



Gang-gang

FEBRUARY 2024

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday 14 February 2024

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

The February 2024 meeting will be a normal face-to-face one held at our usual venue. As COVID is still widespread in the community 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.

Nicki Taws - Preliminary findings of the 2023 annual COG Bird Blitz,

Damien Farine - Uncovering the secret social lives of birds: the curious case of the Vulturine Guineafowl (and other intriguing species)

The presentations will be preceded by the awarding of the 2022 and 2023 Steve Wilson medals.

The short presentation will be by the Blitz co-ordinator **Nicki Taws** who will present the **preliminary findings of the 2023 annual COG Bird Blitz**, COG's 19th annual territory-wide census of birds of the ACT, and the first one for some years that was conducted under reasonable conditions.

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Everyone welcome

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

For the first seven of the nine weeks from 28 November 2023 to 30 January 2024 the weather continued to be very wet and often stormy (continuing from the previous eight days) but then was dry for the final fortnight. As may be expected the unexpected wet period had an effect on the birds present in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi), with many of the less common inland spring/summer migrants not being recorded. Otherwise, bird activity has been high, helped by the high observer activity, and with a larger number of "unusual" species reported than was the case in spring.

Several of these, which might be considered special birds, attracted a lot of interest during the period. The first of these was the **Australian Little (Black-backed) Bittern** first reported on 10 December by Andrew Francis at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (JWNR). However, it was then not further reported until 27 December by Shorty who managed to get his first

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Australian Little (Black-backed) Bittern

Shorty

FEBRUARY MEETING—*continued from Page 1*

The main presentation will be by **Damien Farine**, Associate Professor, Division of Ecology and Evolution, Research School of Biology at the ANU, on “**Uncovering the secret social lives of birds: the curious case of the Vulturine Guinea-fowl (and other intriguing species)**”

Sociality is widespread in birds. Yet we still know remarkably little about the social lives of most birds. Why do they form groups? How do they move and function as a group? And how do individuals navigate social life? In his talk, Damien will first explain why these questions have been overlooked by biologists for so long, and how we have managed to overcome the challenges that are inherent in addressing them. He will then share his journey of discovery, which has revealed that the answers to these questions are far more fascinating than we could have imagined.

He will give examples from his previous research on mixed-species flocks of Australian thornbills and flocks of tits in ancient English woodlands, but will draw mostly from his current work on (the clearly misnamed) ‘confusions’ of Vulturine Guinea-fowl of East Africa. Vulturine Guinea-fowl are large, highly social, almost completely terrestrial, and - until his research - were completely unstudied. Since starting the project in 2016, he has uncovered how Vulturine Guinea-fowl navigate the politics of their group, how they resolve conflicts about where to move, and that they form societies that have a close structural resemblance to those of humans. As East Africa recently faced one of the most extreme droughts in the past century, this also revealed that the social structure of Vulturine Guinea-fowl might provide important benefits, helping them survive harsh drought conditions.

Finally, to answer how these benefits arise, he will leave the African savannah for some birds that are much closer to home. They recently discovered that the social structure of Superb Fairy-wrens also has the same distinct, ‘human-like’ structural feature. Strikingly, we found that who individuals socialise with during the winter predicts the help that they receive when they are in distress - a pattern that almost exactly matches helping in contemporary hunter-gather societies. These projects, the tools they have developed to study birds, and discoveries that they have made along the way, set the scene for the new research projects that Damien’s group is now developing here in Canberra.

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

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photo and confirm the species the next day. On 30 December Shorty noted that he had first heard them in November and had been searching for them since then. He had spent many, many hours trying to get photos. Andrew’s post made him search even harder and from his observations there were definitely at least three birds, if not more.

Shorty noted it was a great way to end the year’s birding, and from that time up to the end of the period up to three **Australian Little Bitterns** have been reported by many observers, with on 19 January Shorty wondering if there was an active nest in the SE of Kellys Swamp. However, up to the time of writing this had not been confirmed.

COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists it as non-breeding visitor rarely seen in the COG AoI, but with 17 records of a single bird at the JWNR between Nov to Feb that year, as well as a record from the Forde Pond in mid-November. There was a record of carrying food on 2 January, but it needed further corroboration to be accepted as a genuine breeding event. However, the ABR states that Steve Wilson in his book *Birds in the ACT: Two Centuries of Change* notes breeding activity in the past. eBird notes a number of further records from the JWNR since the ABR, but only single records from three other locations.

On 1 January Shorty alerted me that he had received an email from a friend, Richard Jeremy, that he had found two **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. He had sent out text messages to local birders who confirmed the sighting at the Rock Valley homestead, and that it appeared they were feeding a young bird. Subsequently many observers have recorded up to three birds there on eBird, including a number noting an immature that was heard begging and seen being fed on several occasions. More remarkably on 15 January Ben Ward reported that one bird was seen visiting and sitting on a densely woven cup-like nest made of grass and leaves, with Sandra Henderson reporting on 26 January that while only one bird was seen, it returned several times to a nest. She was not sure if it was nest-building or feeding young, as she (quite

correctly) did not want to approach too closely. However, two adults and a juvenile begging for food were still observed there on 29 January.

This is a remarkable find for a species that is listed in the 2018-2019 ABR as a non-breeding vagrant from inland districts. It notes there was one record from the Mt Majura NR that year, with previous records only in 2011 (Gundaroo) and 2010 (Michelago and Mt Ainslie). eBird lists records of up to two birds from only seven locations since, the most recent being one on the Border Track at Mulligans Flat NR on 9 March 2023, though Kym Bradley photographed two birds at her patch to the South of Canberra in October and November.

This is probably the first breeding record for this species in the ACT. Interestingly the BIRD INFO on the COG/Canberra Birds web site does list a non-specified (BLA code) breeding record for July, which seems out of or very early in the season for our colder conditions as Morecombe's *Field Guide to Australian Birds* indicates breeding is from July to January. Note also that Morecombe indicates the **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** nest is a small deep grass and web cup hanging by the rim in leafy tree. I am expecting there will be further observations of this very important find.

The third special species was the **White-winged Black Tern** first reported (and photographed) on 14 January by Ben Milbourne at the JWNR. He noted he was nervous about his posting as it could be radically wrong, but around 17 January the species was confirmed and to 20 January the likely immature bird was seen/photographed by many observers, mainly at the adjacent Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Ponds (FSTP). The 2018-2019 ABR lists it as a rare visitor, a non-breeding vagrant that appeared in low numbers in 2014-2016, but only twice previously in 2009 and 1990. For the 2018-2019 ABR year there was a single report of two birds at the FSTP on 4 November, which is also the most recent record on eBird. So, this is the first record for over five years.

In keeping with the much wetter conditions there have been no further records of the inland species the **Australian Painted-snipe, Black-eared Cuckoo, Red-backed Kingfisher** or **Painted Honeyeater**; in fact there have been no records of these species anywhere close to the COG Aol



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Zachary Flegg



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Good birding, good food

2024 tours

The 2024 Far North Queensland & Strzelecki Track outback tours are full.

Top End Birding Tour 20 June to 3 July 2024

Part 1: Darwin, Kakadu NP, Pine Creek, Katherine,

Part 2: Victoria River, Timber Creek, Kununurra.

+Optional Black Grasswren air charter to Mitchell Plateau from Jununurra

Birders wishing to do just the Mitchell Plateau excursion are welcome to put their names down.

2024 Plains-wanderer Weekends

28 & 29 September 2024

02 & 03 November 2024

Please contact Patricia Maher for information & itineraries.

www.philipmaher.com

during the period. The last **White-browed Woodswallows** reported in the COG Aol were four birds from Evatt on 3 December, and there have been no reports of the **Masked Woodswallow** since late October.

Of the other inland spring/summer migrants usually not widely present during summer, up to five **Brown Songlarks** continued to be reported from eight locations in the Parkwood/West Belconnen Pond area, but otherwise only single birds from two locations on the Wollongorang Rd on 5 January. Up to three **Horsfield's Bushlarks** have been reported from the Parkwood Road area, and a single bird several times from the Wollongorang Rd in January.

Of the rarer coastal spring migrants there were five further reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** from five northside locations, Dickson, Nicholls, Black Mountain NR, Ainslie and Hackett between 1-13 December, but none since. The first **White-throated Needletail** was reported on 25 December, and only from around 10 locations since, with a maximum of 100 (30 otherwise) seen over the upper Cotter River on 26 January, which was actually during the dry period. This is very few considering the many storm fronts that have been around, and amazingly there have been no reports of the related **Fork-tailed Swift**.

So, during February please keep a lookout for the species mentioned above which have only been present in relatively small numbers, and, except for the swift species, are usually also the first to depart. Most of the **White-winged Trillers** and **Rufous Songlarks**, both of which were still regularly reported in January, will also have left by the end of February.

Apart from the three special species mentioned above, there were more “unusual” birds reported than was the case in spring. While no further **Magpie Geese** were recorded, one to two **Freckled Duck** continued to be present at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR up to 5 January. One duck was also present at the West Belconnen Pond from 21 December to 8 January, and two were seen on the western side of Lake George on 11 January.

On 15 December Sandra Henderson saw five **Plumed Whistling-Ducks** disappearing over the bank down to the water at the FSTP. Up to six were then seen by other observers that same day, but on 27 December Christine D photographed eight ducks, mainly in the water, at Paddys Park (West of the Holt Golf Club). Otherwise, two **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported from the Trucking Yard Lane dam on 3 and 17 December and on 4 January. As usual the **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 10 locations from the N through to the E of Canberra during the period, with the maximum being the 150 ducks reported from SW Lake George on 2 January. Good numbers of ducks, an increase over those in spring, were also reported from other locations.

Blue-billed Ducks were again regularly reported from the Upper Stranger Pond during the period, with a maximum of seven (including three ducklings) on 3 January. Up to four ducks were also regularly reported from the JWNR and adjacent FSTP, as were up to two ducks from the West Belconnen Pond between 17 December and 19 January, but by far the highest number was the 28 ducks reported from Lake Bathurst on 20 January. Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 11 locations, with easily the maximum of 15 ducks seen at Lake Bathurst on 20 January (otherwise a maximum of four ducks).



Blue-billed Duck

Ben Milbourne




Image by Cape Koola Arts ©


LET'S CATCH UP

Please join us for an informal
Canberra Birds social evening at the

PUBLIC (bar & dining)
located at 1/33 Flinders Way, Griffith
(across from Coles)

4th WED of each month (7 to 9 PM)
next date: **FEBRUARY 28th**

Look for the table with binoculars on it



EVERYONE WELCOME

Great-crested Grebes were reported from five locations, the maximum being eight birds at Lake Bathurst (well down from the 55 there in November), with the next highest being six (all adults it seems) at the Cotter Dam, and mostly singles elsewhere.

Stubble Quail were reported from around 60 locations during the period, significantly up from the eight locations in November, the tall grass resulting from the wet period clearly boosting their numbers. **Brown Quail** were reported from around 40 locations, again well up from the 18 in November. In contrast up to two **Painted Button-quail** were reported from only three locations, the same number as in November. Again, no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

Up to three **Brush Bronzings** were reported from the Pierces Creek Forest during the period, with single birds reported from two other locations to the W of the Murrumbidgee River. Up to two **Peaceful Doves** were reported from the Cotter Rd to the W of Canberra between 10-15 January, but there were no **White-headed Pigeons, Diamond** or **Bar-shouldered Doves** reported during the period.

There were multiple daily sightings of the **Baillon's Crake** at the JWNR, with a maximum of seven on 28 December. However, the only other report was of a single bird at the Hollows Circuit Pond, Macgregor on 17 December. This is well down from the six other locations in November. Up to five **Spotless Crakes** were also regularly reported from the JWNR, and up to three crakes at seven other locations, well up from the single location in November. The **Australian Spotted Crake** was also reported almost daily from the JWNR, with a remarkable maximum of 11 birds there on 5 January, as well as up to two birds from four other locations. Up to three **Buff-banded Rails** were also regularly reported from the JWNR and up to two birds recorded from eight other locations (similar to November). In contrast to November when no **Lewin's Rails** were reported, up to two birds were recorded from six locations, including the JWNR.

Up to seven **Banded Lapwings** were reported from the Wollogorang Rd during January, the only location during the period. Up to 24 **Pied Stilts** were reported from seven locations, with similar numbers at several other locations, but only up to two birds at the JWNR, the only ACT location. No **Red-necked Avocets, Comb-crested Jacana, Pectoral** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, or **Red-necked Stint** were reported during the period. However, the **Common Sandpiper** was regularly reported from the Village Creek inlet at Lake Tuggeranong, especially after New Year with many observers keen to add it to their 2024 ACT bird list.

Caspian Tern were reported from four locations, the first being a single bird at Bowen Park on 10-11 December, then up to three birds regularly at the JWNR/FSTP from 12-30 December, and a single bird at Acacia Inlet on 21 January. However, again no **Whiskered Tern** were reported during the period.

No **Little Egret** was again reported during the period, and a **Plumed** (formerly **Intermediate**) **Egret** was reported only from the JWNR between 5 December and 14 January, as well as a single bird from Lake Bathurst on 20 January. In contrast **Great Egrets** were reported from around 20 locations. **Royal Spoonbills** were reported from around 11 locations, and up to four **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from three locations, well down from the eight in November. Two **Glossy Ibis** were reported from the West Belconnen Pond only on 15 December.

A **Barn Owl** was reported only from suburban Macarthur on 8 January. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from around 60 locations (up from 50 in November). Single **Black Kites** were reported from the northern side of the COG AoI from four locations during the period, and a **Spotted Harrier** was reported by two observers from the Majura Rd on 10 January (surprisingly no-one else seems to have been able to locate it). There were no reports of the **Pacific Baza, Grey Goshawk** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was reported by a number of observers from three spots on the Cotter Reserve from 13 December, as well as one at Casuarina Sands on 18 January, and one at the Tidbinbilla NR between 24-29 January. Three **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** were reported flying low towards the W at Illilanga on 15 January, but no **Cockatiel, Turquoise Parrots, Greater Bluebonnets** and **Purple-crowned, Scaly-breasted** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period. However, **Musk**

Lorikeets were reported from around nine locations (well up from the one in November), with easily the most around the Wanniasa Hills Primary School, where up to 18 birds were recorded, compared with a maximum of two elsewhere.

A male **Scarlet Honeyeater** was last reported from the ANBG on 29 December, but then up to two birds were reported from Campbell Park between 4-14 January. Three **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, two adults and an immature, were reported from Hughes on 9 and 12 December, as well as two birds at the Southlands Shopping Centre, Mawson on 16 January. A **Little Friarbird**, the first record in the COG AoI for 2023, was reported from the Clancy's Walking Track, Mt Majura on 9 December, and subsequently reported by a number of observers to 14 December, with two birds present at the end. However, no **Singing Honeyeaters** were reported during the period.

On 12 December Sandra Henderson reported that she had just seen/heard a **Brown Gerygone** near the final bridge at the top of the rainforest gully at the ANBG. This was a very surprising summer observation as it's generally considered to be a very unusual "reverse altitudinal" migrant, present in the ACT from the coast during the winter period. eBird from 2018 shows that in COG AoI it has only been reported from the ANBG in 2018 (plus a couple from the JWNR) and in 2023, all of which are between April to September, though eBird does show a couple of late spring/summer records from the Tallaganda area. Surprisingly there was only one further report of this species, with one photographed at the ANBG on 26 December.

In the ACT up to three **White-fronted Chats** were reported only from four locations in the Molonglo area, with reports from five other locations to the E and NE, the highest being the 14 reported from Lake Bathurst on 20 January. **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens** were reported from three locations: one bird from the Uriarra Rd Stromlo on 29 December, a single bird from the Cuumbeun NR between 2-5 January, and four birds from Whiskers Creek Rd, Carwoola on 9 January. A **Tawny Grassbird** was photographed at the West Belconnen Pond on 20 January (again it is surprising no one else has subsequently observed it), but no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo** or **Zebra Finches** were reported during the period.

While more species were observed over the period, again there were relatively few "unusual" bush birds, in particular raptors and parrots as shown by the above four paragraphs.

Of the species I have asked readers to keep a special lookout for, **Jacky Winters** were reported from four known locations during the period, with a number of sightings of up to two birds (on 1 January one being a juvenile with still some mottling on the wings) from the Glendale Depot between 1-14 January, a single bird at the Gambles TSR Sutton on 1 January, and three birds from Illilanga on 3 December, as well as single birds there on 20 December and 15 January. The pair in Kym Bradley's patch to the S of Canberra successfully fledged two young. The **Hooded Robin** was reported from three known locations, up to three birds at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd between 2-23 January, and a female bird at Illilanga on 15 January. However, most exciting was Kym Bradley reporting that on 7 December her pair to the S of Canberra had fledged three young.

Restless Flycatchers were reported from two known locations, a single bird at Mullion on 5 December and up to five birds regularly at the Nelanglo TSR during the period. On 20 December Michael Lenz reported with pleasure that the pair at the Nelanglo TSR had two fledglings with half-length tails. They were subsequently reported feeding young there up to 3 January.

While these three threatened species have been only reported from a small number of locations, it is good to see breeding records for all three, they are often harder to locate in spring/summer possibly because they are breeding. The considerable rainfall resulting in improved conditions have probably prolonged the breeding season, and apart from the **Blue-billed Duck**, **Spiny-cheeked** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** above, the following are mentioned:

- On 3 December Patrick Cox posted photos on eBird of a male **Red-capped Robin** at Bluett's Block carrying food to a nest with two chicks. Unfortunately, Angela Bishop informed me that the nest was vacant two days after Patrick's photo, with no sign of the young, so it appears they were predated rather than fledged.
- In late December Line Perrins edited her 16 December eBird list to add that two **Red-capped Robin** chicks had fledged at the Gungaharra Grasslands NR around 22-23 December. She had not disclosed them previously as someone had decided to snap branches around the nest, she assumed for their photography high! eBird records show that these fledglings seemed to have survived with postings of them from 5-22 January. Earlier Line also posted on eBird a pair feeding fledged young there on 12 November.
- On 11 December a **Spotted Dove** was seen feeding a young bird close to our house in Chapman. It was the first time I have seen this in my GBS/local area, though there have been some displaying observations before, including in July and September 2023. The BIRD INFO on COG web site only has four records for display, and one each of nest building, on/leaving nest or dependent young, all in October, but also one of nest with eggs in October and January and nest with

young in February. Over 10 years ago this species used to be found in typical places at the extremities of my regular dog walks, but from then seem to be now concentrated in a 400 m radius centred on my GBS site. However, there is no real evidence of a significant increase in numbers, in particular compared with the **Rock Dove** whose local numbers seem to have gone up exponentially over the past 10 years.

- From 17-31 December there were reports of **Superb Parrots** feeding young from Mt Majura NR, the Phillip Pool/Ice Rink, Yerrabi Pond, Hackett (where they were spending a lot of time in a big dense ash tree), Deakin and the National Gallery. The question arose as to where they had been bred, considering especially as the southside observations were well away from their known breeding sites at Throsby and Kama. To my knowledge these remain the only breeding spots showing how mobile these young parrots can be.
- Up to the time of writing there have been 36 **Eastern Koel** fledglings reported in the COG AoI to my knowledge for the season. This includes one at the Riverbank Park in Yass, the first I can recall for that town. I finally confirmed my first **Eastern Koel** fledgling on 27 January in Rivett when I found it calling in a dense exotic tree and soon saw it fed by its **Red Wattlebird** host (as all other known hosts have been).
- A feature, which has also been shared by some other reporters this season, was the presence of active adult Koels nearby. On hearing the characteristic kek keks and whoas, a female flew very low and close by me pursued by two males. This was about 200 m from the fledgling but just before I found the latter, both calls were heard very close by (<50 m). As well as I was leaving a female flew calling to a tree about 25 m away, with male calls as well.
- Adult **Eastern Koels** have been active on four occasions in the area, both sexes were seen or heard very close by on 24 January when I could hear but not see the fledgling calling high in a gum, and the next day and on 30 January during unsuccessful searches. This is the first time I have witnessed adult Koels near fledglings for some years. While there was no actual interaction seen, particularly as very unusually adult **Eastern Koels** have been very active in my local area throughout January with up to four birds regularly heard and up to three seen, it does seem that the chances are higher that their presence close on four occasions is just co-incidence.
- The good season has been underlined by Kym Bradley reporting successful breeding at her patch to the S of Canberra, including for the following species (adding to the two above) **Southern Whitefaces, Brown Treecreepers, Fairy Martins, Dusky Woodswallows, Diamond Firetails, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Wedge-tailed Eagle** and **European Goldfinches**.



Fuscous Honeyeater

Zachary Flegg



Eurasian Coot

Marcus Hellyer

Despite all the breeding mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have been reported during the period. On her Tuggeranong Hill COG Woodland Survey on 2 December Lia Battison encountered a small MFF comprising a juvenile **Eastern Spinebill, Grey Fantails, Weebills, White-browed Scrubwren, Silvereyes** and **Superb Fairy-wrens**. On 30 December David Rosalky reported that after weeks of seeing few birds, especially small birds, in his GBS precinct in Deakin, life had suddenly picked up somewhat, including a MFF of six species the day before. Our local **Red Wattlebirds** have been much fewer/less aggressive over the period during which there has been a small MFF in my garden comprising of up to three **Eastern Spinebills** (including juveniles), a couple of **Brown Thornbills, White-browed Scrubwrens** (one of which has regularly and vigorously attacked our TV room window, sometimes for over an hour) and **Silvereyes**, as well as up to five **Superb Fairy-wrens**. As far as I can tell the latter have not bred, with for much of the time two pairs being seen in very close company with each other.

In respect of large flocks, we are already seeing flocks of over 50 **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** around our local patch of Chapman/Rivett. Also, late morning on 9 January Andrea and I counted a conservative estimate of 400 **Little Black Cormorants** in Yarralumla Bay, with most being on the ramp and shore of the Canberra rowing club, with around 30 on shore to the E and

another 100 swimming in the bay near the outlet for Yarralumla Creek/drain. High numbers of this species have been reported for LBG, but this is the largest together.

As a follow up to the large number of **Pied Currawongs** (PC) that predated the **Australian Hobby** nest described in my December 2023 column, at 08:47 h on 23 December I heard PCs and watched at least 15 flying, mainly singly, from Cooleman Ridge towards Darwinia Tce Chapman. I thought there may be a **Brown Goshawk** or **Barn Owl** but on checking found at least 30 PCs there, mainly in hakeas at the edge of two houses. There was not much movement in there and no clear cause of the ruckus, which had quietened down by 09:15 h. Again, where the PCs came from and they went to is a mystery, as there were very few around before, and even fewer since.

So, during February please watch out for more of the early spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for MFFs and large numbers of single species, for roost sites and flights, and in particular for late summer breeding activity with birds likely to continue to take advantage of the very good rain that fell over the period, even if it does remain dry. 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

2024 marks COG's 60th anniversary. A very impressive birthday and an important milestone that Canberra Birds will be celebrating. Events and activities will be announced throughout the year.

The first Committee meeting for 2024 was held on the 18th of January and starts a new year with a new look Committee. Zachary Flegg, Julie Hotchin, Ben Milbourne and Kim Farley joined the Committee during 2023 and are now getting into their stride with Committee business. All are working on various Canberra Birds activities and projects, including a new social event for COG members and bird enthusiasts alike, as well as getting back into the swing of social media through our Facebook Page (Canberra Ornithologists Group). None of this would be possible without the continuing commitment and experience of our long-term Committee members— Jenny Bounds, Brittany Brockett, Bill Graham, Steve Read, Margaret Robertson and Prue Watters.

Neil Hermes *President*

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 13 February

You are invited to Canberra Birds monthly Coffee and Chat at the Australian National Botanic Gardens cafe.

Come along any time between 9:30 and 11:30.

All welcome – experienced birders, new and would-be birders, locals and visitors.

Look for the table with the binoculars on it.



Back-up Wanted for Gang-gang Newsletter Layout Editor

If you are interested in helping to produce the Gang-gang Newsletter from time to time, such as when the Layout Editor takes leave, please contact gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au or text Gail on 0499901952 for details.

The newsletter is produced in MS Publisher at the end of each month. You can work using your own computer or CanberraBirds computer.

Canberra Birds shines at the Australian Ornithological Conference - Nov 2023, Brisbane

The 12th [Australasian Ornithological Conference](#) (AOC) was held in Brisbane/Meanjin in late November 2023. Over 750 people attended, and the event was busy, interesting and social - and with a good mix of professional and amateur papers across four concurrent streams.

For the first time, Canberra Birds (COG) sponsored two people to attend the Conference. This was done through a competitive process advertised in Gang-gang back in July 2023. The Committee was delighted to support PhD students Brendah Nyagahii and Lisa Fontana, both from ANU and doing work respectively on our local White-winged Choughs and Sulphur Crested Cockatoos.

They did us and themselves proud—Lisa presenting a paper and Brendah a poster session. This was not a requirement of our sponsorship, but they both ran with the opportunity that COG provided them.

Brendah and Lisa will be presenting their impressions of the Conference and a brief overview of their PhD projects at the **March COG meeting**.

More generally, Canberra Birds folk were at AOC in strength, with Peter Fullagar and Chris Davey attending as delegates. Papers were presented by Neil Hermes, Nick Nichols and Kim Farley.

The not-so-common Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Many COG members have ventured out to Tuggeranong to see the single Common Sandpiper, which I found at Isabella Pond on the 7th of October 2019. The bird (almost certainly the same individual) has come back every year since, and now spends the summer near the silt trap where Village Creek enters Lake Tuggeranong. When disturbed it flies down the creek, sometimes as far as the floating vegetation beds near the first island.

When I first spotted the bird, in the company of a Pied Stilt, it was only the third Common Sandpiper I'd ever seen, and the others had been a very long way from Canberra. Initially uncertain about the ID and having noted that one had not been seen in Canberra for over 10 years, I sent an email to the COG chatline, saying there was a "possible Common Sandpiper" at the pond. Birders more learned than I soon arrived at Isabella Pond and confirmed the ID.



Common Sandpiper

Sandra Henderson

These birds breed in Europe and Asia and occasionally in Africa, and very few have ever over-wintered in southern Australia. I wonder where our little bird goes. The fact that it has decided it likes its spot at the end of the lake is unusual – they are more common along the coast and there are few eBird records from NSW west of the Great Divide. eBird records are primarily from Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

They forage in shallow water and on muddy edges, and often take shelter or roost among exposed roots, such as the casuarinas at Village Creek. They seem to like rocky areas, and the Village Creek bird can sometimes be seen close to the large rocks below the silt trap, or even wandering along the top of the gratings.

Sandra Henderson

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 3 December 2023 – North Coombs Ponds

Fourteen people including a couple of new members attended on a warm sunny morning, after days of rain leading up to the day.

On the largest pond Sandra spotted a pair of **Pink-eared Duck** that flew in and landed as we skirted the edge. Then we wandered down to the Molonglo River checking out the local song birds at the rear of the RSPCA. There were **Superb Fairy-wren** and one **Golden-headed Cisticola** amongst other species. We walked further along to another crossing over the river and confirmed an **Australian Reed Warbler** feeding young.

Good sightings of several species awaited us at the upper pond including several active **Welcome Swallow** nests under the footbridge. There was a family of **Australian Grebe** with two very small chicks.

We then walked down a couple of streets in suburbia down to the causeway and around to the southern end of the lower ponds. There were mostly **Pacific Black Duck** squatting on the concrete walls enjoying the warm sunny day along with the other residents.

Other interesting birdlife included three **Pacific Koel**, two **Eurasian Coot** chicks, one **Black-shouldered Kite**, five **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**, two **Rufous Whistler** and several **Fairy Martin** nests. A total of 43 species was recorded.

Anne Fulker



Black-fronted Dotterel, Australasian Grebe *Marcus Hellyer*

Sunday 10 December 2023 - North Mulligans Nature Reserve

Fourteen new and recently-joined members attended this beginners' outing. Binoculars were supplied and instructions given for their use. An introduction to the pocket Field Guide to Birds of the ACT by Taylor and Day was given prior to the walk. The aim was to identify birds from each of the following groups: wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, parrots and cockatoos, black and white birds, and small birds. The highlights were good views of a male **Scarlet Robin** and a **White-throated Gerygone** calling and flying nearby. The field guides proved to be useful aids as a source of reference during the walk.

Bill Graham

Sunday 14 January - Warks Road and Bendora Road

Twenty people came along to the COG Warks/Blundells Rd trip on Sunday 14 January. The weather was cool but luckily there didn't seem to have been as much rain as in Canberra the night before. Unfortunately, the gate at the top of Blundells Creek Rd was locked - though it was open the day before! A quick route change took us up to Piccadilly Circus, then to Bulls Head Picnic Area for a short unproductive stop (too few birds). We then headed down Bendora Rd and on to Warks where the birding improved. Highlights included great views of an adult **Red-browed Treecreeper** feeding a youngster, four **Cicadabirds** heard and one glimpsed, and nice views of **Varied Sittella**. Lots of **White-naped Honeyeaters** were about, along with **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** and several **Superb Lyrebirds** calling. We also heard **Pilotbirds** in full song and several of us heard a **Wonga Pigeon** calling high up in the forest. Some of the group continued on to lower Warks Rd and found nesting **Eastern Shrike-tit** and several **Satin Flycatchers**! It was a sometimes frustrating morning but lovely to be in the mountains birding with friends.

Kim Farley



Members and guests at BMNR

Julie Hotchin

Sunday 21 January - Black Mountain Nature Reserve

On a glorious sunny, warm morning, 20 people joined me to explore the north-west section of Black Mountain Nature Reserve. The warm morning meant that it was relatively quiet; several species were heard but too elusive to offer good views.

Several **Striated Thornbills** were heard in the bushes at the starting point on Belconnen Way. The distinct four note call of a **Sacred Kingfisher** could be heard as we walked on the Powerline Trail and, after following a bush track to connect to the Link Trail, we saw four **Australian Wood Ducks** perched in eucalypts and some of the group heard a **Common Bronzewing**. Further along the Link Trail there were good views of **Leaden Flycatchers** with young: a male feeding one young and a female with a juvenile. Two more were heard further along the trail.

Continuing on the Link Trail, a single **Little Pied Cormorant** flew overhead, in the direction of the dam near the Aranda Snowgums, and we had good views of **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** and **Noisy Friarbirds**. A **Brown-headed Honeyeater** was heard calling, as were **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**. Empty [or unused?] raven nests on the electricity pylons and two unused, probably magpie, nests were also seen. Winding through the bush on the return leg, there was a great view of a **Grey Butcherbird** on a limb tackling a large insect as well as **Buff-rumped**

and **Brown Thornbills**. A few members of the group also saw a juvenile **Olive-backed Oriole**. Parrot species seen or heard were **Galah**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** and **Crimson Rosellas**, one of which climbed in and out of a hollow before flying off with another. A pair of **Australian King Parrots** were also seen flying through the bush and were heard several times during the walk. A total of 28 species was recorded for the morning.

Around half of the group were new COG members or people who'd seen or heard the walk promoted on social media and/or ABC radio, and who came along to learn more. Many thanks to Lia Battison for recording the eBird list, and to Lia, Sandra Henderson, Margaret Robertson and Julian Robinson for their assistance in keeping track of the group and answering their questions.

Julie Hotchin



The eight card designs:

- **Australian magpie** at the National Arboretum Canberra
- **Australian white ibis** at the National Carillon, Canberra
- **Bush-stone curlews** at Mulligans Flat Woolshed
- **Crimson rosellas** at the National Gallery of Australia Skyspace
- **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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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 5 days, or have any Covid, cold or flu symptoms.

Sunday 4 February - Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR – World Wetlands Day

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope. **Meet** at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

NB: this walk is flat and is wheelchair-friendly.

Register at chris_davey@aapt.net.au with your name, mobile number and name and number of an emergency contact.

Chris Davey

Sunday 11 February - Moncrieff Ridge

This will be a short walk under 3kms for about 2 hours. **Meet** at 7.45am at the Amaroo District Playing Fields carpark off Horse Park Drive. **Registration** is essential. Please provide your name and mobile phone number as well as emergency contact name and number. Limited numbers. Book your place with Bill on bsgraham1948@gmail.com. Bring hat, sunscreen, sturdy footwear and morning tea.

Bill Graham

Sunday 18 February 2024 – Gungahlin Hill

Description: Gungahlin Hill is a woodland area rising on the western edge of the Gungahlin Grasslands Nature Reserve. This will be an opportunity to wander through open forest and grassy woodland areas, where we will aim to see a variety of parrots and other woodland bird species.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2543552>

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at the stile on Cocoparra Cres in Crace, near the intersection with Nuleri St. There is plenty of street parking available.

Walk details: An easy-moderate walk of approximately 3-4 kms on established tracks, with some hilly sections.

What to bring: Water, morning tea, binoculars, sturdy footwear, sun protection (hat, sunscreen, sunglasses).

Registration: Please register with Lachlan by email (poephila@outlook.com), no later than Friday 16 February 2024. Participants should provide their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.
Lachlan Duncan

Wednesday 21 February – Mulligans Flat - evening walk

We will try again for an evening walk at Mulligans Flat, after the January outing had to be cancelled because of the wet conditions. In 2023 the evening walk was very pleasant, although we did not manage to find any night birds. There is always a chance of **Southern Boobook** or **Bush Stone-Curlew**. We will walk a fairly flat, easy loop of about 5km. **Meet** at 7.00 pm at the reserve entry on Eric Wright St, Forde, where there are parking bays. Sunset will be just before 8pm, so we'll see the dams near the woolshed in daylight, and be walking the last part of the outing in darkness. We will finish around 9pm. Make sure you have sturdy shoes, a torch and, given recent wet conditions, insect repellent may be advisable.

Numbers will be limited to 20 participants (more than that had registered in January, so early registration is advisable!)

Please register with the leader by Monday 19 February, with your name and number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson (shirmax2931@gmail.com)

Sunday 25 February – Mount McDonald

Meet at 8.30am in the carpark on Brindabella Rd (off Cotter Rd, between the Cotter Bridge and Cotter Reserve). We will walk up the track, across the Mt McDonald track and up to the Cotter Dam lookout, then return to the Mount McDonald Track and walk up to the trig. The walk is uphill most of the way, but not too difficult. The initial section from the carpark can produce **Spotted Quail Thrush** and **Common Bronzewing**s, and on the management track back to the carpark on the return from the trig I once encountered a family of **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens**. About 5km of walking in total, so sturdy shoes, hat, suncream and water are essential. Bring morning tea and we will stop at the top for a short break. **Registration** essential – name and number for yourself and an emergency contact to Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 3 March – Rendezvous Creek, Namadgi National Park

Description: This is a beautiful walk through a range of habitats in Namadgi – bubbling mountain brooks, open grassland and woodland. There are records of some of the more unusual honeyeaters for our region: **Fuscous**, **Crescent** and **Brown-headed**. There are also **Flame Robins** and **Scarlet Robins**, the chance of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and Lia saw a **Swamp Harrier** here last September.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L6082099?yr=all&m=>

Meeting time and place: 7.30 am at Isabella Plains Supabarn for carpooling. Rendezvous Creek car park is quite small and won't fit a lot of cars. It is a further 35 min / 40km drive from the meeting spot so please be punctual.

Walking distance: 3.2 km

Degree of difficulty: Easy/medium (can be a bit wet in patches if it's been raining).

End time (approx.): 11am. If we finish at Rendezvous Creek early we can have a look around the Glendale Depot and Gudgenby River, which is just back up the road a little.

What to bring: Water, morning tea, hat, sunscreen.

Registration: Participants must register with the leader at least 24 hours before the start of the field trip, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact;

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Marcus Hellyer (0418 264 868 / pickelbarrel@gmail.com)

Sunday 10 March – Mt Rogers

Meeting place/time: Meet at the carpark in Wickens Place, Fraser at 9am

Description: On tracks amongst mixed Eucalypt/shrub vegetation. Surface is uneven. Some steep sections. Rated easy/medium.

Distance 2-3 km and duration about 2 hrs.

Sturdy shoes, long pants, hat and water are recommended for this walk.

Numbers not limited but **please register** by 9 March at chamoisnz@gmail.com providing your name and mobile number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Kirsty Craven 0405 319 917 or 6258 3133

Sunday 17 March - One Tree Hill, Hall

Description: The Canberra Centennial Trail is a 140 km walking/cycling trail which takes in many of the landmarks of the ACT. On the northern side it passes through Hall and travels north-east, parallel to the New South Wales/ACT border. We will walk the Trail from Hall to One Tree Hill. It is a steady uphill climb, and the last section to the summit is quite steep. Some people may choose not to walk the last two hundred metres.

Meeting place and time: Meet at the Centennial Trail Trackhead, at the north-eastern end of Hoskins St, Hall at 8:20 for an 8:30 start.

Walking distance: Six kilometres, including return.

End time (approx.): 11:30

What to bring: Water, morning tea, sunscreen, hat and sturdy shoes.

Please **register** with the leader, Lia Battison by email to liabattison@outlook.com, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Please do so **before 7pm on Friday 15 March**, as numbers will be limited to 15.

Tuesday 19 - Friday 22 March 2024 - Cowra, Central Western Slopes, NSW

Cowra is 185 kms north of Canberra. Sites will include Barryrennie Road, Conimbla National Park, Cowra Sewage Treatment Plant, Wyangala Dam and Cowra Japanese Garden. Target species include **Black-chinned Honeyeater, Chestnut-rumped and Inland Thornbills, Turquoise Parrot and Ground Cuckooshrike**. We plan to stay at Cowra Caravan Park <https://www.cowravanpark.com.au/Home> ph 02 6342 1627. There are cabins available, as well as sites for tents, camper trailers, caravans, etc. Numbers limited. **To register** for this trip and further information, please contact Bill Graham at bsgraham1948@gmail.com

Please register asap as accommodation may be in high demand and bookings will need to be made very soon. Do not book accommodation until your registration is confirmed.

Bill Graham and Kim Farley

Sunday 24 March – Mt Jerrabomberra

Meet at 8.30am in the parking area at the start of Jerrabomberra Hill Rd (which is off Halloran Drive just past Esmond Ave).

This is a fairly easy 2.5km walk to the summit up a well-maintained unsealed road. COG has not visited since April 2019. The walk will take 2-3 hours. Bring a snack and we'll have a short break at the summit, which offers wonderful views. 80 species have been recorded on the mountain, with **Gang-gangs Cockatoos** seen often, and I've seen a **Rufous Fantail** in the past near one of the gullies. As usual, wear sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen.

Register at shirmax2931@gmail.com before Saturday 23 March, with name and phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Thursday 28 March to Monday 1 April - Easter at Bimbimbi River Camp

This camp will be on the Upper Murray, near Walwa, about 300km from Canberra. The property has 3km of access to the Murray River, with campsites set back from the river and Crown land along the riverbank. There are no facilities, except a toilet, so you will need to take everything else you need, including water, and take everything out, including your rubbish. Activities for the three full days are still in the planning stage.

Note that this trip is fully booked but if you would like to go on the waiting list, contact Marcus.

To **register**, contact Marcus Hellyer at pickelbarrel@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact (ie. someone who will not be travelling with you).

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Woodland Surveys – early summer 2023 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

The official woodland survey period at the end of November/early December 2023, coincided with a strong low-pressure system from the north-west moving through, with significant rainfall over several days (up to 150mm) and lingering thunderstorms and showers. The surveys had to be undertaken around the problematic weather, mostly over the first week of December.

(Note: not all sites are reported.)

Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on the site on Sunday 3rd of December, at the tail end of the prolonged low system. They were lucky to have a clear morning, on arrival almost perfect conditions, clear sunny skies and little wind. The birds were very active and calling and most sites had good counts, the total species for the morning was sixty-three. There were a couple of regulars missing this time (**Common Starlings** for one) and this was the highest December survey species total since 2015 (sixty-nine). As the team finished morning tea and prepared to leave, rain clouds started to come in from the south-west.

On arrival as they parked at the Woolshed, a **Pallid Cuckoo** and **Dollarbird** were calling and seen, and a **Sacred Kingfisher** also vocal just north of the Woolshed. The off-site Woolshed environs ended up with 30 species. A highlight was at least 3 **Brush Cuckoos** calling around the Woolshed area to the west ridge; one was recorded in the site 3 count not far from the Woolshed. Brush Cuckoos are recorded on the December survey most years (they are known to parasitise cup nests – such as **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Grey Fantail**). Four cuckoo species were recorded on the survey, with both **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**. A **Red-capped Robin** calling, and a **Scarlet Robin**, were also highlights in the central flat area. **Superb Parrots** were highlights on the west ridge circuit, with two recorded during the site 6 count, and an **Eastern Koel** heard calling nearby. The usual common waterbirds were recorded on or around the dams, especially the large dam.

Other species of interest included: **Speckled Warbler**, **Grey Currawong** and **Common Bronzewing**. A **Bush Stone-curlew** was heard on the central quartz-ridge near site 19; both **Collared Sparrowhawk** (two at a nest) and **Brown Goshawk** on the large dam circuit of sites. As well as one record of **Mistletoebird** at site 18 near the central ridge. **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** were the only small honeyeater species recorded.

Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve (Northern Area)

Nicki Taws surveyed the northern half of the reserve on Sunday the 3rd of December. A fine mild morning after the rain deluge the week prior. As often occurs, there was run-off from the hills, drainage lines were flowing, and water was sheeting across the ground; feet were thoroughly wet before the first site was finished. A total of forty-five species were recorded for the morning.



Common Bronzewing

Zachary

Superb Parrots were seen and heard multiple times, including within two of the sites, and others flying over four of the other sites. One **Scarlet Robin** was heard calling. Summer migrants included **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Rufous Whistler**. **Noisy Friarbirds** were common but the only other honeyeater species recorded was a single **Brown-headed Honeyeater**. Although most of the usual **Thornbill** species, **Weebill** and **Grey Fantail** were recorded, they seemed in low abundance, only being recorded at one or two sites whereas they normally turn up at half the sites. No raptors were recorded.

Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve (Southern Area)

The final woodland survey for the year was done by Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley on the 7th of December in very pleasant conditions – partly cloudy, mild and with little wind. The reserve was still damp after the recent heavy rain, with lush plant growth and water in creeks and dams. A total of fifty species were recorded, with forty-two of these during point counts, compared to 59 and 40 for December 2022.

Interesting records during the 10-minute counts included a **Dollarbird** heard from site 5, a species with remarkably few records during these surveys, a **Golden-headed Cisticola** calling near site 1, and two noisy and rather uncoordinated young **Brown Goshawks** at site 4. **Noisy Friarbirds** were in good numbers, other summer migrants recorded were **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Whistler**, **White-winged Triller**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Shining Bronze Cuckoo**. The decline in cuckoo records since spring was quite noticeable. Up to 4 **White-eared Honeyeaters** were seen, also **Yellow-faced** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. Incidental records included **Nankeen Kestrel**, 2 **Black-shouldered Kites** and **Mistletoebird**.

Mount Majura Nature Reserve

The surveys were conducted over a few days, dodging the rain, by Kathy Walter, John Goldie and Peter Miller. The majority were surveyed on 5 December under a warm and sunny sky. Birds seemed very active with **Pied Currawongs**, **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Australian Ravens** calling loudly. As in past surveys smaller birds were few in numbers compared to the larger species. Overall thirty-four species were seen or heard in the survey sites. Of note was a **Brown Goshawk**, many **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds** at a couple of sites, two **Speckled Warblers** at one site, and a **Sacred Kingfisher** was heard. The Native Cherries (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) had ripe berries on them with at least 8 species feeding on fruit or using the trees: **Superb Parrot**, **Eastern Rosella**, **Rainbow Lorikeet**, **Brown Thornbill**, **Red Wattlebird**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Pied Currawong** and **Noisy Miner**.

Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve /Campbell Park

The lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie were surveyed by Michael Lenz on the 6th of December, a calm and warm to hot morning. The rains had allowed the weeds to speed up their growth. The most widespread bird species across the nine sites were: **Crimson Rosella** (7 sites), **Noisy Friarbird** and **Grey Fantail** (6), **Weebill**, **Striated Pardalote** and **Noisy Miner** (5). Notable species were **Dollarbird**, **Brown Goshawk**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and an adult male **Red-capped Robin**. Equally notable was the absence of species, such as **Common Bronzewing**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **White-throated Treecreeper** and **Speckled Warbler**. A couple of species, regularly recorded by various observers in good numbers until relatively recently, had moved on: **Olive-backed Oriole** and **White-winged Triller** (except for one pair). **Australian Magpie** and **Noisy Miner** were the only species with fledglings. Thirty-seven species were recorded in total (twenty-nine at sites and eight between sites).

Majura Field Range

On Friday 24 November, Kim Farley, Barbara Allan, and Sue Beatty visited the Majura Defence Training Area for the quarterly survey. It was an overcast still morning, but despite taking raincoats, no rain fell. They recorded forty-one species across the eight survey sites. The highlight was five **Pallid Cuckoos** seen or heard - including a male and a female seen together. The call of the female **Pallid Cuckoo** was not one that they were very familiar with, but research afterwards established that the scratchy hoarse call was indeed a **Pallid Cuckoo** female. While the male was happily calling from open perches, the female was only heard from inside bushy trees and seen flying between trees.

Newline

The summer survey was carried out on 25 November by Sue Lashko after a night of rain. Heavy cloud persisted but there were only a couple of very light showers during the survey. Sue thought it was a strange survey, with two previously unrecorded species putting in an appearance. A **Nankeen Night Heron** was flushed from a tree just outside site 3. Later Sue thought she could hear **Australian Reed Warblers** calling from the slopes of tall weedy vegetation on the adjacent concrete dump, and confirmed the birds as they obligingly climbed to the top of the weeds before flying to the swampy area that had developed in site 4 over the last few wet years. The other oddity for the morning was the dearth of **Noisy Miners**; site 7 near the Quarry end was their particular stronghold but has a lot of dead trees due to the 2020 fire and many of the remaining trees looking very stressed with very few leaves. For the first time ever, no **Noisy Miners** were recorded in or immediately outside site 7 and only 3 birds elsewhere. This may not be a bad thing as small birds are usually totally absent from site 7 but this time **Weebills**, a **Grey Fantail** and a **Brown Thornbill** were recorded.

White-winged Trillers, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Dollarbirds**, **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Sacred Kingfishers**, **White-throated Gerygones** and a **Rufous Whistler** were recorded but there were no **Friarbirds**, **Orioles** or **Cuckoos**, the last rather surprising

as there were **Superb Fairywrens** everywhere, taking advantage of the prolific blackberry bushes. A pair of **Black-shouldered Kites** and a **Brown Falcon** were the morning's raptors. A total of forty-one species.

Jerrabomberra West Nature Reserve:

Jenny Bounds did the survey on Wednesday 6 December, starting very early to avoid the heat. Nothing unexpected was recorded and birds were relatively quiet; several of the usuals were absent or not calling (for example, no **Cuckoos** or **White-winged Trillers**). A **Tree Martin** was seen at a usual site and a **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Southern Whiteface** heard off site near the grasslands edge. 31 species were recorded, well down from the previous spring survey.

Tuggeranong Hill Nature Reserve:

Lia Battisson surveyed on Saturday the 2nd of December. The weather did look a bit ominous, but the rain held off for the morning. Site 5 was the most interesting site, with a small mixed feeding flock, comprising a juvenile **Eastern Spinebill**, **Grey Fantails**, **Weebills**, **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Silvereys** and **Superb Fairywrens**. **Rainbow Lorikeets** have moved to the southern side of the sites, after several years at sites 2 and or 3. A **Leaden Flycatcher** made it into a survey for the first time. Other unusual species for Tuggeranong Hill sites were **Australian King-Parrots** and **White-winged Choughs** at site 2. **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, **Eastern Koels** and **Olive-backed Orioles** were amongst species heard between sites. The only breeding records were a juvenile **Eastern Spinebill** and several **Australian Magpies** feeding young. In all, forty-one species were observed, twenty-five of those within sites.

Naas Sites:

Julie McGuiness conducted the survey on this rural lease south of Tharwa on 27 November, an overcast, mild to warm and calm morning. Eucalypts appeared in various states of health, with new growth on some of the Blakely's Redgums; the grassy understorey remained very low with almost no plants in flower. Species diversity was reasonably good, though species numbers were lowish. Ground-frequenting species were uncharacteristically almost completely absent—not a thornbill or robin to be seen. A total of 35 species were observed within the sites, with an extra nine species outside the sites. Summer migrants observed were **Rufous Whistler**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Shining** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos**, **Rufous Songlark**, **White-winged Triller** and **Rainbow Bee-eater**. One **Long-billed Corella** was seen amongst a small number of **Little Corellas**. Outside of the sites, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Mistletoebird**, **Western Gerygone** and **Rainbow Bee-eater** were observed. The only breeding activity seen was a **Rufous Whistler** on a nest, a **Dusky Woodswallow** associating with two juveniles, and two **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** displaying to each other.



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Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871
Tel: 07 4094 1665
Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

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

2023-2024 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

B Houlden
K Blain
E Driscoll
A O'Neill
R Bartolich
A Topaz
L Samson
T Priest-Willimott
S Duus
N Johnson

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for March 2024 edition:

Wednesday 28 February 2024

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.

COG information

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Treasurer: Vacant

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Jamison Centre, ACT 2614

Canberra Bird Notes

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canberrabirds.org.au

COG Webmaster

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COG library

Membership Enquiries & Updates:

membership@canberrabirds.org.au
for change of address or other details.

Gang-gang Newsletter

Editor: Zac Flegg
Lay-out Editor: Gail Neumann
gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

Publication Sales

COG E-mail Discussion List

COG E-mail Discussion List COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'CanberraBirds'. Join (subscribe to) the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

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Gang-gang is published on COG's website in PDF format.

ISSN 2208-018X

