



# Gang-gang

NOVEMBER 2012

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## NOVEMBER MEETING

7:30pm Wednesday 14.09.2012

**Canberra Girls Grammar School**  
corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave,  
Deakin. The meetings are held in the Multi-media  
Theatre at the School.

The first presentation will be: **'Why are maps, graphs and tables appearing on the COG chat-line?'** by **Steve Wallace**. Putting maps, graphs and tables on the chatline is one aspect of the work being done to make data stored in the COG databases more accessible. Why they are being produced for the chatline and what might be available in the future will be discussed and illustrated with examples.

The main presentation, entitled **'Vulnerable but not helpless: parent-offspring communication and the risk of predation'**, will be by **Tonya Haff** discussing her PhD research at the Research School of Biology.

Calling is an important way that animals communicate, but making calls conspicuous to those which are meant to hear them can also make them easily detectable to eavesdropping predators. Parent-offspring communication in birds offers a superb window into how animals communicate under the risk of predation.

Tonya asked three central questions: (1) do nestling calls actually attract predators? (2) how do parents warn young of danger without betraying nest location to predators? and (3) how do young reduce predation risk independently of parents? She will show that vocalisations by White-browed Scrubwren young are indeed risky, that parents use strategic trade-offs when deciding whether to warn young, and that young learn to use a diverse range of cues about danger.

Everyone welcome

## What to watch out for this month

As we enter the last month of spring, most of our expected spring/summer migrants seem to have arrived though there don't seem to have been any sightings posted yet of the **Rufous Fantail** or **Channel-billed Cuckoo**, and only single sightings so far of the **Brush Cuckoo**, **Satin Flycatcher**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Cicadabird**. Last to arrive in good numbers appears to have been the **Dollarbird** in mid-October, which was about the same time that the first **Eastern/Pacific Koels** were being reported but, judging from the chatline postings and local observations, the latter species doesn't yet seem to be as widely present as it has been in previous years.

Contrary to the predictions in my September column the arrivals have included quite a few of the more inland species, including the **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark**. I understand this is because it is drying up inland as they have missed the winter/spring rains we have had. As I have mentioned several times before in this column their presence can be patchy; for example I have yet to record them in my local patch of NW Cooleman Ridge or the southern fence-line of Narabundah Hill and the Chapman Horse paddocks where, together with the **Dusky Woodswallow**, they were quite conspicuous breeders during the drought years.

The last named has also not been recorded there so far this year; in fact many of the summer migrants have not been seen there in the 5 weeks since I returned from holidays. For example, no cuckoos of any kind have been seen, and there have only been a few sightings of the **Noisy Friarbird** and **Rufous Whistler**. I am tempted to relate this to the theory that these are relatively poor sites for these species, which usually

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occupy the best sites first, but this is negated by lots of reports in the past week of the **White-winged Triller**, including in some very unusual locations, such as in exotic trees or in very built up areas including a shopping centre .

The drying conditions inland seem to have been responsible for the very large mixed flocks of **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows**, which were widely reported in the first half of the month. Often these were very high overhead, too high to clearly identify the proportion of each, but on other occasions low enough (with a surprisingly large proportion of the more western Masked, sometimes even 100%), with on one occasion the flock coming in to roost. There has been only a single report of them in the second half of October, so obviously conditions aren't favourable enough here for them to stay and breed. Where they have gone is unclear; there were also high numbers reported in the Capertee Valley and the Weddin Mountains early in the month, but with apparently very few in between.

The October highlight has been the much higher rate of "unusuals" that have been observed compared with the past couple of years. While a number of these would seem to be related to dryer conditions inland, including **Freckled Duck**, **Black-tailed Native Hen**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Painted Snipe**, with others, such as **Plumed Whistling-Duck**, **White-necked Heron**, **Intermediate Egret**, **Caspian Tern** and **Little Bittern**, the reasons or directions are less clear. The large number of **Banded Lapwing** seen around Bungendore (up to 37 at last count) during October are many more than have been present this close to Canberra, even during the drought. These may be spilling over from their local stronghold of Lake Bathurst/The Morass, where larger numbers were reported earlier this year. There also appear

to have been many more sightings of the **Buff-banded Rail** in the last few weeks, including in my garden, where a single bird stayed for at least 3 days, getting bolder and easier to see over time.

Finally the **Scarlet Honeyeater** recently seen at the Jerrabomberra wetlands is clearly a northern/eastern arrival. Earlier in the month it was seen with the **Black Honeyeater**, an inland species, in the COG area of interest at Currawang near Collector, an interesting juxtaposition of movement from two directions. Late in the month there was a report of lots of **Black Honeyeaters**, as well a few **Pied Honeyeaters**, at the Weddin Mountains, less than 3 hours' drive away. So the message over the past month has been to expect and keep an eye out for the unexpected.

Also keep an eye out for any signs of breeding; in keeping with what is expected to be a good season, there have already been quite a few reports. Most interesting has been **Red-rumped Parrots** apparently using the crevices in the sides of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge as nesting sites. Other good early sightings have been of both **Striated Thornbill** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** feeding dependant young, and **Grey Currawong** chicks in a nest under which there was also a **Yellow-rumped Thornbill's** nest, a not unusual location for the last-named species.

Despite my earlier predictions the past month or so has been a very exciting time for bird watchers in Canberra. So please keep your eyes and ears open for any more unexpected arrivals, watch closely for any breeding activity, and as always please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database. If you want to learn more about how to watch for breeding behaviour, please join me at the nest workshop at Campbell Park on 11 November.

— Jack Holland



Great Egret (*Ardea modesta*) Photo: Julian Robinson

## Field Trip Reports

### September 29 – October 1: Yalcowinna camp-out

The COG campout for the long weekend almost didn't happen this year. First of all the property where it was to be held was no longer available. A replacement property was offered, but then a leader had to be found. Again, this hurdle was overcome at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, and then the weather threatened to thwart us! However, delaying our departure until Saturday, after the sky had emptied its inch of rain, proved to be the right decision.

Yalcowinna is a property in the Snowy Mountain foothills, about 15km north-west of Cooma at about 900m. It is hilly and part-cleared with much remaining eucalypt and callitris woodland.

Sandra and Lia arrived at the appointed campsite at 9:15 am and set up tents and the toilet change room, despite a moderate breeze. Before the billy had boiled for a cup of tea, the change room was flapping in the breeze like a big green kite! Fortunately a peg was missing, so one corner had been tied to a nearby tree instead, the only thing that prevented it from blowing into the wilderness. Otherwise we'd have been explaining to the committee how their change room had ended up in Bredbo in tatters! When the two guys arrived around lunch time Julian had some more substantial pegs and we erected it once again.

It was a bit breezy for the rest of Saturday and we had 6 hailstones and 2 flakes of snow, but didn't let that stop us. The creek bed that had been alive with birds when we did our reconnaissance during the week before was very quiet on that windy afternoon. However, within 500 metres of the campsite we saw 37 species, including **Hooded Robin**, **Speckled Warbler** and **Gang-gang Cockatoo**. After an early dinner, the cold drove us to bed at an obscenely (luxuriously!) early hour.

On Sunday morning we set out to walk along the gorge which Charles had marked among his interesting spots. The little brown birds in the grass we determined were **Australasian Pipits** and **Eurasian Skylarks** and we flushed a few **Stubble Quail** as we walked through the open paddock. The climb through the gorge was challenging at times, but there were some very nice patches and it was well worth the effort. **Speckled Warblers** were to be found in several locations and we had several glimpses of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and a **Brown Goshawk** and one of a **Brown Falcon**. In the afternoon Julian lead us up to an area on the back of the property where he had walked the day before. Callitris and grevileas were at home there but the Gang-gang Cockatoos eluded us.

We sat a little longer in the evening as it wasn't quite as bitterly cold as the night before, but it wasn't a late night by any stretch of the imagination! Sandra heard a Southern Boobook in the night but there were no other noises to disturb us.



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### 2013

**February: Tasmania**  
including pelagic & Melaleuca

**Easter Saturday & Sunday  
Plains-wanderer Weekend**  
30 & 31 March

**April: Alice Springs area &  
MacDonnell Ranges**

**July: Top End**  
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Katherine,  
Kunururra,  
Mitchell Plateau flight

**July: Gulf Country**  
Cairns to Mt Isa, returning via  
Atherton Tablelands

**September: Strzelecki Outback**  
Vic, NSW, SW Q'ld, SA, 34<sup>th</sup> tour

**October: Yorke Peninsula to  
Ceduna**  
(over 60 scarlet-chested parrots  
seen on the 2011 tour)

**2013 Plains-wanderer week-  
ends**  
30 Nov & 1 Dec  
7 & 8 December  
28 & 29 December

Please see itineraries, checklists  
and latest news on our website

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



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We made a return visit to the creek area on Monday morning and were rewarded by lots of little birds flitting about. **Striated Pardalotes** were entering hollows in the side of the creek bed and good views were had of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **European Goldfinch**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Scarlet Robin** and **Hooded Robin** male and female and possibly a dependant young. We finished off the morning by walking to another of the spots which Charles had identified as one of his favourites, where we sat for a while in the warmth of the sun by the side of a little brook and soaked up the atmosphere.

In all we observed 59 species over the weekend. All in it was an enjoyable weekend and well worth a return visit sometime. The pies at the Bredbo café on the way home were very good too!

- Lia Battisson



A couple of well-known birders enjoying the camp-out.

Photo:  
Julian Robinson

## Sunday 14 October - K2C bird surveys

The sixth K2C bird surveys were held in ideal conditions, which was somewhat of a relief after the weather of the preceding fortnight. Nine days before the survey the warm spring wind had brought in **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallows** from the inland to the ACT region. A week later snow lay on the ground after one of the coldest October days for a long time. It was therefore quite a surprise for one survey team to come across a flock of these two woodswallow species perched obligingly on a fence in the Michelago area.

A total of 95 species was recorded during the survey morning with almost all the expected spring migrants; four cuckoo species, both Gerygone species, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **White-winged Triller**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Tree and Fairy Martins**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and lots of **Grey Fantails**. Ten honeyeater species were recorded but there was no obvious migratory movement from the **Yellow-faced** or **White-naped Honeyeaters**. Robins were less prominent, as is often the case in the breeding season.

The most frequently reported was the **Eastern Yellow Robin** with a couple of sightings of **Hooded** and

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**Scarlet Robins.** A pleasing record was two **Jacky Winters** at one of the properties near Williamsdale. **Brown Treecreepers** were recorded in good numbers at the sites where they are usually found, and there were more sightings of **Varied Sittella** than in previous surveys.

A couple of seasons of good rainfall have meant that the revegetation sites which were first surveyed when they were little more than tree guards in a sea of long rank grass and weeds now have trees and shrubs starting to provide habitat for birds. **Striated Pardalote** and **Grey Fantail** were both observed foraging in the young planted trees.

Thank you once again to the landholders for the privilege of visiting their properties, to the COG members for volunteering their time, and to Bush Heritage Australia for hosting us for lunch at Scottsdale.

- **Nicki Taws**

## Wednesday 17 October - Uriarra

Fifteen members and guests met at Urriara West to start our visit to three sites in the area.

Things were happening even before the sign on sheet was produced with discussion as to whether a raptor was (a) **Whistling Kite**, or (b) **Little Eagle** or (c) two birds, one of each of those species. Shortly thereafter the matter was resolved in favour of option (c). A **Nankeen Kestrel** then attacked the **Little Eagle** while a **Dusky Woodswallow** performed that duty in favour of the Kite. A **Brown Goshawk** and 2 **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were also seen. Away from Raptors some breeding was noted. **Australian Magpies** had a nest with young in the car park, A family of **Australian Wood Ducks** with four fluff balls swam across the Murrumbidgee - which was in good flow. The most interesting sighting was a pair of **Striated Thornbills** feeding two young perched on a twig. The other most exciting birds of the 36 species seen here were at least 3 **Black-fronted Dotterels** on sandbars, an **Olive-backed Oriole** (from the species account in HANZAB the bill colour seems to indicate a young bird) and a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**.

We then migrated to the big dam at Urriara Homestead. Compared to past visits there were few water-birds around, just 3 **Hardhead**, 2 **Grey Teal** and another **Black-fronted Dotterel** (unless the species has a very unexpected turn of speed). A **Golden-headed Cisticola** posed nicely on a fence just in front of us. 18 species in total were recorded in a fairly brief stop.

Moving to the Village (21 species) we were immediately greeted by a male **White-winged Triller**. A flock of at least a dozen **Tree Martins** posed nicely on a dead tree (until we got close enough for photographs at which point they all disappeared). Breeding activity included **Australian Magpie** (dependent young), **Common Starling** (nest building) and **House Sparrow** (nest building).

A total of 49 species was recorded for the morning. Many thanks to Judy for suggesting the sites and for the excellent cakes and tea!

- **Martin Butterfield**



Left: Whistling kite  
(*Haliastur sphenurus*)

Right: Little Eagle  
(*Hieraaetus morphnoides*)



Photo: James Rolevink

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## Future Field Trips

Before the start of each trip, each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities. The form reads as follows:

*I declare I am capable of undertaking this 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 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 trips page of the COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/> and on the COG chat-line at :<http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/2012-03/index.html>.

### Sunday 11 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past nine years. This very informal outing has again been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual short presentation including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, looking for signs of nesting, etc, which will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to birdwatching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also welcome. Though every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there is usually is a "hot spot" where most of the nesting occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H) by email on [jack.holland@environment.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@environment.gov.au). Stuart Rae and Anthony Overs will again be assisting.

Meet at 8:00 am at the picnic tables at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

### Saturday 17 November — Tuggeranong Hill NR — morning

Enjoy a walk on one of the prominent landmarks of the Tuggeranong region. Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve contains a variety of habitats and commands some spectacular views of the surrounding region. There are no particular target species identified for this outing but we will record everything we observe to provide valuable records for the database. Note that medium fitness is required as this walk will cover some sections of steep terrain. Please bring along your own supplies for morning tea, as well as water and sunscreen. If time permits, we may visit the site where 2500 Drooping Sheoaks were planted last year as a future food resource for the threatened Glossy Black-Cockatoo.

Meet at 8am at the Callister Crescent entrance in Theodore, which has ample off-street parking. For further information or to register, contact Matthew Frawley on 6155 1358 (work), 6296 1026 (home), or email: [frawley.matthew@gmail.com](mailto:frawley.matthew@gmail.com).

### Sunday 9 December - The High Brindabellas – all day

This trip will entail walking and birding about 10 km along the Moonlight Hollow, Gravel and Warks Roads in the High Brindabellas. The walking is fairly easy: on roads and mostly undulating. A car shuffle between the two ends of the walk will be needed.

By December the migrant bird species will be back, and we might be blessed with some early wild-

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flowers as well. We will observe the post-fires regeneration of the vegetation at these high altitudes (1,200 metres) and its impacts on the birdlife, and collect data for the COG Atlas. Registered participants will meet at 7.30 am in the car park of the Kambah Village shopping centre for optional carpooling. Bring water, morning tea and lunch, and be prepared for changeable weather conditions. We will finish at lunchtime.

Please register for this trip with its leader, David McDonald, at phone 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890 (leave a voicemail message if unanswered) or email [cog9dec12@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cog9dec12@canberrabirds.org.au)

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## Field trips 2013

The draft field trip programme for next year currently has a number of gaps which we would like to fill. If you have a suggestion for an outing or would be happy to lead one of the outings where a leader is required, please contact Sue Lashko on [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com).

Date	Location	Leader
Sat Jan 12	Tuggeranong Wall to Pine Island North - morning	Nigel Zhou
Sun Jan 27	Uriarra - day	Bruce Lindenmayer
Sun Feb 3	Jerrabomberra Wetlands (World Wetlands Day - morning)	Sue Lashko
Sun Feb 17	Molonglo Reach Boat Trip (morning)	Jack Holland
Sun Mar 3	Pinnacle -morning	leader required
Mar 9-11	Mt Dromedary/Narooma - Canberra Day long weekend	TBC
Sun Mar 17	Burra (morning plus - bring lunch)	Ian Anderson
Sun Mar 24	Molonglo Gorge - morning	Lia Battisson
29 Mar-1Apr	Chiltern (Easter 4 day campout)	TBC
Sun Apr 7	Farrer Ridge - morning	Sandra Henderson
Sun Apr 14	K2C surveys - day	Nicki Taws
Sun Apr 21	Square Rock - day	leader required
Sun May 5	suggestions welcome	
Sun May 12	ANBG - Beginners - morning	Anthony Overs
Sat May 18-Sun 19	Bundeena, Royal National Park - weeknd camping	Kathy Walter & John Goldie
Sun May 26	Canberra mystery bus tour - day	J Holland & J Bounds
Sat Jun 8-Mon 10	Ben Ricketts near Barren Grounds - Queen's Birthday long weekend accommodated	leader required
Sat Jun 15	Superb Lyrebird Survey - Tidbinbilla NR ( morning)	Chris Davey

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Sun Jun 23	Stromlo Forest Park (morning)	Jack Holland
Sun Jul 7	suggestions welcome	
Sun Jul 21	Mount Majura Vineyard (morning)	Stuart Harris
Sun Aug 4	Hall TSR (morning)	leader required
Sat Aug 11	Lake Ginninderra - Beginners (morning)	Anthony Overs
Sun Aug 18	suggestions welcome	
Sun Sep 1	suggestions welcome	
Sun Sep 8	Lake Bathurst -day	TBC
Fri Sep 13-Sun 15	Galong - St Clements - accommodated weekend	Sue Lashko, Chris Davey
Sat Sep 21-Sun 22	Eden pelagic - 2 one-day trips	Sue Lashko, Chris Davey
Mon Sep 23-Fri 27	Green Cape accommodated - 2 cottages booked	Peter Fullagar
Sun Sep 29	Kelly Road	leader required
Fri Oct 4 - Mon 7	Stackpoole NR Griffith area - Labour Day long weekend camping	Mark Clayton
Sun Oct 13	K2C surveys - day	Nicki Taws
Sat Oct 19- Sun 20	Joint outings with Illawarra birders	Michael Robbins TBC
Sat Oct 26-Sun 27	Bird Blitz	Barbara Allan
Sun Nov 3	Braidwood Landcare group surveys - day	Sue Lashko
Sun Nov 10	Currawang - day	Jude Hopwood
Sun Nov 17	Campbell Park, nest workshop (morning)	J. Holland & A Overs
Sun Dec 1	suggestions welcome	
Sun Dec 15	suggestions welcome	

## Official Notice: Location Names on COG Observation Forms

We are working to “tidy up” our databases so we can extract the most useful data, and to prepare it for an upgrade. It would be helpful if the location of sites indicated on all future COG Observation Sheets is of the form:

Scullin 25 Pickles St, rather than 25 Pickles Scullin. Having the leading characters as numbers makes for difficult searches sometimes. In addition, punctuation, particularly “” and “ ” should be avoided, as they are reserved characters in Access.

So the general form is: Suburb or General Location, Street, number (or further detail) such as:

Chapman Kathner St Large Eucalypt 100m NNW dam end

If people can submit forms with the location in this order, it will reduce the amount of work required to regularise the database.

**Paul Fennell, Editor Annual Bird Report, COG Databases Manager**



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## Woodland Spring Surveys

### Hall/Gold Creek

Alison Rowell, with Matthew Mullaney, did the survey on 5 October, under ideal conditions. **Yellow-faced** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** were present, and the occasional **Eastern Spinebill**, mostly feeding in the flowering mistletoes. A noisy pair of **Australian Hobbies** was seen at a large stick nest on one site. Both Gerygones were seen and heard, and other highlights were **Varied Sittellas**, a **Scarlet Robin** and a **Leaden Flycatcher**. An unexpected sighting was a large slow-moving flock of woodswallows, which passed high overhead just after 9 a.m, circling and apparently feeding. There were at least a hundred birds, but they could not be identified due to their height and the sun being behind them. There were several reports on the COG chatline of similar flocks in the northern ACT around that time.

### Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team did the survey on Sunday 16 September, a little early due to the long week-end falling within September and other survey clashes. A total of 58 species was recorded, which is several more than the average spring count. The morning began with fog, cold and still conditions, and the sun only appeared at morning tea after the survey. A few of the spring migrants were back, including several **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **Rufous Whistler** and **White-throated Gerygone**. There were several sightings of **Golden Whistlers** and **White-eared Honeyeaters**, species usually around more in the colder months. Interesting species included **Varied Sittella**, **Speckled Warbler**, a male **Red-capped Robin**, **Scarlet Robin**, and a **White-necked Heron** on one of the small dams. As morning tea finished a **Spotted Dove** flew into a tree near the Woolshed - the first sighting on the survey. The wall of the large dam has now been repaired and should start to fill with more rain - some re-vegetation work is still to be done.

### Goorooyarroo NR (north)

Nicki Taws reported on the survey on Saturday 6 October, a warm morning before the breeze picked up. The reserve was looking beautiful with water in the creeks and the ground spangled with Early Nancy. Most of the expected spring migrants were back including **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Fantail**. Nest building by **Mistletoebird** and both Gerygones was found. **Brown Goshawks** were nesting in the same tree they have nested in for the last 14 years. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were flying south-westerly in small flocks, and **Superb Parrots** were very active in the woodland area adjacent to Mulligans Flat. Two groups of **Varied Sittella** were seen and **Speckled Warblers** were recorded at several sites. There were no **Brown Treecreepers** seen or heard, and sadly no **Hooded Robins**.

### Goorooyarroo NR (south)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the spring survey on 30 September, in cool but initially still conditions. Unfortunately a strong, cold wind blew up and continued for the rest of the survey, possibly explaining the relatively low species count of 43. Some of the expected migrants were missing, with no sign of cuckoos, **Noisy Friarbird** or **White-throated Gerygones**. The reserve was looking very green and creeks were flowing after the heavy rain in the days prior. Species recorded included **Rufous Whistler** (3+), **Mistletoebird** (1), **Dusky Woodswallow** (7), **Western Gerygone** (3), **Superb Parrot** (3) and **Varied Sittella** (1). At site 6 a stropky pair of **Brown Goshawks** were harassing **Australian Ravens** that had an active nest in a tree the goshawks have nested in previously. Also at site 6, a **Brown Falcon** was flushed from a big Blakely's Red Gum; they have also bred in this area in recent years. A pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were also seen on a couple of occasions during the morning.

### Majura Field Firing Range

Paul Fennell, with Barbara Allan, reported on the survey on Wednesday 26 September. The sky was a bit overcast early, but on the whole it was a pretty good day for birding, with good visibility and very little wind. They had to clear the southern sites (Sites 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10) by 10 am, since there were commandos training and shooting after that time. Most of the sites supplied a good range of birds, but mainly

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the usual suspects. Some of the summer migrants were there, with **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** at two sites and **Rufous Whistlers** at others. There were no **Hooded Robins** or Brown Tree-creepers seen.

At site 2, the Grenade Range, a site that was chosen because it was NOT pristine, there was a good cover of exotic grasses, where in previous years there was only the bare ground of a car park. However, despite the good seasons, the mainly Blakeley's Red Gums are suffering from serious die-back, with many looking as if they are on the way out. Nevertheless, **Australian Wood Ducks, Red-rumped Parrots, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Tree Martins** and **Starlings** were inspecting the many hollows. There were only 2 **Noisy Miners** seen, which is low for that site. Other species seen included: **White-throated Gerygone, Grey Butcherbird, White-eared Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, Laughing Kookaburras, White-winged Chough, Grey Fantails, Striated, Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills, White-throated Tree-creeper**, and **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**.

### **Mt Ainslie— Eastern lower slopes**

Michael Lenz reported that the morning was a perfect time for the survey at Mt Ainslie, sunny and calm, wind picked up only towards the end of the survey. 32 species were recorded at sites, with an extra 9 species close to or in between sites. **Thornbills** and **Speckled Warblers** only at a couple of sites. Among spring arrivals 1 male **Leaden Flycatcher**, several **Mistletoe birds**, **Rufous Whistlers** and **Noisy Friarbirds**. **White-throated Gerygones** were fairly widespread, but most of them gave imitations of the **Western Gerygone** with singing only short phrases. I could not find a proper Western Gerygone. **Whistlers** and **Friarbirds** were also only singing/calling every now and then. At 2 locations **Jacky Winter**, further 1 adult male **Red-capped Robin**, and a singing brown **Flame Robin**, 1 quiet **Rufous Songlark**, 1 pair only of **Dusky Woodswallows**. 1 **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** visited more than one site. The best find was an active nest of the **Little Eagle**.

### **Newline**

Sue Lashko reported on the survey on 30 September, a fine and at times windy morning, with 48 species recorded. The highlight was a male **Hooded Robin**, the first since Sue has been surveying at Newline (although there are records from earlier surveys). A pair of **Collared Sparrowhawks** sent **Noisy Miners**, magpies, ravens and rosellas into a frenzy in the front paddock, while south of the dump a pair of **Brown Goshawks** perched in the middle of one site, keeping the species count low. A **Peregrine Falcon** zoomed from its perch in Site 8 at a very impressive speed. A flock of 92 **Silvereyes** streamed through and other returned migrants included **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Olive-backed Oriole**, lots of **Grey Fantails** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**. Breeding activity included **White-winged Choughs** gathering mud, **Dusky Woodswallow** sitting on young, **Pacific Black Ducks** copulating, a **Galah** taking sticks into a hollow, **Magpies** nesting and, unfortunately, many **Starlings** on eggs or chicks.

### **Callum Brae NR (Symonston)**

Sandra Henderson surveyed on 3 October, a beautiful morning. A few of the regulars didn't put in an appearance, but a few which seldom show up made up for it, with well over 40 species for the morning. The first site was disappointing in that a jogger accompanied by very large, unleashed dog made her way down the track about 50 metres away, putting to flight the choughs, rosellas, etc, as well as ducks off the nearby dam. (Dogs are not allowed in Callum Brae at all). The second site (near the dam closest to Mugga Lane) had some just out-of-site (and out-of-sight) **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, but their calling meant they made it into the survey results. Throughout the morning there were various parrots going in and out of holes, **Striated Pardalotes** were using holes in the gully at nursery corner, and **White-winged Choughs** were nesting in several spots. Copulating **Nankeen Kestrels** were obviously keen to make this another good breeding year. **Diamond Firetails** were back in the usual spot down near nursery corner.

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Unusually, there were 2 **Australasian Pipits** - one up near the pumping station, and another near nursery corner. There were plenty of **White-throated Gerygones** and **Noisy Friarbirds**.

### **Jerrabomberra West NR**

Jenny Bounds reported it was a pretty nice morning on 2 October for the survey, birds were very vocal and 50 species total was recorded (very good for that site in spring). Several **Rufous Whistlers** and **White-throated Gerygones** were actively calling, as well as many **Grey Fantails**, a **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Dusky Woodswallows**. **Crimson Rosellas** were in abundance and a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, **White-naped Honeyeaters** and **Red Wattlebirds** flew through. Other highlights included **Brown Goshawk**, **Brown Falcon**, 2 **Tree Martins** at one site, one **Fairy Martin**, several **Southern Whiteface**, and a group of 6 **Little Ravens** (as well as a number of **Australian Ravens**). On the grasslands edge, **Australian Pipit**, **Skylark** and one **Singing Bushlark** (a first for the survey) were recorded. On walking out, the highlight of the morning, a flock of 12 **Masked Woodswallows** circled by. Weeds were not a problem to get through on this survey, and the star picket marker at site 1 was accessible for the first time in several surveys, as it had been well covered by tall thistle growth in the last 18 months.

### **Tuggeranong Hill NR**

Lia Battisson did the spring survey on 22 September in fine, cool and still conditions. Many of the sites had 7 species and even Site 7 managed a couple of **Crimson Rosellas**. **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were observed at several of the sites. In all, 19 species were recorded during the survey, with a further 20 species, including **Mistletoebird**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** seen or heard elsewhere on the Hill; two were breeding records, a **Magpie** on a nest in a survey site and copulating **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** elsewhere .

## **COMMITTEE NEWS**

The committee will discuss possible ways in which COG might celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If members have any ideas on this please contact a member of the committee.

Affiliation with Birdlife Australia is likely to be discussed at the next BIGNet meeting. COG is seeking the views of other BIGNet members on the issue.

The money held by the Canberra Birds Conservation Fund is now exhausted.

Many members are aware that both Canberra Bird Notes and Gang-Gang are made available online. If you would prefer to be advised of when each issue is available online, Instead of receiving a printed copy, please advise [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au) . The printing and mailing of publications consumes a significant part of the funds spent on members' services each year.



# Photo Ops #11

## Photographability – what makes a bird photo worth taking?

In the days of film (only 10 years ago!) the decision whether to click the shutter when presented with an avian 'scene' was rather more fraught than it is now. There were only 36 shots on a roll and not inconsiderable processing costs to consider, so clicking the shutter required a deal more thought than we need to apply today.

But even with digital photography we still, at some stage, have to decide whether something is worth photographing. I've drawn a parallel between bird photography and hunting before, and though the consequences differ, the question is the same – to shoot or not to shoot, or sometimes, to keep or not?

If you've never seen the species in front of you before, the question is a no-brainer. Take a photo, any photo, and put it in your 'one-of-each-species' collection. Or... but ... perhaps not, since this situation raises something that is not likely to concern a gun-shooter – a third alternative is to watch with your own eyes or binoculars, rather than take photographs. Many will tut-tut and say 'of course!', but the photographer is hunting, and endorphins and different motivations beg to differ. For me and I suspect all bird photographers, the dilemma over observing versus photographing is forever present and will not go away until, in perhaps ten or twenty years, we have binocular equivalents that take quality photos, or cameras that work well as binoculars. Boo to that inevitability.

So what makes a shot worth taking and keeping? Obviously we all have our own priorities, but here are the things that pass through my mind as I look out of the hide at Kellys:

Is it a rare or unusual bird or species not seen before by me? If so - take photos (between eyes-on time, that is).

Unusual appearance or behaviourally interesting? - take photos.

Unusually close to bird, so you can see detail not normally visible? - take photos (if you can).

Not sure what bird that is? - take photos for later ID, before or after you've had a go at looking at it.

Great light, good background and well-posed bird (even if common and not doing anything interesting) - take photos, hopefully attractive ones.

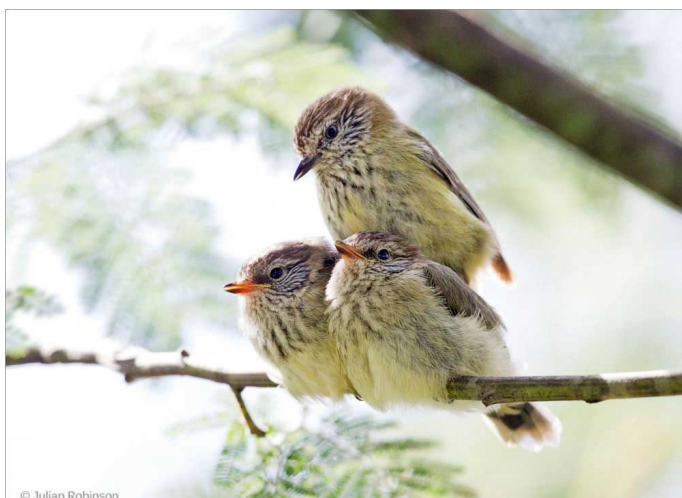
None of the above - move on or just enjoy observing.



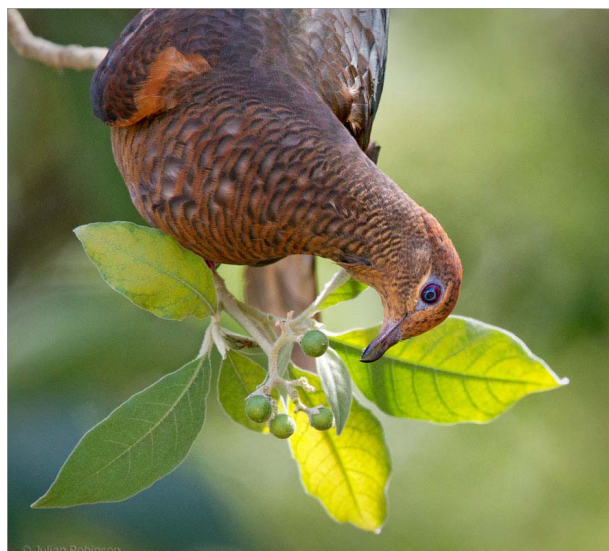
The **Little Bittern** at Kellys Swamp is the obvious current rare or unusual bird and I would have taken and kept its photo no matter how poor, just because it's a **Little Bittern**. But I was lucky to be there at the right time one morning and even luckier that she was hunting in full view in brilliant sunshine and not concerned about humans. While not close enough for a good display shot, it ticks boxes 1,2 and 3.

The **Striated Thornbill** photos on the other hand ticked only box 2. They were taken during the last Wednesday Walk at Uriarra Crossing in difficult light (deep in shade with full sun on some parts and behind). I would not normally have taken photos in those circumstances, but for the interest provided by the 'dependent young' situation. As it turned out, the miracles of the digital darkroom extracted a reasonable image from the raw original that illustrates well the situation facing the poor Thornbill parent. I only saw one adult feeding these chicks and it worked non-stop apart from a short period during which it chose to walk over the backs of its chicks! It did this twice, perching first briefly beside the

Chicks, then climbing up and walking over them from right to left, paused a few seconds and then back over them again, sat for a few seconds more before departing to gather more food. I'd be interested in any explanation for this behaviour.



Striated Thornbill feeding behaviour

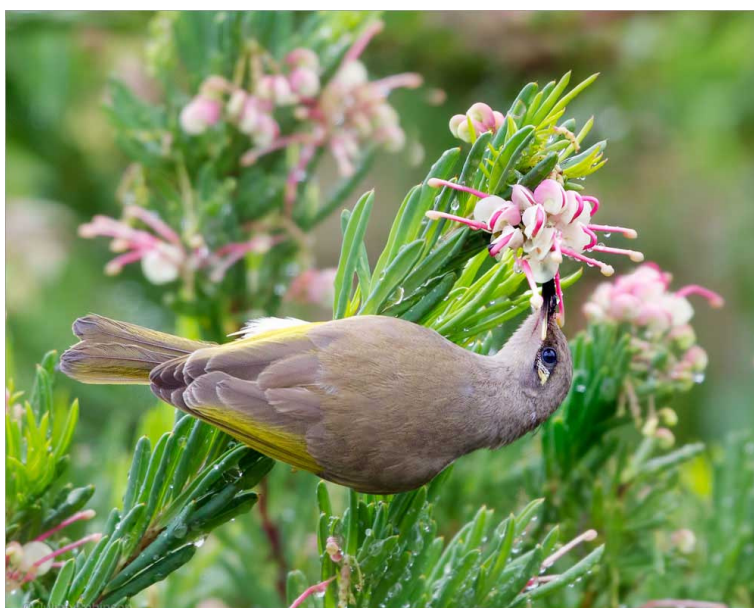


**The Brown Cuckoo-Dove** arguably combines 'unusually close detail' with 'great light, well presented...' and was a pleasant discovery at a roadside rest stop on the mid-north coast. Being immature it was less shy than many and happy to feed relatively close. A rather beautiful bird when seen in detail, the tail feathers are quite something. (More photos including the tail are on my flickr page; e.g. [flickr.com/photos/ozjulian/8098615358](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ozjulian/8098615358) ).

Lastly, one in which the interest and beauty lie as much in the plant that the **Brown Honey-eater** is feeding on as the bird itself, so it's the background that made it photographable. Seen in a house-garden near Inverell last month, the flowers of this grevillea are irresistible close up and the raindrops, to me, added a little something more.

Next time – Photographing Birds in Flight.

- **Julian Robinson**







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# COG SALES



## **Invisible Connections Why Migrating Shorebirds Need the Yellow Sea**

Phil Battley , Massey University, New Zealand

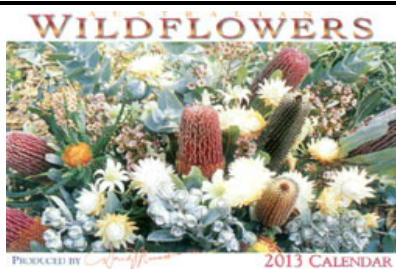
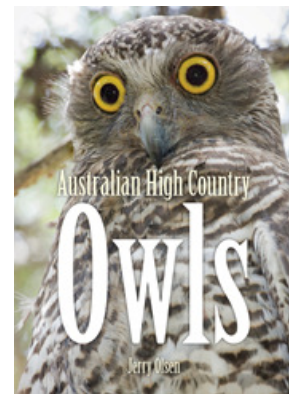
Brian McCaffery (US Fish and Wildlife Service) and other authors.

Colour photographs. 160 pages, 228 x 285 mm Publisher: CSIRO PUBLISHING \$34.95

## **2012 Whitley Award Commendation for Vertebrate Natural History - Jerry Olsen**

*Australian High Country Owls* provides the latest scientific information on Australian owl species, especially *Ninox* owls. It details studies of Southern Boobooks and Powerful Owls, visits North America and Europe to learn about owl research, and discusses the resulting publications that overturned some existing beliefs about Australian owls. Ultimately, this led to the discovery of a new owl species in Indonesia, the Little Sumba Hawk-Owl.

\$55.00



**David Messent Bird and Wildflower Calenders 2013** (with envelopes) \$7.50

## **Peacock spiders: jewels of the Australian bush.**

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## NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for the December  
edition

Wednesday 28 Nov. 2012

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 and welcomed.

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### COG membership

2012-2013 memberships:

- Individuals, families and institutions: \$35
- school students (under 18): \$17.50.

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### 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 website

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

### COG library

For all enquiries or access to COG's library phone Barbara Allan on 6254 6520

### COG E-mail Discussion List

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The subject is 'subscribe' (without the quotation marks).

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