



Gang-gang

April 2023

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday 12 April 2023

7.30 pm

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

The April meeting will be a normal face-to-face one held at our usual venue. Attendees should heed social distancing and good hygiene practice etc, and use their common sense and stay home if they have COVID symptoms. Mask wearing is recommended.

This month there will be 2 presentations giving different perspectives of the research on the Superb Fairy-wren.

Olivia Congdon - Communicating Superb Fairy-wren research.

Andrew Cockburn - Lifetime success in Superb Fairy-wrens: a tale of two sexes

The shorter speaker will be Olivia Congdon presenting on **"Communicating Superb Fairy wren research."**

Olivia is a senior science writer for the ANU College of Science. This talk will describe the challenges and techniques used to create engaging content about science for the public, using a recent story on the long-term study of Superb Fairy-wrens at the Australian National Botanical Gardens as a case study.

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Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the 4.5 weeks from 22 February to 25 March inclusive covered by this column became increasingly warmer and drier, with our hottest day of the summer season (in fact for several years) on 19 March, though it has been cooler since with some showers or thunderstorms. Bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) seems to have increased over the whole period, possibly because March is one of the main months where much movement occurs. Interestingly despite the earlier indications some spring/summer migrants seem to have delayed their departure, and with the autumn/winter altitudinal migrants also being slow to arrive.

Drawing much of the attention for the period has been the presence (possibly best described as an irruption) of 3 species of egret around the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR). The rarest of these was the **Little Egret**, five of which were first reported by Shorty in the JWNR paddocks and then shortly after at

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Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret

Sandra Henderson

This should provide a perfect introduction for the main presentation by Andrew Cockburn, Emeritus Professor at the ANU's Research School of Biology, on "Lifetime success in Superb Fairy-wrens: a tale of two sexes."

Triumphing in the trials of life is best estimated by the relative success of individuals in producing young that are themselves successful or go on to produce grandchildren. The logistical difficulties of obtaining such measurements in the field are horrendous, and hence ecologists have focused on certain sorts of animal, usually those with simple societies and modest lifespans that live on islands, where the observers do not need to worry about dispersal, and where predation is often minimal. Helen Osmond and I have devoted more than half our lives to making the appropriate observations on the superb fairy-wrens that inhabit the Australian National Botanic Gardens. In this species the social system is horrendously complicated, exceeding the most sordid soap opera in its twists and turns. The fear of predation governs adult behaviour and restricts their foraging, and predation of nests and fledglings can be extreme. Males and females lead very different lives, because males are the ultimate stick-at-homes, while females must disperse to acquire a breeding slot. In this talk I will review what makes an individual successful, while others are complete losers.

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

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the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Ponds early on 26 February. To 28 March many observers were then able to find up to 6 of these birds, which COG's 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists these as a rare non-breeding visitor very occasionally seen in the margins of water bodies.

Following this there was only one more confirmed sighting of this species, on 18 March when Sandra Henderson took advantage of the very rare opportunity to photograph 3 egret species in the one frame. Of these the **Intermediate Egret**, listed very similarly in the 2018-2019 ABR, has been present far more commonly than I can remember, throughout the whole period at the JWNR, with a maximum of 7 reported on two different days. It has also been found from 5 other locations, with a maximum of 15 birds (noted as a likely underestimate) reported by Liam Manderson from the SW corner of Lake George on 18 March.

The third species, the **Great Egret** is much more common in the COG Aol, but again the maximum of 7 reported from the JWNR on 28 February is a significant number together. It was also reported from 9 other locations, often singly but also of multiple birds with a maximum of 15 reported from the Wet Lagoon Breadalbane on 9 March.

The other quite "unusual" species was the **Tawny Grassbird** which also reported from the JWNR, but by limited observers. It was first photographed by Zebedee Muller early on 2 March, but only seen once later that day and once on 6 March. This is listed in the COG 2018-2019 ABR as a rare vagrant, only a very rare visitor, appearing recently in the COG Aol. From eBird the most recent sightings were from the West Belconnen Pond in mid January 2022.



Tawny Grassbird

Zebedee Muller

The **Comb-crested Jacana** has still been reported from Rows Lagoon NE of Collector but only 6 times between 25 February and 21 March, all by names not familiar to me. Perhaps it is no longer worth the hour's drive to see it, or possibly it has become harder to find.

However, there have been no further reports of the **Purple-crowned Lorikeet**, which now joins the list of species asking the question to where they have gone.

Of the early leaving spring/summer migrants still reported in the previous period there have been no further reports of the **Horsfield's Bushlark**, which was last reported on 29 January.

After not being reported since 10 February there was a late observation of a **Rufous Songlark** at Bluett's Block on 4 March. While in the previous period the **White-winged Triller** was reported from just 2 locations, there have been reports from 6 locations during the present period, the most recent being from Carwoola on 15 March. So, it seems the drier (and warmer?) conditions may have allowed these 2 inland species to delay their departure compared with what was expected a month ago.

Likewise, the **Pallid Cuckoo**, another inland species for which the only report during the previous period was one heard on 25 January, was reported from 5 locations, mostly single reports of single birds. However, a juvenile was reported by many (at least 15) observers from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR between 6-21 March. One wonders where this was raised as the closest report of an adult in 2023 was on 1 January from Carwoola.

The **White-throated Needletail** has been reported from 7 locations between 25 February and 22 March during the period, with the highest numbers being the 20 reported over Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 22 March. The related Fork-tailed Swift was again not reported during the period, and with only the single report of 6 birds in mid January so far in 2023 it certainly has been a poor season for them, despite the conditions.

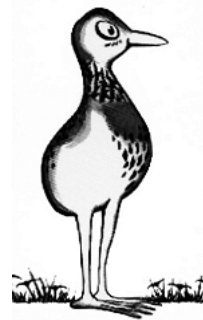
Of the other early leaving spring/summer migrants, the coastal species the **Common Cicadabird** was still reported (seen briefly, then heard very well) from the Tidbinbilla NR (from where it was last also heard on 12 February) on 25 February. Of the 3 other coastal species which usually leave by mid-March the **Dollarbird** was reported from 19 locations during the period, with the last observation being from the Uriarra East Reserve on 18 March.

The **Rainbow Bee-eater** was reported from 17 locations, with particularly between 15-23 March many of these being reports of them migrating north, sometimes very high over, the maximum being 40 at the Uriarra TSR on 18 March. The **Sacred Kingfisher**, which usually stays the longest, was reported from 18 locations, with the most recent being on 17 March from the western foreshores of the Googong Dam.

Other birds that mostly have left by the end of March/early April the inland **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** was still reported from 6 locations, the most recent being from the Yankee Hat car park and track, and the Glendale depot on 19 March. The coastal **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** was still reported from 15 locations most recently at Campbell Park on 21 March.

The **Brush Cuckoo** was still reported from 7 locations, most recently from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 21 March. This was a juvenile with still some dark mottling around throat (see also other breeding record below). The **Eastern Koel** was reported from around 33 locations during the period, with the last adult probably being reported from Fraser on 18 March (but also see breeding below).

The **Latham's Snipe** was still reported from 7 locations, with the last report on eBird being from Rows Lagoon on 17 March. The **Leadend Flycatcher** was still reported from an amazing 30 locations during the period and was still present up to the time of writing, as was the



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16 June to 3 July 2023

Plains-wanderer Weekends

7/8 & 21/22 October 2023

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2024 tours

Kutini - Payamu

(Iron Range NP) Wet Season

4 to 10 January 2024

Cairns to Lockhart River

Far North Queensland

1 to 14 May 2024

Part 1: Atherton Tablelands,

Part 2: Musgrave, Archer River

Kutini – Payamu (Iron Range NP)

Top End

Late June/July 2024

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Creek, Kununurra.

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Australian Reed-Warbler still reported from around 40 locations. **Tree** and **Fairy Martins** were reported from around 19 and 10 locations, respectively, both also up to the time of drafting this column.

Of the passage migrants, the **Satin Flycatcher** was reported from 3 locations only, the last being at the Tidbinbilla NR on 8 March (there was also a late report of a male still there on 25 March), and with only a single observation of a pair migrating through at Black Mountain NR on 24 February. In contrast the **Rufous Fantail** was reported from 10 locations, all but one of these being from the mountains W of the Murrumbidgee River (most recently from the Razorback Track on the Cotter River on 19 March), with the only peri-urban report being from the COG outing to Red Rocks Gorge on 12 March.

So, during April please keep an eye out for the above and other spring/summer migrants which are still being reported, but usually leave during April. These include the **Noisy Friarbird** (still reported from close to 70 locations during the period), **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** (still reported from 9 and well over 30 locations, respectively, during the period), and most of the **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails**. A number of these last two species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and **Superb Parrot**.

Of the species that return to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, there has been only a moderate increase in reports from urban and peri-urban locations of the **White-eared Honeyeater** and the **Golden Whistler** (14 and 13, respectively), during the period, indicating they are yet to come in big numbers.

Likewise, there were reports of Scarlet Robins from around 11 such locations (same as in March) of the total of 33 locations indicating they have also been quite slow to move in closer. There have been none of these so far of the **Flame Robin** from the surprisingly low total number of 12 locations.

The first urban/peri urban report of the **Rose Robin** was from the Pinnacle on 24 March, otherwise there had been only reports from 4 locations from the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River. There have been no further reports of the **Pink Robin** following the rare observation of an immature or female in the Tallaganda NP in January, the closest report coming from the east of Melbourne 350 km away. There were again no reports of the inland species, the **Red-capped Robin**, anywhere in the COG Aol during the period, the closest recent report again being from the W of the Weddin Mountains, over 150 km to the NW.

There have been reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** only from 5 locations in the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River, but no reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** anywhere in the COG Aol during the period, the closest being from Kangaroo Valley over 100 km to the NE. Up to 25 March, no **Swift Parrots** migrating from Tasmania seemed to have been yet reported from the mainland, whether they visit Canberra this autumn/winter is likely to depend on the amount of flowering available. So please look out for the above species as they move into Canberra and surrounds during April.

There have been no reports of **Plumed Whistling Ducks** (the nearest report is from Canowindra nearly 200 km to the N) or **Freckled Ducks** (nearest is from Wollongong over 200 km to the NE) during the period. **Australian Shelducks** were reported from five locations to the E and NE of Canberra during the period, with by far the highest numbers being the 149 at East Lake George on 15 March (less than half the 400 reported in the previous period).

Single **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported from three locations only during the period. In contrast apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary up to 9 **Musk Ducks** (mostly single otherwise) were reported from 8 locations. **Great-crested Grebe** were reported from 2 locations, with up to eight birds including five juveniles seen at the West Belconnen Pond and up to three birds at the Cotter Dam.

Stubble Quail were reported from around 11 locations, down from the 17 locations in February, again probably indicating limited calling. **Brown Quail** were reported from 18 locations, slightly down from in February. Up to four **Painted Button-quail** were reported from five locations, up from the single location in the previous period. There were no reports of **Little Button-quail** (none in NSW but from five locations in N and NW Victoria) or **White-headed Pigeon** (plenty from along the NSW south coast) during the period. A **Peaceful Dove** was reported from the Cotter Rd on 8 March, and single **Brush Bronzewing** was reported from the Bendora Rd on 24 February and 6 March.

On 24 February Fleur Leary reported she had a juvenile **Diamond Dove** foraging in her front garden in Crace for the past few days. On 5 March Ian Fraser posted that he was pretty sure there was a **Bar-shouldered Dove** calling from near the Duffy shops that morning, but of course by the time he got over there it had stopped. He noted that you can't really mistake the call,

so it was worth keeping eyes/ears open if you happened to be in the vicinity. However, no one else seems to have been able to find this bird, with the closest report during the period being from Ulladulla 125 km to the east.

Up to three **Spotless Crakes** were reported from four locations, but the place to see them during the period has been the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR from where they have been regularly reported with a maximum of 11 birds. The place to find **Australian Spotted Crakes** has been the southern part of Ginninderry where there were multiple sightings on 1 or more birds between 18-21 March, with the maximum being 5 reported at the Strathnairn Gallery on 20 March. In contrast no **Baillon's Crane** was reported during the period. Up to two **Lewin's Rails** were reported (again mostly aural) only from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR and the Yankee Hat car park and track. Similarly, up to 2 **Buff-banded Rails** were reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR and the North Watson Wetlands.

No **Banded Lapwings**, **Red-necked Avocets**, **Red-necked Stints** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were reported during the period. The **Common Sandpiper** was last recorded from the northern end of Lake Tuggeranong on 7 March; I have found it much more difficult to find in 2023 and it may have left early. No **Caspian** or **Whiskered Terns**, or **Australian Little Bittern** were reported during the period, but as noted at the start of this column the many sightings of **Little** and, in particular, **Intermediate Egrets** have been among the highlights of the period.

There was a single nocturnal report (by call) of the **Barn Owl** from Tuggeranong Hill on 28 February. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from 16 locations during the period, an increase from the 9 in February. The **Nankeen Kestrel** was reported from around 34 locations during the period, very similar to February. On 24 March Margot Oorebeek and Ray Turnbull photographed an adult **Spotted Harrier** flying very low near John Gorton Drive, Molonglo, very close to where I had seen it 2 days earlier (interestingly the nearest other sighting was at Junee, nearly 150 km to the WNW). There were no reports of the **Grey Goshawk**, **Pacific Baza**, **Black Kite** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from four locations, at the Cotter Bend of the Cotter Reserve up to 28 February, on Jerrabomberra creek at the wetlands on 26 March, and by many observers at the Stony Creek NR and the nearby East Uriarra Reserve on 15 March. With the many sightings over the past few years, it seems clear that this species is now a resident.

No **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**, **Turquoise Parrots**, **Greater Bluebonnets**, **Purple-crowned** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period. However, two **Cockatiels** were reported flying overhead at Lake Tuggeranong on 8 March. Two **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets** were reported from Symonston on 8 March and one bird from the Canberra Grammar School on 24 March, whereas up to two **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from five locations. No **Singing** or **Scarlet Honeyeaters**, or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period, but on 19 March Cedric Bear photographed a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** on the Border Track at the Mulligans Flat NR. On 7 March Jean Kennedy posted that she saw an unmistakeable **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, and what she thought was a fledged young being fed, in the south courtyard of the Coombs Building on the ANU campus. She noted she had no camera handy, unfortunately. Several birders were able to follow this up, with on 12 March Christine D photographing a juvenile with green-yellow facial skin, and separately Shorty finding seven **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, five of which were juveniles, along Sullivans Creek. Whether these were from the same breeding event as he had found in October is not clear. It is possible as HANZAB indicates that the facial skin of younger immatures (up to 6 months old) is mostly yellow but often with some greenish areas.

A single **White-fronted Chat** was reported only from the eastern side of Lake George on 15 March, but there were no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** or **Zebra Finches** reported during the period.

Of the birds I have continued to ask readers to keep a special lookout for in 2023, on eBird up to five **Jacky Winters** have been reported only from the Glendale Depot during the period. However, Kym Bradley reported a successful second brood at her patch to the S of the Canberra (see further below). **Hooded Robins** were reported from four locations, with single males photographed at Bracks Hole Rd near the Cotter Dam on 2 and 13 March, two males observed on Kelly Rd (a historical location) on 11 March, and 3 birds at the Scottsdale Reserve on 10 March. **Restless Flycatchers** were reported from 4 locations; again most sightings were at the Nelanglo TSR where up to two birds were reported between 26 February and 23 March. Single birds were reported from the West Belconnen Pond on 22 February, from the Yankee Hat car park and track on 1 and 24 March, and from the Scottsdale Reserve on 9 March.

So, while the report of late breeding for the **Jacky Winter** is welcome, that they have each only been reported from a maximum of 4 sites is cause for continuing concern. Apart from the **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Blue-faced Honeyeater** breeding reports above other interesting breeding observations include:



Jacky Winter

Kym Bradley

On 24 February Kym Bradley informed me that the pair of **Jacky Winters** at her patch to the S of Canberra had brought in a new family member. She was wondering why she had not seen them for a few weeks with only one there and there even when she called them, they did not arrive. She now knew why, a second nesting, with one streaked juvenile she had photographed. HANZAB includes that the **Jacky Winter** “can raise up to 3 broods per season.” However, the references are very old except a 1994 one which states, “A pair laid a second clutch 22 days after the first brood fledged, and 7-12 days after (first) brood became independent.” This fits in with the timing of Kym’s birds.

On 6 March Alan Fowkes posted through the COG office an attached photograph of a very mottled juvenile bird taken at Mulligans Flat in mid-February. His best guess was perhaps a juvenile Hooded Robin, but he was not familiar with the

species and therefore quite unsure. Consensus from respondents was that it was a **Brush Cuckoo** with David Rosalky pointing out that it looked to be zygodactylic, ie 2 toes forward and 2 back (and thus not a passerine). Anthony Overs agreed that the markings were key for this species, with the other thing that immediately said cuckoo to him was the raised, round nostril.

Breeding reports of the **Eastern Koel** have continued, especially in the second half of February with my current count being 156 fledglings, with the most recently reported being Margaret Robertson’s in Giralang on 22 March, and Barbara Allan reporting hers was still present on 26 March. This is very similar to the 157 fledglings counted by 30 March 2022. Again, all the known hosts were **Red Wattlebirds** (RWB). The following are well worth including in more detail:

- On 2 March Carrolle Colbert forwarded to me a video of a pair of **Eastern Koels** copulating on their farm at Royalla on 9 February. She was taking photos of the female (who was calling) and as she was switching over to video, the male arrived. Carrolle did very well to capture this event, as in many years of Koel watching I’ve only seen it twice, in similar situations at the top of a tree. It was also quite late in the season for them still to be doing so. Interesting too is that the sighting was made at rural Royalla. Checking the eBird Australia map from the start of 2018 shows there have been no reports from there though there has been one at Burra and also some further south including around the Baroona Rd.
- On 12 March Julie Clark informed me that it appeared that her local pair of Red Wattlebirds were now raising a second Eastern Koel fledgling. Around 25 February she heard and then saw a one in the tree overhanging their garden. She left Canberra on 27 February until late on 8 March, but during her absence she was told by her neighbours that her RWBs were in their garden feeding one. That morning the fledgling landed on their shed roof, begging incessantly. She was not sure of the breeding time frame of this species but thought that there was enough time between the first chick and this one for it to be the same RWB pair (The first one was first sighted on 8 January but was heard several days earlier and departed on 11 February).
- This was indeed a very interesting observation. There have been plenty of local observations of two or more Koel fledglings together in close proximity, especially during the 2020-2021 bumper season, or even of the presumed same pair of RWBs raising Koel chicks in successive years, but I am not aware of RWBs raising successive Koel chicks even if there’s reasonable evidence that RWBs can have up to 4 broods per season.
- The accepted maximum period from egg laying to fledgling is 37 days. Working backwards if Julie’s first fledgling was weaned before the end of January, say 28 January, and the pair of RWBs laid soon after, say by 1 February, the 25 days’ time before she saw the next one would seem too short as egg laying would have needed to take place on or shortly after 20 January. This seemed too early to me as advanced fledglings often are very demanding and take up all their host’s time, the reason I had come to the conclusion previously that raising successive Koel chicks was very unlikely.
- Further information provided by Julie supported that raising successive Eastern Koel chicks is likely to have occurred. She only has one pair of RWBs in her garden which are able to be identified, with the male larger and quite friendly and the female smaller and more skittish. Also, she and her husband Len hadn’t seen the female after the first couple of weeks of the first Koel fledgling appearing until after their return from holidays. So, it appears she may have started nesting again around 20 January, possibly using the same nest. Also, their RWBs only had one brood of their own this season, so the two Koel events only makes three and there was a very long gap between their own brood and the first Koel. So, they may not have been too exhausted. Another aspect is that food is plentiful in their garden, including the supplementary food provided.

- So, the evidence is strong for successive Eastern Koel fledglings being raised by the same pair of RWBs. This seems to be unprecedented. Checking HANZAB there is a case of RWBs observed incubating 7 days after the loss of chicks, in another case one was observed incubating about 3 weeks after the previous clutch fledged (HANZAB gives the RWB fledging period as between 15-20 days, so this would have been very soon after the fledglings became independent). Most importantly there is a relatively recent (1993) observation of incubating while still feeding its own fledglings of the previous clutch.

Few mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have come to my attention other than those observed while I have been out birding. The small one with 5 species in my garden has become noticeably bigger over the period, now including **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalote**, **Weebills**, **Silvereyes** and on two occasions a **Yellow Thornbill**, very unexpected and identified at very close quarters by its streaked ear coverts and faint orange wash to the throat. So please look out for this autumn phenomenon especially for the unexpected species often quietly feeding in among all the activity. The **Common Myna** roost just outside my GBS site increased slowly to a maximum of at least 120 birds by 10 March, soon after moving to some alternative roosts within my GBS site before moving much further away. This is very typical behaviour in my experience.

On 26 February Rod McKay posted that as he walked the track alongside the Molonglo River, he encountered a large number of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, some perched, some flying in and out of the pine trees, some carrying portions of pine cone. He noted perhaps 30 birds, there could have been more, and there was, to quote the Australian Bird Guide, a lot of “continuous rasping begging calls” which he guessed meant a number of them were juveniles, presumably being fed by the adult birds carrying the pine cone portions. He also presumed that meant they were breeding somewhere up in the Brindabellas and were now dispersing around Canberra?

Checking HANZAB there is very little information on what food Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos give to their young; it says they are given Fabaceae (legume) seeds and various types of insect larvae. However, the information is fairly old (published in 1999) and as it's very well accepted that adults have adapted to eating pine cones (in fact it's been the species' saviour) it wouldn't be a surprise if they had learnt to feed them to their young. I noted that I'm also not sure if anyone knows where they breed locally, the usual wisdom is “in the mountains” but I'm not sure how much evidence there is for that. Checking the BIRD INFO on the COG web site indicates almost all COG Aol records are of dependent young with a few Breeding (BLA code – presumably the same), and other than that only 3 records of inspecting hollows.

On the morning of 10 March Kym Bradley counted between 100 to 150 honeyeaters (most appeared to be **Yellow-faced**) coming out of the mountains high over her patch to the S of Canberra heading East. However, by 25 March I was not aware of reports of numbers of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters migrating over Canberra and it seems that significant migration still needs to commence, possibly as the weather since has not been favourable (too hot, cloudy, or wet). Michael Robbins has confirmed he has seen very few so far flying along the major migration route over his place in Kambah.

So please keep an eye out for them, especially under their favoured conditions of still clear cool mornings following crisp overnight conditions. Watch out also for the **White-naped Honeyeaters** which will join them and probably become the majority in flocks towards the end of April. Watch out too for other species that migrate in groups but usually less spectacularly such as the **Red Wattlebird**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Grey Fantail**, **Silvereyes** and both species of **Pardalote**; again very few reports of which have come to my attention.

April is the last of the more than 3 months when there is significant bird movement in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above (in particular for the **White-throated Needletail** and **Fork-tailed Swift**), including those that usually leave by the end of April, for the arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species (including migrating) flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any autumn 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 e-mail Discussion List (“COG chat line”) and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always, I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Jack Holland

Committee News

The Canberra Birds (COG) committee met by Zoom on 16 March. Clare Henderson has resigned from the committee. The committee thanks her for contributing her knowledge and insights, particularly on conservation matters and related legislation, over the past year and a bit.

The committee still needs to fill the vacant treasurer's position and could appoint up to three more general members which would reduce the load for other committee members.

Recent Submissions:


COG's submission on the Draft Territory Plan and associated draft District Strategies is on the website – <http://canberrabirds.org.au/conservation/cog-conservation-strategy/>.

Neil Hermes President

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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.

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.

Narrabundah Hill, Easter Saturday 8 April - morning outing

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

Meeting time: This walk will start at 8:30 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning in early April (we saw over 2500 birds there at a similar timing in 2019).

Meeting place: Meet at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care. Please take water and morning tea to have on the track.

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland by E-mail on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your mobile and emergency contact name and number.

Easter camp – Tumut Fri 07 – Monday 10 April 2023

Leader: Sandra Henderson

The Easter Camp this year will be at Tumut. We have access to a small number of bedrooms in shearers' quarters on a sheep/cattle property (bathroom facilities in the quarters), and access also to the nearby shearing shed, which has toilet facilities for campers. It is usual for most participants to arrive on the Thursday, leave on the Monday, so we will be having outings Friday-Sunday.

The property is close to the town, on Shelleys Creek. Tumut COG member Les will be assisting me with an outings program for the weekend – he undertakes Birdlife Australia surveys in the Tumut area, so knows some interesting birding sites.

Numbers limited to 16 participants. As of 28 March there are still plenty of spots left. If you are interested please contact Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com). Please indicate if you would like a bed in the shearers' quarters, or whether you will be camping.

Sunday 16 April 2023 07:30am K2C surveys – Bredbo area

Leader: Nicki Taws

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 **before Tuesday 11 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210736.

Wednesday 19 April 2023 – Glendale Depot

Leader: Sandra Henderson

Meet at Namadgi Visitor Centre at 8am for carpooling.

Glendale Depot is a decommissioned Parks works depot, and a COG favourite. Over 120 species have been seen there, and recent highlights include **Jacky Winter**, **Restless Flycatcher**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Grey Currawong** and **Gang-gangs**. Sturdy shoes, hat, water recommended. Some walking will be off-track.

To register please contact Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com) with your name and number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sunday 23 April 2023 – Stony Creek Nature Reserve, Carwoola.

(Not to be confused with the ACT's Stony Creek Reserve)

Leader: Sandra Henderson

Meet at the entrance to the reserve at 8.30am. The entry is well concealed on the left of Captains Flat Road, *directly opposite* the right hand turn into Clydesdale Road. It is about 6km from the Kings Highway intersection.

Around 80 species have been seen here. My last visit indicated the track is overgrown, and we will venture off-track. Sturdy shoes, hat, water recommended. **To register** please contact Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com) with your name and number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sun 30 April 2023 08:00am Reedy Creek TSR

Leader: David McDonald

Description: We will visit this fine Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) in the Mount Fairy/Boro area. It is located along the Goulburn Road north of the Kings Highway. It is a beautiful woodland area that is part of a five-year TSR conservation and restoration project being conducted by the Molonglo Conservation Group. The iconic **Scarlet Robin** is a possibility, along with other box/gum woodland birds. The TSR is currently leased, but South East Local Land Services are arranging for us to have access.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L3895125>

Meeting time and place: 8:00 am at the Spotlight carpark, Bungendore Road, Queanbeyan, for optional carpooling

Walking distance: 5 km approx.

Degree of difficulty: Easy

End time (approx.): 12:00 noon

What to bring: Water & morning tea

Need to register: Yes, by email or text to the trip leader, giving name, mobile number, and your emergency contact's name and phone number.

Name of leader and contact details: David McDonald, email David [at] dnmcdonald.id.au, phone 0416 231 890.

Numbers limited: Yes, maximum 15.



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- **Galahs** at the Balloon Spectacular
- **Gang-gang cockatoos** at City Hill
- **Rainbow-crested cockatoo** at Black Mountain Tower
- **Tawny frogmouths** at Shine Dome

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Borneo Nature Tour: 13 – 25 June 2023

In June we are offering a nature tour to Borneo with opportunities to experience some of the most biodiverse locations for mammals, birds, insects and plants. Internationally renowned for its animal and plant attractions, Sabah is justifiably famous for its Orang-utans, Proboscis Monkeys, Pygmy Elephants and dozens of other mammal species; amazing birdlife including 10 species of giant hornbill, nine species of pitta (truly the jewels of the rainforest) and the amazing Bristlehead. Sabah's unique vegetation features pitcher plants, giant Rafflesia flowers and sprays of ferns and colourful orchids sprouting from towering rainforest trees. Insect life is prolific and includes the spectacular Rajah Brooke's Birdwing among hundreds of other butterfly species; the giant Moon Moth and thousands of fascinating beetles, praying mantids and katydids.

This nature tour for photographers and nature journalers is from 13 – 25 June 2023, and is one of our favourite nature tours with many of our participants keen to return for a second trip. We will have our award-winning photographer and NatureArt Lab Queensland tutor Danny McCreadie accompanying the group, providing mentoring for participants on all aspects of photography. We will be closing bookings for this trip on 10 March, and have a couple of places still available if people are keen to book. We also have a travel agent who can assist with flight bookings.

Further information and bookings are available at: <https://natureartlab.com.au/collections/field-trips/products/borneo-nature-tour-13-to-23-june-2023-deposit-of-1-500-00-tour-cost-6-950-1>

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 5 March 2023 – Murrumbidgee Track from Casuarina Sands

Overcast though warm conditions greeted the 16 members gathered at Casuarina Sands car park for the planned stroll along the Murrumbidgee River towards Kambah Pool. Clouds cleared for a delightful warm day with a cool breeze later.

A **Grey Currawong** was heard calling near the car park and on our return, we were all rewarded with a good view of this bird. Despite many more birds being heard than seen, a reasonable tally of 38 species was recorded. A small flock of **Red-rumped Parrots** gathered conveniently on the far riverbank which we viewed as they drank. **Silvereyes** were prolific, most with the rufous sides indicating the Tasmanian variety.

A feeding flock about halfway along included **Red-browed Finches**, **Silvereyes**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and thornbills. Many **Superb Fairy-wrens** were recorded along the track. There were also good sightings of **Leaden Flycatchers**. A young bird which was photographed but not positively identified was subsequently identified by Anthony Overs as a female **Rufous Whistler** in moult.

The highlight of the day presented itself just as we reached the turn back point of the walk with a male and female **Mistletoebird** seen hovering and foraging in casuarinas.

The raptors included a **Nankeen Kestrel** and a **Brown Goshawk** which cruised along the ridge and river offering good views. The path while uneven in places was generally reasonable. It was an interesting and enjoyable walk. The mix of experienced and newer members was very pleasant and as always so informative for those of us starting out.

Denise Rawling

Wednesday 15 March 2023 - Stony Creek Reserve

I will break with tradition and start my report half way through the trip, as most of the birding highlights were seen/heard on our return journey.

At 1.25 km from our starting point in East Uriarra Nature Reserve, a reasonable way into Stony Creek Nature Reserve, it was decided we'd retrace our steps.

I heard somebody say "Now we'll see those Mistletoebirds we have been hearing". And we did! We had good views in dead/live Casuarinas of adult female, immature male and juvenile **Mistletoebird**. And while I didn't see it, one of the party saw an adult male shortly before we turned around. Then birding got better and better.

We heard, then saw **Rainbow Bee-eater**. Although we had good views, I don't think anyone saw the long tail streamers of an adult male. And the birds on the other side of the river were too far away to see any streamers. **Dollarbirds** were heard then seen, there being at least one adult with red bill and one juvenile with dark bill.

Probably our top highlight was the **Azure Kingfisher**, first seen on a rock in the middle of the river, then on fallen timber on the far bank, and finally closer on a stump in the river, near our bank and on rocks close by. I think everyone managed to see it fishing/flying and/or sitting. Some of us had very good views. Several of the party heard, although nobody saw, **Double-barred Finch**. The best views of **Red-browed Finch** was on outward journey.

As was the view of the raptor flying upstream then preening in a dead tree on the other side of the river. Not the best viewing through binoculars, but fortunately one of the photographers with long lens got an id photo of a **Brown Goshawk**. I think everyone saw **Silvereye**, we certainly heard



Rainbow Bee-eater

Marcus Hellyer



Brown Goshawk

Marcus Hellyer

Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Magpie-lark, Australian Raven and Common Starling we thought Sandra had done us proud.

Michael Robbins

enough on both outward and return journey. Also on our return journey were **Welcome Swallow, Dusky Woodswallow, Willy Wagtail, and Yellow-rumped Thornbill.**

A **White-faced Heron** was seen on both the outward and return journey and **White-throated Gerygone** were heard but not seen. Probably everyone had good views of male **Rufous Whistler** and some of an adult female. We also saw **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, but not obviously migrating, **White-eared Honeyeater**. We heard **Pied Butcherbird, White-browed Scrubwren, Common Blackbird.**

Along with **Australian Wood Duck, Galah, Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, White-throated Treecreeper, Supberb Fairy-wren,**

COG Field Trip Milton/Ulladulla Tuesday 21 to Friday 24 March 2023

Ulladulla Holiday Haven Tourist Park was the base for 8 COG members led by Bill Graham.

As rain was predicted later in the week, we brought the program forward and began on Tuesday starting from Burrill Lake Lions Park. We saw a few Caspian Terns on a sandbar with **Silver Gulls** and **Crested Terns**. Then followed Garrad Reserve, Narrawallee. The walkway was unstable due to recent flooding. The feature bird there was a **Rufous Fantail**. This is a hotspot with good paths, huge old trees and ends with mangroves at Narrawallee Inlet, but was fairly quiet this time. At the last site, Wilfords Lane south of Milton, we saw three **Black-shouldered Kites** with two in an aerial display. Wilfords Lane dam was on private property and viewed from a distance. A scope would be useful there. The highlights were **Cattle Egrets** and **Royal Spoonbills**. This is a top wetland site but this time had nothing unusual.



Back at the holiday park at 6.15pm, six **White-throated Needleetails** circled slowly overhead.

Wednesday began at Lake Conjola Entrance which had the highest score for the trip of 32 species. Two **Glossy Black Cockatoos** flew over as we arrived. Starting at the end of Lake Conjola Entrance Road we went up a raised walkway to the top of the hill and saw waders and shorebirds on the sandbar including **Pied Oystercatchers, Caspian Terns** and a **Great Egret**. On the beach near the entrance were perfect views of three **Bar-tailed Godwits** feeding on the shoreline and 45 **Red-capped Plovers** and three immature **Double-banded Plovers**.

Next, finding the way into Yatte Yattah Nature Reserve was tricky and we were lucky to have Graeme Austin as our guide. It was in a sorry state from the 2020 fires with dense regrowth of acacias and infested with weeds and tall grass.



Red-capped Plover, Topknot Pigeons

Graeme Austin



Double-barred Plover, Brown Cuckoo-dove Sandra Henderson

About 200m from the carpark we saw an **Australian Raven** feeding a youngster. On the trail towards the west, highlights were **Tree Martins**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** behind the foliage, a **Grey Currawong**, at least 10 **Weebills** and a glimpse of a **Speckled Warbler**. We also saw several **Brown-headed** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**.

In the woodland we saw a **Western Gerygone** and heard and saw two **White-throated Gerygone**. Some of the birds enjoyed posing for us: a **Brown-headed Honeyeater** at the top of a dead branch, and a male **Scarlet Robin** up high in a large eucalypt. Five **Dusky Woodswallows** including at least one juvenile were in foliage and occasionally came to the top of dead branches to perch for insects. A male and female **Rufous Whistler** and a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** were seen in the same tree.

A total of 34 species was recorded.

Judi Millington

Sunday 26 March 2023 - Tinderry NR outing

Mild, overcast and still conditions, perfect for birding, greeted seven COG participants at the Cassidy's Creek area of Tinderry NR near to Burra Road. The sub-alpine woodland there is comprised of healthy-looking scribbly gums, brittle gums and red stringybark, reminiscent of Black Mountain in Canberra. Birding at first was not easy, with few birds seen, and most species only heard. Undeterred, the party walked deeper into the reserve, and as is often the case, birds were found concentrated in a small area closer to the creek itself. A highlight was a mixed feeding flock containing **Scarlet Robins**. The party flushed four **Painted Buttonquail** and a **Spotted Quail-thrush** was briefly seen and heard. A mysterious small green parrot was flushed at one point, though was too quick to enable identification. Small groups of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, with one or two **White-naped Honeyeaters**, were moving through the canopy - suggesting the early stages of migration. In the course of the morning, the party saw and heard some 34 species in this lovely area of woodland.

David Dedenczuk

Fallen logs and rocks were a hazard. The rainforest in the gorge was inaccessible due to steep sides. The fire had passed over it. Giant Stinging Trees with huge, pale green leaves were springing up. The big thrill was a flock of 80 **Topknot Pigeons** chased (unsuccessfully it appeared) by a **Brown Goshawk**. Also seen was a **Green Catbird**, **Figbird** and **White Naped Honeyeaters**. Butterflies seen included Imperial Hairstreak, Brown Ringlet, Black Jezebel and Swordgrass Brown. After lunch Graeme took us to Burrill Lake Rock Cave Forest off Wyoming Avenue, a usually reliable spot for **Brown Cuckoos-doves**. They were not seen but were recorded there on the Thursday afternoon. A house beside the walkway in has a feeder that attracts them each day.

On Thursday 23 March at South Pacific Heathland Reserve Coral Crescent, Ulladulla we were lucky to find a male **Satin Flycatcher**, and four **Glossy Black Cockatoos** were the top sightings. We went on to Bada Dam at Macquarie St, Burrill Lake. It had covered picnic areas, wide footpaths and was full of waterbirds. **Hardheads**, **Pacific Black Ducks** and **Australasian Swamphens** featured here.

The Warden Head walk on Friday morning featured leeches large and small and some colourful fungi. Four **Eastern Reef Herons** flew below one lookout. The total species count over four days was 87. The weather was mild and overcast for much of the time and it was a most enjoyable trip.

Bill Graham

Sunday 26 February – Stromlo Forest Park West

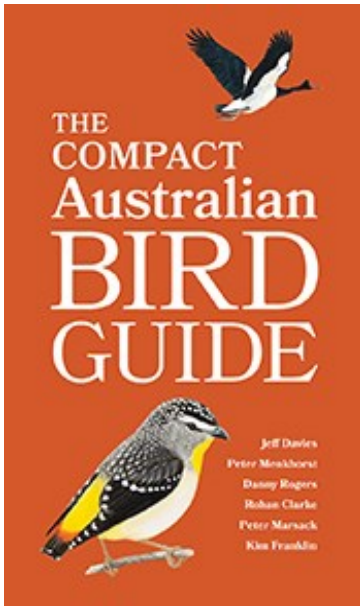
We started 500m uphill of the Stromlo Forest Park Western Carpark. eBird users can click on the Stromlo Forest Park--west hotspot in eBird to find their way there.

Our group of 12 walked from the carpark down Coopers Fire Trail and turned onto TSR Fire Trail directly west towards the river. We walked for an hour in that direction and saw many birds.

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!

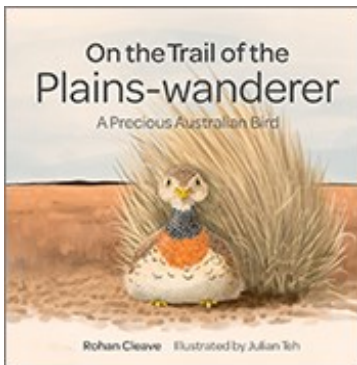
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Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

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 membership

2022-2023 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

P Kibble

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2023 edition:

Wednesday 26 April 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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