Cape Tee Tong Teo



Lace Monitor, Striated Fieldwren Green Cape



Sandra Henderson

Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 October – Eden pelagics

The weather forecast for the pelagics weekend wasn't the best, but we were rewarded with some good sightings.

On Saturday the most interesting birds included a **Kelp Gull**, a **Pomarine Jaeger**, four species of albatross (**Buller's**, **Yellow-nosed**, **Shy** and **Black-browed Albatrosses**), **Wilson's** and **White-faced Storm-Petrels**, **Grey-faced**, **White-chinned** and **Providence Petrels**, a **Northern Giant-Petrel**, and four species of shearwaters.

The Sunday trip yielded a **South Polar Skua** (a new bird for many of us), three **Sooty Shearwaters**, and a **Brown Skua**, in addition to many of the species seen the previous day.

Many thanks to Julian Teh for expert ID skills and Bonnie for keeping the eBird lists.
Sandra Henderson



Black-browed Albatross, Buller's Albatross

Sandra Henderson



South Polar Skua

Susan Cribb



Sunday 6 November – Sherwood Forest

Eight COG members joined me for this outing, with trip organiser Kim laid low by a bad cold. While the hoped-for quail-thrush failed to materialise, we managed 29 species, including a persistent **Wonga Pigeon** heard for an extended period. Other species included a **White-winged Chough** on a nest, several **Rufous Whistlers**, two **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos** and several **White-throated Treecreepers**. Many of those on the outing had not been to this area before, and we all enjoyed the wonderful views from the top of the walk.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 13 November – Campbell Park nest workshop

While twenty-five members and guests had registered for the twentieth running of this workshop, the forecast for the day was the worst ever with 35-60 mm of rain predicted with possible heavy falls and flash flooding, the chance of a thunderstorm, possibly severe and with damaging winds and large hail. Surprisingly the rain had held off at 6 am, but a very large rain band arrived from the west around 7 am with quite a bit of thunder and heavy rain. Though 3 people still came out

to the meeting spot. The amount of rain and water running down the road made it clear the workshop was not able to go ahead, and for the first time in many years of leading COG outings I had no option but to cancel.

Jack Holland

Wednesday 16 November - Murrumbidgee Track north of Tharwa Bridge Fourteen hardy souls undertook this quite easy walk along the river. Initially the weather seemed benign, but quickly deteriorated. A few spots of rain turned into a shower, which soon included hail. Thankfully it didn't last, but it was then very cold. That was perhaps why some birds were reluctant to join us. The usual Dollarbirds were absent, and while **Rainbow Bee-eaters** were heard near the causeway, they stayed hidden. A male **Leadbeater Flycatcher** showed nicely as we finished, and **Red-browed Finches** were moving through the blackberries at various places along the track.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 20 November 2022 - Woodstock Nature Reserve

I was joined by only three other COG members for this outing. The weather forecast was not promising, and our planned carpooling at Stromlo Forest Park was abandoned when I discovered the Running Festival had the site jam-packed with cars and runners. We convened instead at East Uriarra and drove up to the reserve entry on Fairlight Road. During occasional light showers, lighter winds than forecast, and a couple of sunny breaks we found 31 species. The highlights included a **Rainbow Bee-eater** which was hanging around the creek crossing, a **White-faced Heron** which flew across the track just in front of us, a group of about 20 **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** flying on the other side of the river and a couple of **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** calling repeatedly.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 27 November – private property near Hoskinstown

A small party of experienced and neophyte birders attended the field trip to a private property near Hoskinstown just west of the top of the Great Divide on the border of Tallaganda National Park. The group of 9 included 4 Chinese ANU Students with a strong interest in conservation and one with birding experience in China. After a video and photographic description of the impact of the Black Range Fire in December 2019 on the flora of the site, and observing the local and feral mammals and birds that had been photographed after the fire, we spent a pleasant morning walking through the range of habitats - native grassland, Banksia forest and very tall Eucalyptus viminalis forest. It was a mostly sunny morning with some overcast spells and a couple of drops of rain at one point. Thirty-three species of birds were observed, as well as a snake (probably a Copperhead), and several orchid species.

Peter Smith



Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

Feathers'n'Friends cottage is fully self-contained with extensive facilities to ensure guests can enjoy short or extended stays.

The secluded lodging is surrounded by tropical rainforest and beautiful gardens with varying habitats and a large variety of birds and wildlife.

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Julatten QLD 4871
Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

New Places—Final

Sandra Henderson

In March 2018 I started writing a New Places page for each issue of Gang-gang, describing four new places I'd visited in the past month. So I've now described over 200 places I had not previously explored, and while I still go birding every day, and love finding new spots, I'm giving up the New Places contributions. I thought as a finale I'd mention some of my favourites from the past five years.

Mackey VC rest area, Hume Highway

I travel several times a year to Mittagong to visit my son and his family, and have utilised quite a few of the rest stops along the way. There is nothing very unusual about the Mackey VC stop, but I explored beyond the rest stop, walking a track leading into private property after half a kilometre. There is an old bridge over Black Bob's Creek at the end of the track. The bridge was on the Great South Road, which was renamed the Hume Highway in 1928. (The highway was subsequently diverted to its current route.) The bridge has historic significance having been originally built in the 1830s, and is classified by the National Trust. Sadly, there is no information available at the site. The convict-built sub-structure is still the original sandstone structure, while the top is a concrete arch built in 1896. The steps from the old road down to the pool beside the bridge were carved out of the sandstone by the convicts. I knew nothing of this fascinating history when I wandered down the track from the rest stop, but another "wanderer" had come from Sydney specifically to check out the bridge, so he answered my questions about the history of the area, and I answered his about the **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circling over the paddocks.

Murrumbidgee River track

It is possible to walk 1.5km from Tharwa Bridge along the river in both directions. The track north finishes at a property gate, while the track south leads to the historic De Salis cemetery near where the Gudgenby River meets the Murrumbidgee. COG has at times had outings to both. There are some great views of the river, and some good birds to be seen. Almost 100 species have been seen along the track north, including **Dollarbird**, **Speckled Warbler**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Rose Robin**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Southern Whiteface**, while 75 species have been reported along the southern track.

Tuggeranong Marsh

This small pond between apartments in Tuggeranong and Pine Island Reserve has in some years been a key breeding area for **Little Pied Cormorants**. Quite a variety of other species have been known to utilise the pond and surrounds over the years, including **Hardhead**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australasian Grebe**, **White-necked Heron**, **Spotless Crake**, **Spotted Crake**, **Musk Duck**, **Black Swans** and **Buff-banded Rails**. The Marsh is next to Greenway Oval, and its water seems to be runoff from watering of the oval, so I've not known it to dry out.

Bracks Hole Road, Coree

I've visited this spot 15 times since my first visit in September 2020. I had been lured by a "No Fishing" sign on a locked gate off Bullock Paddock Rd, so went back and walked beyond that locked gate, to an area probably not flooded until the raising of the Cotter Dam in 2013. I saw a couple of **Great Crested Grebes** on that first visit, but on subsequent visits I saw up to 18 birds, a number of nests, and a successful breeding event. The first fledglings were sighted in December of that year. This year there does not appear to have been any breeding, and on my last visit I saw no grebes. Breeding by other species has also been observed in the last three years, among them **Australasian Darters**, **Great Cormorants** and **Little Pied Cormorants**. In 2020 I also photographed an adult and juvenile **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** perched together on the edge of the dam. Other birds of note reported along the road include **Red-capped Robin**, **Hooded Robin**, **Painted Buttonquail**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and various cuckoos.

Many thanks to Sandra for contributing her regular contribution to Gang-gang for the past five years and providing members with a vast array of new places to go birding. I would love to hear from other members who would be willing to write a regular article, or even an occasional contribution.

Sue Lashko

Publications for Sale

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

Below are some of the most popular books and latest publications. 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



RELEASED AUG 22!

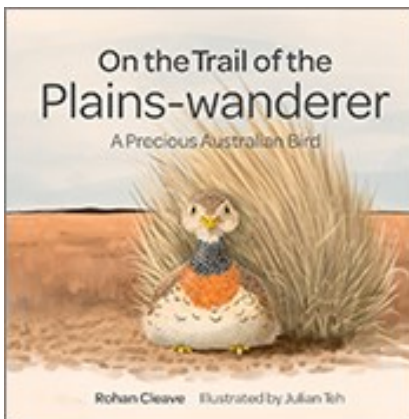
THE COMPACT AUSTRALIAN BIRD GUIDE

Peter Menkhurst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin

The Compact Australian Bird Guide is an easy-to-use and beautifully illustrated quick identification guide to all bird species regularly occurring in Australia. The content has been carefully designed to provide the reader with key information to enable rapid identification of a bird, in a convenient form. 264 pages | 198 x 120 mm

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The story of the Plains-wanderer, a critically endangered Australian bird that is truly unique!

The Plains-wanderer is unlike any other bird on Earth – it's one of a kind!

On the Trail of the Plains-wanderer tells the true story of one of Australia's most critically endangered bird species. This unique, quirky and precious bird faces many threats, but continues to survive against the odds. Discover more about this fascinating bird and see how people are providing hope for their future.

Reading level varies from child to child, but we recommend this book for ages 5 to 9.

Members' Price \$20 RRP \$24.99.

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

2022-2023 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

A Coombas
S Eddison
D Kurzawa
A Reynolds

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for February 2023 edition:

Wednesday 25 January 2023

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary, COG,

PO Box 331, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

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

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

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