



Gang-gang

OCTOBER 2013

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday 9 October 2013

7.30 pm.

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

The presentation for October will be by **Stephen Debus** from the University of New England on “**Raptor Identification**”.

Based on his book ‘Birds of Prey of Australia: A Field Guide’, Stephen will run through the principles of identifying raptors by classifying them into natural groups and their characteristics, and highlighting the main field characters to look for, concentrating mostly on shape, proportions, flight style and wing carriage. He will also contrast the difficult species-pairs. Finally, he will show some photographs of the ACT raptor species, and some other Australian species.

As this will be a very popular presentation, likely to lead to many questions and/or audience participation, it will be the only one for the night. If members want to take along their copy of his book on the night, Stephen has indicated he’ll be happy to sign them.

Everyone welcome

What to watch out for this month

When I forwarded last month’s column to the editor on 27 August, I expected that the forecast week of warmer weather would at last see a major influx of returning spring migrants. And this certainly proved to be the case, with an almost immediate increase in the number of reports of the **Noisy Friarbird**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** and **Olive-backed Oriole**, as well as of the **Grey Fantail**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike**, **Mistletoebird** and **Tree Martin**, of which reasonable numbers had either overwintered or had returned earlier in August. By 30 August the first **Dusky Woodswallows** since 11 May were reported and there were a number of sightings up to 8 September, including over 50 by Leo Berzins at Newline on 1 September, but curiously no records after that until 21 September (see further comments below). By contrast the **Australian Reed-Warbler** has been regularly reported since 31 August, the **Superb Parrot** more widely away from its winter

(continued page 2)



Scarlet Honeyeater

Photo: Roger Williams

What to watch for this month — continued from page 1

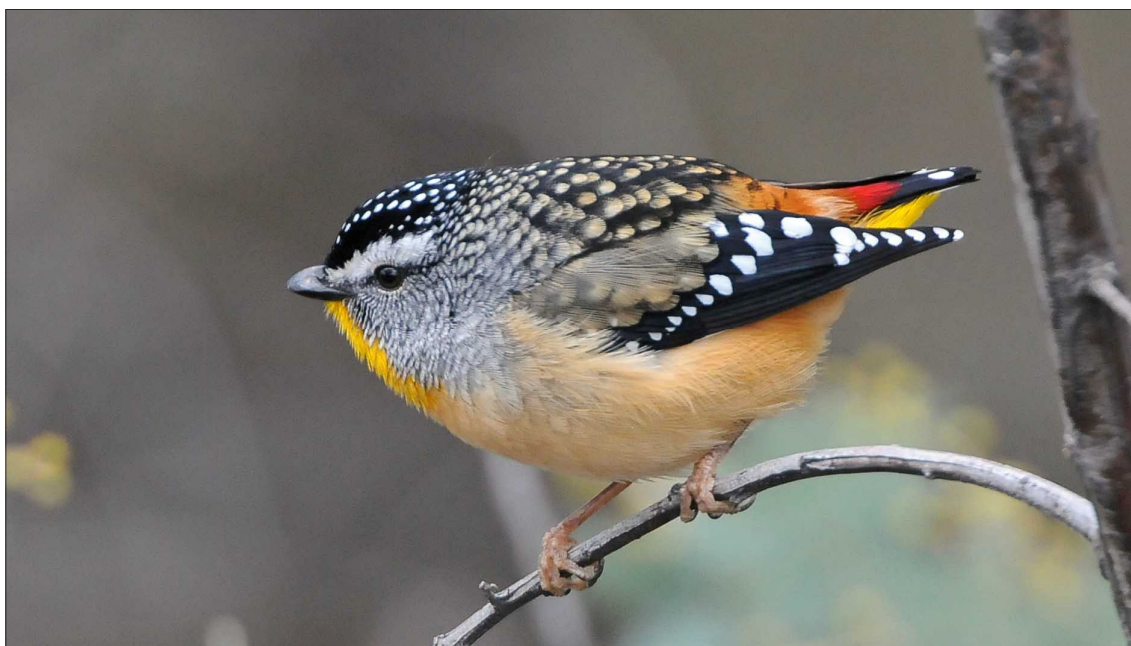
haunts from 2 September, and the **Rufous Whistler** since 3 September.

My speculation in last month's column that the combination of the delay in the first migrants' return and the sudden warmer weather might see a compression in the arrival times this year also appeared to be accurate with the first **White-throated Gerygone** and **Western Gerygone** reported on 3 and 4 September, respectively, though reports of these species, particularly the latter, have been much fewer than of those above. This is also the case for the **White-naped Honeyeater**, **Fairy Martin** and **Fuscous Honeyeater**, as well as the migratory cuckoos. While the first **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was recorded on 1 September, and the **Pallid Cuckoo** has been observed since 20 August, I can only find a total of twelve records so far. More importantly I can only find one report of the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, and it certainly doesn't appear that it's going to be a good year for observing these cuckoo species, similar to the past few.

For a while it appeared that the migrant arrival period may be even more compressed than I had expected, with the first **White-winged Triller** reported on 2 September and (two separate observations) of the **Rufous Songlark** on 10 September. However, I can find only one further record of both (on 7 and 13 September, respectively), until one of the former, at the furthest southern end of the ACT on 22 September. A possible explanation for this, and the **Dusky Woodswallow** above, was the return to colder windy weather about then, with the species deciding to move on. Similarly there were six reports of the **Latham's Snipe** between 25 August and 8 September, but none further until 21 September, and none of the **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Rainbow Bee-eater** so far, though the first of the **Sacred Kingfisher** was on 21 September. A bigger surprise to me was a record of a **Brown Songlark** on 15 September.

So please keep an eye/ear out for further arrivals of these species, as well as the **Dollarbird**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **Eastern/Pacific Koel** which usually arrive in October, as well as the **Rufous Fantail**, **Satin Flycatcher** and **Cicadabird**, often the last of the migrants to arrive, and which may be seen passing through on their way to the mountains to breed. In line with my theory that most migration occurs when the weather heats up, I had expected another influx of new migrants in the week or so before the Gang-gang deadline of 25 September, but this didn't seem to eventuate.

In keeping with this pause in migration, there have still been plenty of reports of the winter altitudinal migrants the **Scarlet Robin**, the **White-eared Honeyeater** and the **Golden Whistler**, as well as a few of the **Flame Robin**, from the urban/peri-urban areas of Canberra, so it seems their departure was also delayed. Interestingly, there have been reports of the **Rose Robin** throughout the month, usually on their passage through, including in some areas where the reporters had not seen them before. By contrast,



Spotted Pardalote

Photo: Lyndon Howe

What to watch for this month — continued from page 2

there have been no reports of the **Pink Robin**, the **Restless Flycatcher** or of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater**, and only single reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** and the **Swift Parrot** in September. Once into October any records of these species in Canberra will be significant. This will also be the case for the **Brown Gerygone**, which was recorded at Mulligans Flat during the middle of the month, possibly on its way back to the coast.

In respect of waterbirds, the inland species, **Freckled** and **Pink-eared Ducks** and **Hardhead** continue to be reported, as well as the **Red-kneed Dotterel** and **Yellow-billed Spoonbill**, plus **Baillon's** and **Australian Spotted Crake**. Hopefully after Steve Wallace's excellent video of the crake species last month everyone will be able to identify them now; their presence in Canberra certainly seems to be enhanced by the proliferation of suitable habitat, particularly northside such as at Crace and Forde Ponds. One surprise waterbird species was the appearance again of **Black-winged Stilt** on Lake Burley Griffin, again only for less than a day. Surprise bush bird species have included the **Scarlet Honeyeater**, first at Mount Rogers where many observers saw and photographed them (and members enjoyed Steve Wallace's video of a male as a back drop during the August COG meeting) and more recently at Kambah, followed shortly thereafter at the Botanic Gardens.

In keeping with spring, there have been many more reports of breeding, the highlights being **Varied Sittella** nest building, a **New Holland Honeyeater** fledgling, and a pair of **White-throated Treecreepers** using a nest box in David and Kathy Cook's property at Wamboin. Breeding of the **Whistling Kites** at the big dam on Mulligan's Flat has been confirmed but while the **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** in Fadden was seen again, it's not clear if it actually bred.

So with the weather warming up again, there is likely to be further excitement for bird watchers in Canberra over the next months. So please keep an eye out for an increase in breeding activity in October, as well as further arriving spring/summer migrants and the last of the departing winter altitudinal migrants. As usual always please ensure that all significant observations end up on the COG database.

Jack Holland



Superb Parrot

Photo: Stuart Harris



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria
Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2013

2 & 3 October
Birding for beginners in
Murray Valley NP

10 – 18 December:
SW Western Australia birding
and mammal tour

2013 Plains-wanderer weekends

7 & 8 December
28 & 29 December

2014 tours

2 – 8 Feb: Tasmania
19 – 26 April: Alice Springs
25 May – 8 June: Top End
June: Gulf Country
August: New Caledonia
September: Strzelecki Track
30 Oct – 6 Nov NSW Central Coast,
Barrington Tops NP, Barren Grounds
NR

Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 1 September – Molonglo Gorge

Seventeen participants attended on this lovely, sunny Father's Day and spotted 33 species of birds, 6 types of gum trees, one historic train to Bungendore and a rail utilities vehicle. After the rain during this week the track was dampish but passable. There also were several groups of walkers on the track and, on our return, picnickers in the car park.

The highlights of the day included 8 **Dusky Woodswallow**, 2 **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, 6 **Double-barred Finch** (2 CO), **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Golden Whistler**, **Striated** and **Brown Thornbill**, **Spotted Pardalote**, and **Yellow-faced**, **White-eared** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters**.

Jean Casburn



Dusky Woodswallows

Photo: Roger Williams

13-15 September - Galong

On the balmy weekend of 13-15 September, twelve earnest seekers (including two exotics from Seattle, Vince and Pamela Vesterby) after birds stayed in the old monastery of St Clements, near Galong. This is now a retreat and conference centre. It is ideal as a base for bird-watching among the golden canola and green wheat fields west of Harden. The grounds include a dam where an **Australasian Grebe** had laid one white egg on her 'raft' nest. On Saturday morning all departed at 7.30 a.m. for our first stop, a sheep farm where, after some disagreement between the old and young generation owners, regeneration bands have been established. The owners requested Sue Lashko, our leader, for data indicating whether this approach had increased bird numbers. After Sue showed us the shearing shed (especially for the benefit of the visiting Americans), we explored the elegant garden (with a resident Guinea Fowl) and inspected an impressively reconstructed settlers' slab cottage. Then the serious bird watching began. **Brown Quail** were startled, **Zebra Finches** flitted through a regeneration band and later, **Superb Parrots** were sighted on and around their favourite dead-tree haunts on a Travelling Stock Reserve nearby.

After a picnic lunch we visited a very different habitat, of ironbark ridges, in Jindalee National Park. Here we found **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and, later, **Apostlebirds** building a nest. The latter are common out west but few of us had witnessed this activity before. It had been a long day and we rushed in to dinner a little late, a little bedraggled. There followed convivial chat in the drawing room that was reserved for us.

Sunday's early start was soon interrupted by the sight of a likely culvert, frequented by **Fairy Martins**, nearby **White-fronted Chats** and, great excitement, **Baillon's Crakes**, huddling and puddling among the reeds of the small creek. No sooner were we off again than **Double-barred Finches** were spotted on a fence line. These were followed, on the next property, by a flock of ten **Diamond Firetails** feeding on the front lawn. (**Red-browed**

Finches, HouseSparrows and **European Goldfinches** had also been seen: the weekend was a feast of finches.) A large dam teemed with waterbirds, including **Australasian Shoveler** and **Hoary-headed Grebe**. We car-pooled over rough undulating paddocks to where the quarry was **Brown Treecreepers**. We saw plenty; one was spotted darting into the nostril of a dead gum, then shooting, seconds later, out of the tree's empty crown. Soon after, Pamela found a **Speckled Warbler**, causing great glee.

After lunch those who climbed a wooded slope saw three **Red-capped Robins**. This triumph was a fitting end to a weekend in which 96 species had been observed. The trip had been very ably researched and reconnoitred by Sue Lashko whose quiet, calm and informed leadership is a model for such excursions. This one was a resounding success.

Those returning to Canberra with her even saw a bunch of **Budgerigars**!! Sadly, by then your reporter was on another road in another place.

Suzanne Edgar



Fairy Martins

Photo: Mary Bomford

Wednesday 18 September – Lake Road and Brooks Hill Reserve

Eleven optimistic members and guests partook of this month's mid-week walk.

At the appointed meeting spot, at the start of Lake Rd Bungendore, an early highlight was **Grey Shrike-thrush** carrying food. As Lake Road was wet and a tad slippery after yesterday's deluge we decided to visit the Big Dam and then go to Brooks Hill Reserve.

At the now water-replenished dam the obvious highlights were **Pink-eared** and **Freckled Ducks**, with counts giving 25 of each. One male **Chestnut Teal** was certainly present and 4 other birds lurking with **Grey Teal** were considered to also be **Chestnut Teal** out of breeding plumage. Both **Red-kneed** (2) and **Black-fronted** (1) **Dotterels** were present. At least 2 **White-fronted Chats** were seen on the island and a flock of 15+ **Double-barred Finches** briefly visited the group.

Once we had identified the full 33 species of birds in the area we moved on, passing by the small dam on Trucking Yard Lane which was, astonishingly, almost free of birdlife. 2 **Australian Shelduck** were seen on the far side of the paddock and another 2 as we drove away.

Our final stop was Brooks Hill Reserve (thanks to David McDonald for that suggestion). The walk up the old highway was rather quiet, both actually and metaphorically. However, near the top of the road a **Speckled Warbler** was first heard and then seen feeding on the ground. A cuckoo was heard and after a hunt on the nearby hillside seen and identified as a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. Although bird-calls remained few we struck a good area with most of the group getting good views of a male **Mistletoebird**, and all seeing a male **Scarlet Robin**. Other than the red birds a small flock of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** was spotted, as were a pair of **Varied Sitellas** building a nest high in a eucalypt. Back near the cars a **White-throated Treecreeper** emerged from a hollow and was recorded as a breeding record. The total for the site was 32 species.

With very different habitats it was not surprising there was little overlap between the two areas. In total we recorded 58 species for the day.

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September - Eden pelagics

Saturday

Friday evening saw a bunch of keen birders descend on the Eden Fishermens Club for dinner and a catch up ahead of the now-annual COG pelagic trips out of Eden. However, our boutique beer selection had the bar staff completely bamboozled. Judging by their blank looks when I asked for James Squires, I suspect that anything beyond VB and Toohey's is very rarely ordered.

After a good night's sleep, we congregated at the wharf at 7am, by which time the sun was already well up. There was bad news, however: 20-30knot sou'westerlies and 3 metre swells meant an uncomfortable ride. More importantly, it meant we couldn't get out to the edge of the continental shelf, which is generally the best place for seabirds.

Heading out of the Twofold Bay, we immediately encountered **Common Diving-Petrels**. Throughout the day, I estimate we would have seen 60+ which is a very good number, although mostly they stayed well clear of the boat. We motored due south, paralleling the coastline to Green Cape and beyond, finding Humpback Whales and Common Dolphins on the way. There were lots of birds flying around, but mostly only **Shy Albatross** and long lines of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** going south to breed. The odd **Fairy Prion** cruised past and a lone **Great-winged Petrel** was the only Pterodroma for the weekend. After a while, we stopped the boat and started a burley trail and soon the bird started coming in to feed on the shark and ray liver. We had good numbers of **Shy Albatross** squabbling for food, and the **Fairy Prions** were putting on a good show for all the photographers on board. It wasn't long before I spotted a **White-faced Storm-Petrel** dancing around on the oil slick but sadly it managed to evade some punters. Not to be outdone, a **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel** raced in and hung around the back of the boat, making numerous close passes and satisfying the twitching instincts of most of the boat who hadn't seen one before. This species is rare in NSW and I will be submitting a rarities submission to NSWORAC.

Amazingly, we only saw one more species of albatross, a single **Black-browed Albatross**. On the way back into port, we stopped to view the **Black-faced Cormorants** loafing in the bay.

Sunday

By Sunday morning, the winds and sea were calm, so we motored straight out to the shelf edge. The day went much the same as Saturday, with a very poor diversity of seabirds, especially albatross and petrels, but good numbers of **Fairy Prion** and **Common Diving-Petrel**. We missed the **White-faced Storm-Petrels** at the Burley Point, but saw a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** instead. The **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel** put in an appearance again, but this time didn't come as close. For many, the highlight was probably the very close encounters with Humpback Whales, some surfacing right next to the boat. The skipper and I were fortunate enough to spot some rarer whales, possibly the elusive Pygmy Killer Whale, but this awaits verification of the photos. Once again, we saw only a single **Black-browed Albatross**, although we did manage to get views of a **Northern Giant-Petrel** on the way home.

For the whole weekend, I was amazed by the lack of diversity of seabirds. No **Wandering Albatross**, no **Yellow-nosed Albatross**, no **Buller's Albatross**, no **Providence Petrel**, no **Cape Petrel**, no **Brown Skua**; all birds I would expect to see at this time of the year. Interestingly, pelagics a week earlier off Tasmania had been some of the best in decades in terms of diversity and rare species. The ocean never fails to surprise.

Tobias Hayashi

DEUA TIN HUTS (Via Braidwood)

Comfortable accommodation on the door-step of the Deua National Park at Krawarree via Braidwood NSW. Three cosy huts accommodating up to 14 people.

A short walk into the Deua National Park, the Big Hole and Marble Arch, walks in the beautiful Shoal haven Valley. Reasonable rates, hampers on request, Group booking discounts.

Notice of COG Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 13 October 2013

7.30 pm.

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

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 13 November 2013, in the Multi-media Theatre, Canberra Girls Grammar School, corner of Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin.

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of 2012 AGM
4. President's report
5. Adoption of president's report
6. Presentation of annual statement of accounts
7. Adoption of annual statement of accounts
8. Appointment of auditor for 2013-14
9. Election of office-bearers (President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer) and ordinary committee members (a nomination form is printed below, and forms will be available on the night of the AGM)
10. Other matters for which notice has been given
11. Close of meeting

COG Committee Nomination Form

I hereby nominate

for the position* of

*(*Positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Members)*

on the 2014 COG Committee.

(Name):

(Signature):

I second the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

I accept the nomination.

(Name):

(Signature):

Posted nominations must reach the COG mailbox (PO Box 301, Civic Square, ACT 2608) by Friday 8 November.

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>

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.

Friday 4 to Monday 7 October - Stackpoole Nature Reserve

Previous visits to the Stackpoole area have yielded **Pied, Black, and Painted** Honeyeaters, **Crimson-Chats, Major Mitchell's Cockatoos** and **Budgerigars**. We will check several areas for **White-browed Treecreepers** that have previously been recorded here.

There are **NO** facilities in Stackpoole Nature Reserve or in Langtree and Loughnan NRs, the other reserves I hope to visit if we have time. So camping will be "bring everything in and take everything out". If people do not wish to camp there are several motels in Goolgowi, a further 15 km along the Mid Western Hwy from the Back Hillston Road sign.

PLEASE NOTE:- The reserves are within the Fruit Fly exclusion zone so fresh fruit and vegetables should NOT be brought into the area unless purchased somewhere like Griffith. Heavy fines can apply.

There are two ways to get to Stackpoole Nature Reserve. The most direct is to travel from Temora to West Wyalong and take the Mid Western Highway at the western end of WW to Rankin Springs (93 km – kilometres are cumulative), pass the turnoff on top of a rise to Griffith (107 km) but stay on the Mid Western Hwy until you come to a crossroad marked **BACKHILLSTON ROAD** (133km – the signpost is on the left of the hwy) – Back Hillston Road is a good dirt/gravel road. **Turn RIGHT** here and follow this road until you see WELLS ROAD off to the right. Do not turn here but travel another several hundred metres where you will find the BHRd is sealed. Just after the bitumen and on the right is a NSW NPWS sign low down – turn in here and travel until you find a "clearing" near two large eucalypts. I should have my small tent erected here so find yourself a spot to camp.

The second route is via Griffith. It is 50 km to the south of Goolgowi but the road north (The Kidman Way) is sealed all the way. Turn right at Goolgowi and travel the 15 km to the Back Hillston Road and turn LEFT.

In the event of heavy rain the trip will be cancelled. I will make the decision on the Thursday before the long weekend.

Please register with Mark by email chollop7@bigpond.com or phone (h) 62413620 or (mob) 0419482341. Mark Clayton

Thursday 10 October - Raptors ID Session – bus trip/outing

Stephen Debus has agreed to lead a raptor ID session the following morning as a follow up to his presentation at the COG meeting. For this one 12-seater bus has been booked and if it is filled a maximum of two cars may be allowed as tag-alongs on a car-pooling basis, thus making it a maximum of 20 people.

The cost of the bus will be \$20 per person and the bus will be leaving at 8 am sharp from a central car park where parking is free all day. Exact details of meeting arrangements etc will be emailed to participants a few days before the event. The route taken will not be decided until very close to the day and will depend on where raptors can be most easily seen at the time.

At the Gang-gang deadline, there were still some places available. To express your interest in this outing, please contact Jack Holland on 6288 7840 or jack.holland@environment.gov.au.

Sunday 13 October – K2C bird surveys, Bredbo region

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds, such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer.

Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or PH. 6251 0303, mob.0408 210736.

Wednesday 16 October- Round Flat Fire Trail, Tinderries (full day trip)

As this is a longer trip people should bring lunch and plenty of water. I expect we will walk 5+ kilometres on the fire trail. I suggest those coming from Canberra carpool (into Foresters or above as there is a fair bit of dirt road) at the Kambah Village shops at 8:30am, meeting those coming from Queanbeyan at the Michelago turn-off the Monaro Highway at 9am.

Martin Butterfield

Saturday 19 October - 8 am at Callum Brae, then 9.30 am to 5 pm in Namadgi NP

On the weekend of 19/20 Oct GOG will hold joint outings with the Illawarra Birders and you are invited to join all or just one outing. The following are target species for the weekend: **Speckled Warbler**, **Western Gerygone**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Southern Whiteface**, **Fuscous Honeyeater**, **Grey Currawong**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Rufous Songlark**, **Spotted Quail-thrush** and **Olive Whistler**. We've a good chance for all except the last two. We will also be aiming to see other woodland birds of concern such as the **Brown Treecreeper** and **Hooded Robin**, plus migrants such as the **White-winged Triller**.

You are welcome to join the 90 minute exploration of Callum Brae starting at 8 am and/or the trip to Namadgi starting at 9.30 am. Both will meet at the Narrabundah Lane entrance to Callum Brae.

Bring a packed lunch, water, hat and sunscreen for the Namadgi trip as we will be out all day, visiting several places. Which places will depend on what have been recently reported as good options. Options certainly include Namadgi Visitor's Centre, Glendale Depot, Old Boboyan Rd, and Booroomba Rocks car park, but others are also possible. On Saturday night there will be a dinner get together with the IBers at a restaurant in Dickson.



Weebill

Photo: Mary Bomford

Bookings are not required, but advice of attendance is appreciated to facilitate car-pooling and booking of restaurant. Contact Michael Robbins mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au .

Sunday 20 October - 8am at Shepherds Lookout, then 9.30am– 3pm at hot spots plus Mulligan's Flat

This is the second day of joint outings with the Illawarra Birders and you are invited to join all or just one outing. Both outings will meet at the Shepherds Lookout car park off Stockdill Drive which comes off Drake Brockman Drive, Holt. The Shepherds Lookout walk will run from 8 – 9.30am. We will then depart at 9.30 to check out the hot spots and Mulligans Flat. Bring water, hat and sunscreen for the hot spots/ Mulligans trip, and, if you want, a packed lunch (we're aiming to finish about 2 pm!). The aim is to visit several different places depending on which have been recently reported as good options and finish with a stroll around Mulligans.

Bookings are not required, but advice of attendance is appreciated to facilitate car-pooling. Contact Michael Robbins mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au .

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October – Bird Blitz (see separate notice)

Sunday 3 November – Braidwood Landcare Surveys

The Braidwood Landcare group contacted COG in 2011 to see if we would be interested in surveying five to six properties where some revegetation has been done. These surveys will be repeated in 2013. We will not only survey the revegetation sites, but also remnants and riverine areas. 10 to 12 surveyors are required for Saturday morning, beginning at 7.30am, and must be sufficiently experienced to undertake the survey. Hopefully the 2011 surveyors will be available again. Please contact Sue Lashko on 62514485 or smlashko@gmail.com if you are interested and to receive further details.

Sunday 10 November – Currawang

If you wish to carpool, meet at the Netball Centre carpark on the right and just north of the Northbourne Ave/Mouat St intersection ready for a 7.30 am departure. Distance to Currawang is 64 km (about 45 minutes). Those travelling independently should aim to arrive at Currawang by 8.15 am.

The outing will begin at the property where we will spend up to two hours, depending on birds, but hopefully **White-throated Gerygone, Scarlet Robin, Pallid Cuckoo** and possibly **Diamond Firetail, Dusky Woodswallow, Mistletoebird, Yellow Thornbill, Flame Robin** and various raptors. We will then spend 1–2 hours at a neighbour's property which may require a bit of easy dirt road travel. Species may include **Hooded Robins, Rufous Songlarks, Peaceful Doves** and **Stubble Quail**. Anyone keen can turn right on the Federal Highway on the way home and go a couple of kms to Rowes Lagoon.

How to get there. Head up Federal Highway to Collector (50km). Go past first Collector turnoff, then turn right onto Collector Rd. At 2.8 km turn left on Lucky Pass Rd. Go 7.8 km on dirt road to Currawang Rd, turn right and go 2.9 km to our front gate at 2388 on right low side of road opposite old Post Office Telegraph Hill. Bring morning tea. Toilet available. Register with Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com and indicate if you wish to carpool or travel independently. Jude Hopewood

Sunday 17 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

This will be a repeat of the very successful practical nest workshops held over the past ten 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, with participants looking for breeding behaviour, signs of nesting etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunity for bird watching.

This workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, 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 a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs. To participate, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 A/H) on jack.holland@environment.gov.au.

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 Campbell Park map on the COG web site under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

INCIDENTAL NOTICES

7-14 September - Lord Howe Island

As part of the monitoring protocol to document the effects of rodent eradication on Lord Howe Island, COG has been invited to conduct a series of annual bird surveys on the island pre- and post-eradication. Seven members were joined by Ian Hutton, resident naturalist on the island. Four teams surveyed throughout the week and 96 sites were surveyed a number of times to assess the abundance and distribution of the lowland terrestrial birds. 18 species were recorded during the surveys with an additional ten species recorded around the island. Common land bird species included the **Silvereye**, **Golden Whistler**, **Common Blackbird** and **Buff-banded Rail**, whilst the **Song Thrush**, **Lord Howe Woodhen** and **Emerald Ground-dove** were also frequently reported.

On the main island breeding was about to start with the **White Terns** taking possession of a couple of inches of branch, whilst the **Sooty Terns** and **Black and Brown Noddies** were starting to nest build and the **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** and **Fleshy-footed Shearwaters** also getting ready. During an afternoon's visit to Ball's Pyramid, good views were obtained of **White-bellied Storm-Petrels**, **Kermadec and Providence Petrels**, **Little and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, **Abbott's Booby** and rafts of **Grey Ternlets**.

Many thanks to all team members for an enjoyable and productive time on the island.
Chris Davey

Community-based Superb Parrot Survey

The Threatened Species Unit of the Office of Environment and Heritage based in Queanbeyan is asking for volunteers to survey for Superb Parrots on the Southwest Slopes region during the spring. The COG area of interest is included within this area and so would be of interest to COG members.

In brief, this exciting on-going survey involves picking one or more 1 km routes of your choice and surveying at least one morning a year between late September and late November. Sites can be located along tracks or roads, on private or public land. The 1 km route needs to be covered at a slow walking pace and will take 1 hour for each transect. All Superb Parrots observed within 250m on each side of the transect must be recorded.

For further information and for a copy of the survey protocol and data sheet please contact Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au, ph 62546324, mob 0418 679 847). Completed datasheets should be sent to Dr Damon Oliver, Superb Parrot Survey, Office of Environment and Heritage, 11 Farrer Street, Queanbeyan, NSW.

Gang-gang Distribution

It is with regret that due to unforeseen circumstance Brian Fair will no longer be responsible for the posting of Gang-gang. I would like to thank Brian for his efforts and to the helpers who have each month travelled to Queanbeyan to ensure that COG members receive their monthly newsletter. Brian has been responsible for the Gang-gang posting since January 2011. Many thanks, Brian.

Dianne Davey will take over responsibilities after the posting of the October Gang-gang.

Alison Russell-French

Share your bird stories with Gang-gang readers

I am sure there are members who would be keen to share a bird story in Gang-gang. Whether it be your favourite local birding spot, an interesting bird encounter or just a good bird story, we would welcome your contributions on a one-off, occasional or regular basis. Send contributions to gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au.



Australian Ornithological Services P/L

PO Box 385
South Yarra 3141
Victoria
Tel: 03 9820 4223
Mob: 04173 10200

enquiries@philipmaher.com

2013

2 & 3 October
Birding for beginners in
Murray Valley NP

10 – 18 December:
SW Western Australia birding
and mammal tour

2013 Plains-wanderer weekends

7 & 8 December
28 & 29 December

2014 tours

2 – 8 Feb: Tasmania
19 – 26 April: Alice Springs
25 May – 8 June: Top End
June: Gulf Country
August: New Caledonia
September: Strzelecki Track
30 Oct – 6 Nov NSW Central Coast,
Barrington Tops NP, Barren Grounds
NR
Please see itineraries, checklists and
latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 26-27 OCTOBER – Update 25 September

Nominations to survey sites have been coming in steadily but there are still many outstanding areas yet to be “adopted” for survey purposes over that weekend. If you “adopt” a site, you commit to doing at the very minimum a 20-minute 2-hectare survey there, though of course longer surveys and surveys of several sites are most welcome. Full details about the Blitz and an Excel spreadsheet of the adopted sites are provided on the COG website; to “adopt” a site, please contact the Blitz organiser Barbara Allan at blitz@canberrabirds.org.au or telephone her on 6254 6520. Below are some of the sites awaiting adoption. More than one individual or group may survey each site, but it is helpful to spread our coverage as widely as possible.

Northside

North Mulligans Flat; Campbell Park

Central sites

National Museum environs; ANU; Kings Park

Eastern sites

Fairbairn Pines; Queanbeyan Sewage Works

Western sites

Uriarra Crossing; Woodstock NR

Southern sites

Mt Mugga Mugga NR; Rob Roy NR; Urambi Hills NR; Jerrabomberra Grasslands

Further afield in Namadgi NP

Shanahans Mtn; Settlers Track; Smokers Trail; many spots in the Brindabellas; Brandy Flat Hut; Square Rock; etc.

Come on, COG members! Sign up for an enjoyable day's – or weekend's – birding to help us build as complete a picture as possible of the birds of the ACT over that weekend!



Shy albatross

Photo: Julian Robinson

In Praise of Pelagics

Photo Ops #15 - Oct 2013

Julian Robinson

I'm a reluctant convert to the addiction of "pelagics", an activity which in birder terms means getting on a boat and looking for birds of the open seas. Who could possibly enjoy masses of monochromatic birds that all



On the boat looking for birds of the open seas – all quiet at the end of the day.



Grey-backed Storm-Petrel

look the same, flying so far off that you can barely see them? Nah. Not for this photographer who started his birding life by photographing Superb Parrots for cash and who now enjoys nothing more than sitting quietly in some choice bit of bush waiting for a colourful or behaviourally interesting avian something to arrive.

But after my second pelagic recently, I seem to have caught the bug and would happily go again in a week if it were possible. The attractions for me are probably different from most since I'm such a crap pelagic birder – I spend most of my time listening for 'incoming' calls and then realising that I can hardly

see the nominated bird let alone identify it, then asking someone knowledgeable for the ID again. Fortunately there's a few extra attractions

First there's a joy that comes from just being at sea – fresh air, wind in the face, rolling seas, far horizons and all that stuff. Probably not for everyone but it obviously works for at least the 18 or so people who turned up at Eden this year. Then there's the chance of seeing popular mammals, some of them very large, performing spectacular manoeuvres just over there. Other more human-scale and possibly even more endearing dolphins and seals often come right to the boat.



Fairy prion 'walking' on the water.

There's a degree of excitement that comes from the ever-present possibility of a rare or unusual bird appearing. Such highlights are more likely than on land given the scale of the environment and the unpredictable effects of weather – howling winds from which there's simply nowhere for a bird to hide. Recognition of these rarities is more than challenging for some of us, but I can appreciate the thrill of discovery that must be felt by the experienced pelagic birder, and enjoy the fruits of their discovery.



Shy albatross

But most of all, of course, there's the photography. My most productive pelagic birding takes place when I get home, where I can see the detail in shape, plumage and behaviour that is mostly missed at sea. Birds that just looked like black and white blobs become recognisable. Behavioural antics become clear and sometimes captivating. 'Personalities' or style of different species emerge.

The extra detail you can get from photos makes sea-bird 'monochrome' look wonderful, and some views of the ocean backdrop are beautiful or breathtaking. The silky smoothness of close-up sea surface or the crisp liveliness of spray frozen by fast shutter are an image-maker's delight. And it's no surprise to discover that monochrome is often punctuated by splashes of colour with correspondingly greater effect than in the garish land world.

As described in the trip report this issue, we weren't blessed with much variety this year. On Saturday really only one Shearwater species, one Albatross, a **Fairy-Prion** and the slightly exotic **Grey-backed Storm-Petrel** ended up in my camera. The **Common Diving-Petrel** was apparently more present than usual but at a distance and speed that escaped my lens.

The **Fairy Prion** was the star photographic attraction. In this it was aided by the swell which meant that sometimes the camera was down at the same level as the bird, giving an uncommon point of view very different from the usual "looking down on the bird" perspective. From this angle the **Fairy Prions** seemed to be walking ever so nonchalantly along the surface!



Shy albatross showing beak structure.



Fairy Prion

One **Shy Albatross** flew past very close and I managed to jag a detailed view of Albatross face that shows the beak structure nicely – much better than you'd see through bins. The **Storm-Petrel** wasn't as obliging as the **Fairy Prions** but was captured I think by most of the five photographers on board, shown here 'dancing' off the surface. For the benefit of other participants and possibly interesting to the would-be pelagist I've included a roughly stitched image that shows the boat as we were nearly back at port.

The comparatively smooth sea in that photo reminds me of my final pelagic photographic pleasure – the challenge. It's not so easy using a long lens in significant swell. As one person mentioned, 'normally it's just the birds moving'. Moving birds *plus* moving platform make for a much higher degree of difficulty, the photo equivalent of a reverse 2 ½ somersaults with 2 ½ twists in pike. Modern wildlife photography is a doddle compared with even a decade ago, but ocean-going photography manages to put some of that challenge back.

In keeping with the COG Pelagic theme at this time of year, the next of this series will be written by Tobias Hayashi who has offered to write on his more wide-ranging (and knowledgeable) pelagic experience, hopefully including some tips and insights into his ocean-going photo techniques.

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

2012-2013 memberships:

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

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for November 2013 edition

Wednesday 30 October 2013

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au Or

c/- The Secretary COG, PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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

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

COG information

President—Alison Russell-French

0419 264702

Email: alisonrf@inet.net.au

Vice President—Chris Davey

6254 6324

Email: chris_davey@aapt.net.au

Treasurer—Noel Luff

Email: noelluff@hotmail.com.au

Secretary—Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary

COG, PO Box 301

Civic Square, ACT 2608

COG website

www.canberrabirds.org.au

COG library

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

Membership inquiries—

Sandra Henderson

6231 0303

membership@canberrabirds.org.au

for changed address or other details

Gang-gang Newsletter

Editor: Sue Lashko

Email: gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Lay-out Editor: Mary Bomford

Newsletter distribution

Brian Fair and helpers

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'Canberra Birds'.

Join the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an empty email message to;

canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au

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



Gang-gang

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Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.

PO Box 301

Civic Square ACT 2608

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