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### **Review of the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor Interim Plan of Management (2018-2023)**

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is a volunteer-based community group with around 350 members, with a mission that includes the conservation of native birds and their habitats. COG plays an active role in advocating for the protection of native vegetation and bird habitats, and for the mitigation of threats to and impacts on native birds. COG's specific aims are to:

- encourage interest in, and develop knowledge of, the birds of the Canberra region,
- promote and co-ordinate the study of birds, and
- promote the conservation of native birds and their habitat.

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Interim Management Plan 2018-2023 for the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor. COG's comments largely relate to issues relating to birds and their habitat, as well as some more general points.

COG is providing these comments by direct email as a number of our comments do not fit nicely with the categories established on the TRC Social Pinpoint platform. We therefore request that you provide acknowledgement of receipt of this letter.

#### Bush on the Boundary Reference Group

COG has had input to the management directions and implementation of the Interim Plan of Management through a representative on the 'Bush on the Boundary Reference Group', an initiative under the umbrella of the Ginninderry Catchment Group. There is no reference to the role and importance of the 'Bush on the Boundary Reference Group' in the Interim Plan of Management, and this needs to be addressed in a revised Plan of Management.

#### Monitoring of fauna, especially birds

The Interim Plan of Management set out aspirational guidelines for management of the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor, with an emphasis on the five years from 2018 to 2023. A science-based approach to biodiversity restoration is specified as underpinning management, and reference is made to regulatory and statutory requirements under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), including for Pink-tailed Worm Lizard. However, there is little detail in the Interim Plan of Management about broader fauna issues, including management and monitoring, and little detail about the range of avifauna (bird ) issues in which COG has a special interest.

Section 5.6 of the Interim Plan of Management, covering the Natural Values Monitoring Framework, therefore needs to be revised and updated with sufficient detail on the methods and approach to be used for fauna monitoring, and how monitoring results will inform management. This should cover both the EPBC-listed bird species in the area, and the more common bird species that may be impacted by development.

- COG notes a separate document on the [ginninderry.com](http://ginninderry.com) website, prepared by Umwelt and titled 'Ginninderry Conservation Corridor Ecological Monitoring Framework – April 2021 – Final'. This contains some detail on a proposed biodiversity monitoring framework, with woodland birds dealt with in Section 7. However, it is unclear whether this monitoring program has been agreed, adopted or implemented. This or a similar document need to be given formal status in a revised Plan of Management, then implemented.
- With respect to the monitoring of birds, COG recommends that a robust, systematic program of repeatable surveys needs to be implemented, so that assessment of impacts is not based on ad hoc citizen science such as provided by eBird or Birddata. Those initiatives have their place, but are not appropriate to assess management-induced changes to avifauna over the long term. The COG woodland bird monitoring project ([canberrabirds.org.au/conservation/woodland-birds/cog-woodland-bird-monitoring-project/](http://canberrabirds.org.au/conservation/woodland-birds/cog-woodland-bird-monitoring-project/)) has established methodology suitable for monitoring changes in bird communities in Ginninderry.
- The list of threatened and migratory EPBC-listed bird species provided in Section 3.1.3.6, Table 3, of the Interim Plan of Management needs to be updated. Several woodland bird species have been recently listed under the EPBC Act (including Diamond Firetail, Southern Whiteface, Hooded Robin and Brown Treecreeper). These have potential habitats in the Ginninderry Corridor, and need specific consideration for management.
- The Interim Plan of Management mentions birds of prey in Section 3.1.2, with specific reference to the Little Eagle. COG argues that there is an urgent need for an appropriate study to assess the breeding status of birds of prey more generally within the Ginninderry Corridor, as there are local records of a number of species of birds of prey.

#### Habitat management

COG supports the emphasis in the Interim Plan of Management on the management of habitats, in particular the EPBC-listed Natural Temperate Grassland and EPBC-listed Box-Gum Grassy Woodland.

In addition, riparian (riverside) habitat is of particular importance to birds. The riparian areas at Ginninderry not only provide an example of a habitat rare in the ACT, but are of major importance as a migration corridor for many species of birds, in particular for the species of honeyeater that pass through the area on their migration passages during spring and autumn. Riparian habitats need specific consideration in an updated Plan of Management.

- As noted in the Interim Plan of Management, the Ginninderra Falls and Gorge area provides a high level of biodiversity and ecological integrity. The Black Cypress Pine community and adjoining Box-Gum Grassy Woodland is an unusual combination of habitats not often found in the ACT. This area could well provide a fauna assemblage unique to the Conservation Corridor. Baseline bird surveys and ongoing monitoring need to be specified in an updated Plan of Management, and implemented. In particular, COG recommends surveys of birds breeding in this unique area.

With regard to habitat management in general, there is rightly a major emphasis in the Interim Plan of Management on the need for weed control. However, any weed control management program should take into consideration the bird species that utilise the weeds as a food resource or as cover, such as birds that feed on non-native grasses or roost or shelter in shrubs. Resources provided by weedy species need to be replaced as the weeds are removed, such as by active revegetation with native species. No comprehensive bird species list is provided for the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor, so at present it is difficult to assess the bird species affected.

#### Viewscapes

The Interim Plan of Management gives emphasis to protecting the view from the Belconnen Farm heritage precinct, and needs to give similar emphasis to protecting the view from Shepherds Lookout.

- Although not formally within the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor, Shepherd's Lookout provides a unique perspective of the area. The view from the lookout is frequently used to promote the corridor, and to highlight the benefits of the river corridor and topography to the prospective adjacent urban community.
- However, there are plans for a Visitors Node located in the middle of the view from the Lookout. Although designed to draw on the unique aspects of the Conservation Corridor, this plan needs reconsideration if those unique aspects are not to be degraded by the Visitors Node itself.
- The node is planned to be in an open area adjacent to the Murrumbidgee River, yet there are no indications of any plans to mitigate impacts on viewscapes or how the Visitors Node will relate to the habitat at that location, designated as Pasture Grass/Grasslands. There is concern that, without appropriate design features, particularly in regard to the carpark, the Node will severely impact on the view obtained from the Lookout.

COG can be contacted at: [cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au).

Yours sincerely



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