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### **Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management (2010)**

The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments relevant to the Review of the Namadgi National Park Plan of Management (2010) (POM). COG's comments are brief, and relate mostly to issues relating to birds and their habitats.

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.

COG previously provided comments on a September 2005 Draft Management Plan, which was later published as the 2010 POM. Matters that COG raised in its November 2005 submission remain relevant in the current review, such as the need for explicit principles to underpin management for long-term biodiversity conservation, using updated information on birds to inform management actions, and ensuring appropriate fire regimes.

### **Principles for promoting long-term biodiversity conservation**

COG recommends there be an explicit enunciation of the overarching principles for biodiversity conservation that will underpin the capacity of the Plan to meet its objectives.

- These principles must include a comprehensive framework for the long-term monitoring of birds and other fauna, linked to research priorities. The opportunities after the 2003 bushfires to establish such a comprehensive long-term fauna monitoring framework appears to have been lost.
- These principles should also include understanding the long-term ecological and conservation requirements of particular birds and other fauna inhabiting specialised and/or complex habitats, and the management response to these requirements. This requires identification of species at risk of negative effects from management interventions (such as inappropriate fire regimes), and species at risk from climate change.

## Updated bird-related information

Bird-related information needs to be updated in the new POM. This is essentially Appendices 4 and 5 of the 2010 POM, and some sections which refer to birds such as in Chapter 5.

- Appendix 4: the Table showing the conservation status of various species under threatened species legislation in several jurisdictions (including Commonwealth and ACT) needs to be updated. Several additional bird species have been added to various listings, including Hooded Robin (endangered), Brown Treecreeper (vulnerable), Gang-gang Cockatoo (endangered) and Pilotbird (vulnerable) under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- Appendix 5: the list of bird species recorded in Namadgi NP should be reviewed and updated. Canberra Nature Map, eBird and the Atlas of Living Australia are appropriate sources.
- In regard to Chapter 5, particularly 5.10.7, under a section for birds:
  - Pilotbird is mentioned as a moist montane forest specialist. The status of this species, 'vulnerable' under the EPBC Act and also in ACT legislation, should be updated.
  - The contemporary occurrence and status of Brush Bronzewing in Namadgi NP should be confirmed through public records (such as Canberra Nature Map, eBird, or the Atlas of Living Australia). This species has been reported occasionally since the 2003 bushfires, although numbers are low.
  - Other birds recently listed as 'vulnerable' under the EPBC Act and which occur in Namadgi NP should also be cited, namely Diamond Firetail and Southern Whiteface. These are woodland species occurring in some low-elevation woodlands and valleys.
  - Information on Fuscous Honeyeater should be included. This species has been identified as a 'Conservation Priority Species' in COG's long-term woodland surveys in the ACT peri-urban woodlands (see below). Fuscous Honeyeaters move seasonally between mid-altitude and lowland woodlands; their core breeding habitat in low-elevation woodlands was impacted by bushfires in 2003 and 2020.
  - Flame Robin should also be included, as it is a species at risk from climate change. Flame Robins are altitudinal migrants, breeding in the higher ranges in spring and summer, and moving to lower, milder altitudes in winter where they flock. Numbers of the species are low. More research is needed to determine long-term trends, as little is known about the local or regional numbers, seasonal movements, and preferred winter lowland habitat requirements. Historically, Flame Robins occurred in much larger flocks in lowland habitats in winter.

The Review document on the YourSay website (p.16) proposes research on occurrence of Gang-gang Cockatoo in Namadgi NP, and potential supplementation of breeding habitat. COG supports this research. Gang-gang habitat has been affected by bushfire, reflected in its recent Commonwealth threatened species listing as 'endangered'. The need for research programs for other bird species of concern could also be included.

Finally, COG maintains a long-term woodland survey program, and has recently published a report 'Long-term Trends in ACT Woodland Birds 1998-2019', which is an analysis of COG survey data in collaboration with the ACT Government<sup>1</sup>.

- This report identifies long-term declines in abundance of a number of woodland bird species, including birds regarded as fairly common as well as species listed as threatened under Commonwealth and ACT legislation. The report contains a list of 'Conservation Priority Species'.
- Appropriate reference in the updated POM could be made to this report and its list of Conservation Priority Species, and specifically to Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper and Fuscous Honeyeater, all of which are ranked as species of high conservation priority.

### **Fire management**

Ensuring appropriate fire regimes in bird habitats continues to be an important matter, especially for threatened species and for birds with specialised habitat preferences. This is especially so, given the widespread bushfires in Namadgi NP in 2003 and 2020, and the predictions of higher temperatures and more frequent bushfires under climate change scenarios.

- Fire is a key issue particularly in relation to wet forest birds and forest floor birds, in for example wet gullies, Ribbon Gum forest and Brown Barrel forest. Species of concern include Pilotbird, Red-Browed Treecreeper, Brush Bronzewing and Powerful Owl.
- Fire is also important in the low-elevation woodlands in Namadgi NP. These provide habitat for several bird species including Hooded Robin and Brown Treecreeper (both of which are ACT-listed and Commonwealth-listed threatened species) and Fuscous Honeyeater (a Conservation Priority Species – see above).

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Yours sincerely



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<sup>1</sup> Report available on COG website:  
<https://canberrabirds.org.au/conservation/woodland-birds/cog-woodland-bird-monitoring-project/>