



Gang-gang

MAY 2024

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MAY MEETING

Wednesday 8 May 2024

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

The May 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.

Doug Liang - MARCH OF THE MINERS

**Michael Mulvaney and Chris Davey -
How a citizen science project has
informed us about the Gang-gang
Cockatoo.**

Please note that construction is currently occurring around the Gabriel Drive parking area, and access to there is expected not to be available. If the gate is locked, please use the Chapel Drive entrance and park there. To get to the Multi-media Centre from there, please proceed keeping the Chapel and the next two buildings to your left until you reach a gap between the buildings, go through this and you will see the Gabriel Drive parking area in front of you (see the map on COG's web site at <https://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/other->

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Everyone welcome

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

It remained hot and dry for the first ten days of the four weeks from 27 March to 23 April inclusive covered by this column. This was followed by a significant rain event over the second weekend, after which it was much cooler but as yet no frost (just one 0°C). While these conditions ensured bird observer activity remained high, based on my analysis below bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) again seems to have been significantly lower than for the first two months of 2024, despite April being a month of much species movement. However, as they have in the past few years many of the spring/summer migrants seem to have stayed around longer, but there seems to have been the lowest number of "unusual" species (using my very loose definition) that I can recall for quite some time.

The bird that attracted the most interest over the period was an immature **Black-faced Monarch** first reported by Craig Doolan at Kellys Swamp at

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Black-faced Monarch

Shorty

[resources/cog-monthly-meeting-location/](#)). Though it is reasonably well lit, as it will be dark a torch for finding your way to the Multi-media Centre and back to your car after the meeting is recommended.

The short talk will be by Doug Liang on “**MARCH OF THE MINERS (or why I really don’t like Noisy Miners anymore)**.”

In this talk Doug looks at how the bird fauna in his and surrounding gardens in the Weston Creek area has changed over the past twenty years, and how **Noisy Miners** appear to be central players in the creation of a new suite of avian winners and losers. He suggests changes in local miner behaviour may have been triggered by stochastic events such as drought, fires and consecutive rain events. Reduced nectar availability and foraging opportunities resulting from these events seems to have emboldened miners to enter and fiercely colonise home gardens, where they had never been dominant, at the expense of some previously common species.



Noisy-Miner

Geoffrey Dabb

The main talk will be a joint presentation by Michael Mulvaney and Chris Davey on “**How a citizen science project has informed us about the Gang-gang Cockatoo**”.

Dr Michael Mulvaney and Chris Davey, representing a small group of local citizen scientists, will report on a Gang-gang project initiated by Canberra Birds in 2014 to celebrate the Groups’ 50th Anniversary. Since then, various publications in Canberra Bird Notes have summarized their findings in the ACT up to 2020-21 breeding season.

In their presentation they intend to provide information on various aspects of the project involving observations from the species range within south-eastern Australia, in particular time of breeding in relation to altitude and habitat requirements for the species. They will then concentrate their presentation on breeding success with an analysis of breeding failures over the past three breeding seasons within peri-urban ACT. They will also outline other projects associated with the general ecology of the species that have been conducted in association with ACT Environment Offsets Section, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Summary of Presentations from the 10 April Meeting

The short presentation was a very informative one by **Anthony Overs** on “**Birds of the Month – Thornbills**”.

The interest in this often hard to identify group of small “brown birds” was clear from the large audience, and Anthony did not disappoint them with his very clear and concise (but thorough) presentation.

He initially noted that each species is separable from the others based on:

- Subtle differences in plumage and other parts;
- The habitat types they occupy;
- Their social structure; and
- The calls they make.

Anthony then went through the above in order, with for the first dot point using well-chosen images on single slides of the 5 species, using short texts as pointers to the main distinguishing features.

This was followed by further individual slides concisely outlining both the preferred habitat and social structure of each species, and then by slides playing the calls of each species, again with short text aiming to best describe them in words.

The audience greatly appreciated Anthony's very clear, concise but thorough exposition of how best to identify these often-difficult species, including your final slide containing a précis of all of the above.

However, for many of the audience trying to remember all the information and applying it in the field will be very difficult and therefore the COG/Canberra Birds committee is proposing to make the presentation available on its Facebook page.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Anthony for this very informative presentation. We are aware of the considerable effort he puts into preparing and particularly delivering his presentations and we are most appreciative.

The main presentation was an absolutely fascinating one by **Ian Fraser** on "**Costa Rica; where the Americas meet**" at last night's meeting.

The interest in Ian's talk was clearly demonstrated by the biggest attendance at one of COG/Canberra Birds monthly meetings for some time, and we weren't disappointed. Ian delivered a very clear, logical, well thought out presentation with some very informative slides, with his experience in giving such talks clearly showing.

Ian started by outlining of how the Panamanian Isthmus was formed on the joining of the two Americas, and how either of these continents influenced the fauna and flora of Costa Rica. He then showed us a very good map of Costa Rica focusing on its five broad habitats, illustrating these very well with both words and typical images from them.

As is appropriate for the audience Ian then spent most of his time discussing the birds of Costa Rica, particularly the many colourful endemic species. The audience really appreciated him taking some time to discuss aspects of many of these rather than to just flick through the slides.

This started from the very first bird, the **Resplendent Quetzal** where he showed its different colours depending on the light. We were also impressed by the fact that toucans' very large bills, as for the unrelated hornbills, are mainly used for temperature regulation.

Hummingbirds are clearly amongst Ian's favourites, and he showed us many of those occurring in Costa Rica, including how they are often attracted to artificial feeding sites. He also mentioned how they manage to hover with figure 8 wing beats at 200 per second, can fly backwards, with the cost being 30% of their bodyweight being wing muscle, and with the very fast heartbeats meaning they need to eat 1.5 times their bodyweight per day.

Ian similarly went through many other bird species unfamiliar to Australia, such as the tanagers, barbets, woodpeckers, motmots (with their bee-eater like long tails), and the turkey-like cracides including the **Great Currasow**, ending by showing a whole range of other vertebrate groups typically occurring in Costa Rica.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many, many thanks to Ian for his absolutely fascinating presentation. We all enjoyed it so much, including those who have been on his trips to Costa Rica. It has certainly whetted others' appetites to visit Central America.

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 14 May

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.



Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for in May *continued from Page 1*

the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR) on 2 April, and then seen and photographed later that day and subsequently by many observers until 10 April, making it the easiest to observe and longest staying bird of this species for some time (see below). Remarkably, Line Perrins then photographed another immature bird at McQuoid's Hill on 19 April. This was possibly moving through from the mountains as the JWNR bird might be expected to have headed for the coast (or Tallaganda, see below) to escape the increasing colder conditions.

COG's 2018-2019 Annual Bird report (ABR) indicates that the **Black-faced Monarch** is a rare visitor, a species of the East Coast, seldom occurring this far inland. There were 6 records that year, with the level of reporting said to be typical for this species. However, eBird gives just 4 observations in ACT for the period since that, heard on Warks/Blundell's Creek Rd on 2 Dec 2018, one at the ANBG from 10-11 Dec 2018, one at the woodland loop of the JWNR on 31 Oct 2019 and one at Molonglo Gorge on 21 Sep 2020. In contrast there have been regular records from 10 locations in the Tallaganda SF/NR area during that period, including 2 birds there on 5 and 11 March 2024.

Of the earlier leaving spring/summer migrants still present in March, during the period there were no further reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** (last reported 9 March) or **White-winged Trillers** (last reported 16 March). However, a **Rufous Songlark** was still reported from the Tallaganda Lane (Yass Valley) on 1 April, and 6 **Horsfield's Bushlarks** were reported from the Wollagorang Rd on 21 April (previous last report was on 11 February). Both of these species can be present in small numbers in the COG Aol over autumn/winter. There was also a further report of **Black-eared Cuckoo** (mainly by call) from the Pierces Creek Forest on 1 April, the previous last report being on 11 February.

Of the species which have often left in the first half of March, there were no more reports of the **Dollarbird** (the last report being 18 March). However, there was one further report of the **Rainbow Bee-eater**, a bird heard at Geoscience Australia (Symonston) on 1 April. In keeping with it usually being the last of these three species to leave, the **Sacred Kingfisher**, was still reported from 4 locations, the most recent being 2 birds at the Gungaharra Grasslands NR and 1 bird on the JWNR peninsula, both on 14 April.

Of the other species that mostly have left by the end of March/early April, the only report during the period of the **Brush Cuckoo** was the very blotchy immature bird Kym Bradley photographed in her patch to the S of Canberra on 30 March. There was just a single report of the **Pallid Cuckoo** at O'Connor Oval on 30 March. There was also only one report of the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, a bird heard at the Mulligans Flat NR on 7 April, but the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was reported from 9 locations up 14 April when it was reported from Mulligans Flat NR, Whiskers Creek Rd and on the K2C survey. The **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory local cuckoo, was still reported from around 12 locations.

While the female **Eastern Koel** that had been visiting Christine D's garden in Flynn almost daily to eat figs and persimmons was last seen on 27 March, there was still a report of a very late fledgling and some adults associating with it (see breeding below).

White-throated Needletails were reported from 5 locations, with the highest number being 6 birds in the Yass Valley on 3 April (also the latest date they were reported). There was also a report of two of the related **Fork-tailed Swift** over Hawker on 20 March that I overlooked in my previous column, this is the only report this spring/summer with the most recent previous report being 6 birds over O'Malley on 15 January 2023.

I've also had a late report of a **Latham's Snipe** still present at the West Belconnen Pond on 19 March, with Lori Gould confirming the last of hers at the JWNR left on 6 March. However, the **Australian Reed-Warbler**, while very quiet in April, was still reported from around 18 locations up to the time of writing, as was the **Tree Martin** reported from around 17 locations. **Fairy Martins** were still reported from 7 locations, with the last being 6 birds observed at the JWNR on 19 April.

The **Leaden Flycatcher** was still reported from 8 locations, the most recent being a bird at Kama NR on 15 April. However, the related (passage migrant) the **Satin Flycatcher** was not reported during the period, the last record being of a well described female and an immature from the Mulligans Flat NR on 11 March. The second passage migrant, the

Australian Rufous Fantail, was reported from just 2 locations, the most recent being from the ANBG, from where up to 2 had been regularly reported, on 16 April. There was also a late report of the third passage migrant, the **Common Cicadabird**, one was calling in the Orroral Valley on 1 April.

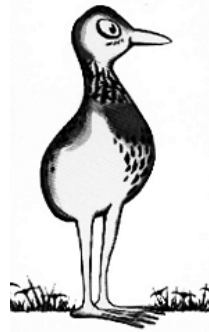
Of the birds that usually leave in April the **Noisy Friarbird** was reported from 15 locations, still being present up to the time of writing. The **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** still reported from around 9 and 15 locations, respectively, with the most recent reports being from the JWNR on 16 April and Campbell Park and the Namadgi Nature Reserve Visitors Centre on 12 April, respectively. The **Rufous Whistlers**, **Black-Faced Cuckoo-shrike**, and **Grey Fantails** were still reported from many locations, with a number of these last three species expected to overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and **Superb Parrot**.

So, during May please keep an eye out for the above and other spring/summer migrants which are still being reported, but usually leave during May. Look out also for the last two spring/summer migrants usually to leave (but with some also overwintering) the **Olive-backed Oriole** (still reported from around 20 locations) and **Dusky Woodswallow** (still reported from at least 50 locations). The latter often moves in flocks, with Kym Bradley reporting a “mass” of them hawking at the Apollo Rd on the afternoon of 21 April (there were none there that morning). Also, at 10:15 h on 23 April Kym photographed at least 50 in a tree at her patch to the S of Canberra, they had moved on by 11:00 h.

Of the species that return to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, the **White-eared Honeyeater** has now clearly moved in being reported from at least 30 urban and peri-urban locations (I have been seeing/hearing more than for some years) compared with 12 in March, as has the **Golden Whistler**, reported from over 50 such locations.

Scarlet Robins have also moved in closer and were reported from a remarkable over 50 urban/peri-urban locations compared with 20 in March. My impression is that it seems to be more common this year than for at least the past five. In contrast the **Flame Robin** has, as is usual, been much slower to move closer being reported from just 6 such locations in April (compared with 2 in March). While Coral Dow reported 2 females on Cooleman Ridge when she led a walk there on 4 April, I have yet to find them there at their usual spots. The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 2 such locations, with a further 6 from the mountains to the W of Canberra. Again, no **Pink Robins** were reported; they are usually considered a winter visitor to the COG Aol, so keep an eye out for them.

There were reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** from 3 urban/peri-urban locations, a female on the COG outing to Narrabundah Hill on 7 April, one in Cook on 12 April, and most regularly a single bird at the ANBG, from a total of 10 locations during the period. In contrast there were no reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** in the COG Aol during the period.



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Up to 2 **Bassian Thrush** were reported at the ANBG during the period, with reports from 3 other locations in the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River. However, there have been no reports of the **Brown Gerygone** (last reported from the ANBG in December 2023, it is more usually a winter visitor there) or the **Swift Parrot** during the period. The closest regular report for the latter is still the Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP to the W of Albury, as well as several sightings of up to 3 in SW Sydney, so please keep an eye out for them as well as the other species mentioned above anywhere in the COG Aol.

Apart from the **Black-faced Monarch** above, there were again few “unusual” birds reported even compared to March. No further **Magpie Geese** or **Freckled Duck** were reported in the COG Aol during the period, and up to 9 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported only from the Trucking Yard Lane dam up to 14 April. The **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 8 locations during the period, as usual from the NE through to the E of Canberra, but with a maximum of 11 ducks. except for the 48 ducks reported from the Trucking Yard Lane dam on 11 April.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 2 locations with a maximum of 5 ducks at the Upper Stranger Pond on 16 April, and a single duck at the JWNR on 21 April. Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, up to 2 **Musk Ducks** were reported from 4 locations. Up to 2 **Great-crested Grebes** were reported from the Cotter Dam, with 3 also seen at the West Belconnen Pond on 31 March.

A single **Stubble Quail** was reported only from the JWNR on 28 March, well down from the over 20 locations in March, reflecting that they have stopped calling completely. However, **Brown Quail** were reported from around 10 locations, about the same as in March. Single **Painted Button-quail** were reported from 3 locations, at Bluetts Block on 30 March, the Nelanglo TSR on 1 April and Mulligans Flat NR on 2 April. Again, no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

Up to 2 **Peaceful Doves** were reported from 1 location only, from the Cotter Rd between 30 March and 3 April, but there were no **White-headed Pigeons**, **Brush Bronzings**, **Diamond** or **Bar-shouldered Doves** reported during the period.

There were no further reports of the **White-throated Nightjar** during the period, with the most recent record being on 21 March. I’m not sure whether it was searched for and the status of this species in the COG Aol is likely to remain unclear until there is a well-planned detailed formal study of its presence.

The spring/summer irruption of the **Baillon’s Crake** seems to be over, with none reported during the period. In contrast up to 4 **Spotless Crakes** were regularly reported from the JWNR, as well as from 5 other locations, slightly down from March. Single **Australian Spotted Crakes** were reported from 5 locations (also slightly down from March). Single **Buff-banded Rails** were reported from 4 locations (down from March), but up to 3 **Lewin’s Rails** were reported from 3 locations, up from March.

Up to 23 **Pied Stilts** were reported from 4 locations, all from Lake Rd on the SW side of Lake George, similar to March. No **Banded Lapwings**, **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 present at the Village Creek inlet at Lake Tuggeranong to at least 20 April, despite the area having been very well cleaned.

No **Caspian Tern**, **Whiskered Tern** or **White-winged Black Tern**—were reported during the period. The **Australasian Little/Black-backed Bittern** was also not reported during the period, with the last record from the JWNR being 20 March.

No **Little** or **Plumed** (formerly **Intermediate**) **Egrets** were reported during the period, but **Great Egrets** were reported from around 7 locations (half those in March). **Royal Spoonbills** were reported from around 10 locations (as for March), and up to 3 **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 5 locations, similar to March. No **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.



Image by Cape Koala Arts ©

LET'S CATCH UP

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

PUBLIC (bar & dining)

Corner of Flinders Way & Franklin St, Manuka
(across from Coles)

4th WED of each month (7 to 9 PM)
next date: May 29.

Look for the table with binoculars on it



EVERYONE WELCOME

Single **Barn Owls** were reported at 2 locations during the period, but **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from many locations, as they have been for the past few years; it's hard to believe that so few were around in the year or so before that. A **Black Falcon** was reported from the West Belconnen Pond on 17 April. Michael Lenz reported that he was watching a **Black-shouldered Kite** flying towards a powerline with a mouse in its talons when out of nowhere a large all dark falcon appeared, snatched the mouse and continued flying steadily across the paddocks: it was a very dark (black) bird with a long tail, whitish chin, wings pointed and drooped, flying with rather stiff wingbeats. However, there were no reports of the **Spotted Harrier**, **Pacific Baza**, **Grey Goshawk** or **Black Kite** during the period.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was again reported from 2 locations only the Cotter Reserve/Cotter Bend and the Tidbinbilla NR. A **Turquoise Parrot** was reported from the Uriarra TSR on 19 April. No **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**, **Cockatiel**, or **Purple-crowned**, **Scaly-breasted** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period, but up to 6 **Musk Lorikeets** were reported on from the University of Canberra and with 2 also at Watson on 16 April.

The **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** which bred at the Rock Valley homestead in the Tidbinbilla NR were not reported during the period, with the last record being on 7 March. A **Blue-faced Honeyeater** was reported calling at the Canberra Hospital, Garran on 21 April and 3 were seen at the Capital Tower later that day, with the reporter commenting "First heard, then seen. Have seen this species regularly in the ANU, Acton, LBG area in the past 6 months. Calling while we played tennis. Resident Miners did not seem too fussed." Another was reported from Sullivan's Creek at the ANU on 23 April, the last two reports being in the area where they bred in 2022. No **Singing** or **Scarlet Honeyeaters** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period.

White-fronted Chats were reported only from 2 locations within the COG Aol with 12 birds seen on the dam on Shingle Hill Way (Yass Valley) on 1 April and 2 birds on the Wollogorang Rd on 21 April. Up to 3 **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens** were reported from Bluetts Block between 27 March and 3 April (see breeding record below), with 2 reported from Zosterops Corner (Yass Valley) on 29 March and also 3 reported from Whiskers Creek Rd Carwoola on 14 April. No **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo** or **Zebra Finches** were reported during the period.

Again, fewer species were observed over the period, with again there being few "unusual" bush birds, in particular pigeons/doves, raptors, parrots and honeyeaters, reported.

Of the species I have asked readers to keep a special lookout for, **Jacky Winters** were reported from 5 locations during the period. Of these 4 were the known locations, the Namadgi NP Visitors Centre, with 2 seen there on 12 April, 3 seen at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 20 April, 1 at Top Naas Rd, also on 20 April and 2 recorded at the Glendale Depot on 1 April. A single bird was also seen at Ingelara on the K2C surveys on 14 April, where I have recorded them before, but not recently.

The **Hooded Robin** was reported from 4 known locations, with 1 bird reported from the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 20 April, one from the Orroral Valley on 29 March, and 1 bird at the Yankee Hat carpark and track on 1 April. On the K2C survey on 14 April Nicki Taws found a remarkable 8 birds in 3 separate locations at Scottsdale (see separate report).

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 4 known locations, with up to 2 birds reported from the Nelanglo TSR up to 10 April, one bird at the JWNR up to 3 April, one bird in the Orroral Valley on 1 April and one bird at the Yankee Hat carpark and track, also on 1 April. Birds were also recorded at 3 new locations (at least in recent times), with a bird recorded at Te-Chi (a private location on the Jerangle Rd) during the K2C surveys on 14 April, one bird on the Lada Vale Rd on 10 April and one bird on Dicks Rd Namina on 17 April.

While it was the second month of autumn, apart from the **Brush Cuckoo** above, there was still some breeding reported, including the following:

- On 4 April Steve Wallace drew my attention to Nik Froelich's post on eBird of 24 March with photographs of an adult and juvenile **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** at Bluetts Block. Steve noted that the record was interesting from two perspectives: dependent young at that time of year; and the food being carried by the adult, which he thought was a skink (very likely from the photo). Steve didn't think either had been previously recorded anywhere for this species, not just in the ACT. None of the food records he could find mentioned reptiles. It certainly is a very significant observation as BIRD INFO on the COG/Canberra Birds web site only gives 3 records in total to 2017, nest with young or dependent young from September to November.

- There has been another report of the **Red-capped Robin** breeding, with Kym Bradley photographing a female and juvenile on Apollo Rd on 30 March. Kym also reported a second juvenile/immature male **Hooded Robin** at her patch to the S of Canberra on 31 March and suspected there had been two different breeding events there this year.
- During the K2C surveys on 14 April Mark Tindale and I found 3 **Pied Butcherbirds** at Stonehouse (opposite the top end of Kelly Rd). Two were immature birds (both often calling). I found very interesting that the brown part of the hood of one of the birds was so much more clearly defined (see photograph) than in the other one, which was much more of a diffuse brown wash (as in Pizzey and Knight). While others have been previously reported on K2C surveys, this is likely to be the most southerly breeding record for the **Pied Butcherbird** in the COG Aol to date.
- Prue Watters informed me that she was at a friend's house in Downer on 30 March and saw a juvenile **Eastern Koel** in their raspberry bushes. Apparently a family had been there for quite a while and it was still hanging around. The young bird was last seen on 3 April, about a month after the previous latest report for the season, but well within the latest leaving times for previous seasons. With one other report received during the period, my total of 69 fledglings for the wet 2023-2024 summer is exactly the same number as for the dry and smoky 2019-2020 season.
- For the past week a pair of **Australian Ravens** has been showing interest in the nest they didn't use in 2023 and in which the **Australian Hobbies** later unsuccessfully tried to breed. They have been visiting it regularly, including being there first thing in the morning. This species breeds very early in the season and can initially be very noisy in the nest area, so keep a watch out for it.



Pied Butcherbird

Mark Tindale

Many mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have been reported, with in our experience female/immature **Golden Whistlers** or **Grey Shrike-thrush** (of which there seem to be lots in my local area, especially Cooleman Ridge, recently) among them. So, keep watching out for this phenomenon as they will keep forming until breeding starts in late winter.

It's been very hard for me to get a decent handle on what kind of honeyeater migration season we are having. The weather has often been ideal (cool, still and crisp after a low overnight minimum), but the 150 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (YFHE) at the COG outing I led to Narrabundah Hill (NH, see separate report) on 7 April has been by far the most Andrea and I have seen in the usual local places including a visit to NH under better conditions. Checking eBird records on the W side of Canberra from Molonglo to the Tuggeranong Town Centre also shows relatively low numbers.

Michael Robbins, who lives next to a usual major honeyeater migration on the W side of Kambah, has been providing me regular reports of birds moving through. His summary is that he hasn't seen large numbers passing over at any time in 2024 season, and remarkably few flocks which he would consider other than small, confirming my observations. On the other hand, many were seen during the K2C surveys (see separate report) where Nicki Taws indicated she had also seen much migration over Easter. Perhaps it's been a local phenomenon though there have been no reports on the COG/Canberra Birds chat line of very large numbers moving through.

So, watch out for the last of the honeyeaters moving through in early May, with the **White-naped Honeyeaters** likely to predominate in the flocks towards the end of April.

In respect of large single flocks, in the early morning of 20 April there were 182 (a pretty exact count) of **Rock Doves** in the small park in Rivett close to our home, evenly spread and very close together over the 3 overhead wires that run through there. This is by far the highest number I have counted there, over 33% higher than the previous high of 136 on 17 February 2024. Their numbers just seem to be increasing, often I see small numbers on houses where they haven't been seen previously. Despite this I haven't been able to find where they breed, except for a couple of nests on top of the spikes on a column (to prevent them from doing so) at the Fisher shops earlier this year. It was removed and a further barrier put up next time I went past.

May is the final month of autumn when there is lots of bird movement and activity in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the departing spring/summer migrants mentioned above, and for more of the returning autumn/winter altitudinal migrants, MFFs and single species flocks, as well as roosts and roost flights. 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

Scarlet Robin, a Warmth in the Cold Seasons

Zachary Flegg



Scarlet Robin

Zachary Flegg

A fiery flash among silvery frost, the scarlet robin is an incredible bird that becomes relatively common in Canberra during the cold months of the year. Fascinating to watch, easy to find and completely adorable, the Scarlet Robin is an all-star species and a highlight of any birding trip.

Not often seen during the warmer months, they are a gem of a bird that makes the frigid mornings worthwhile. Sightings of Scarlet Robins increase during the March period, but peak during April, so now is the time to get out and look for them! Scarlet Robins are by far one of the best reasons to go birding when the weather begins to turn.

The Scarlet Robin is an altitudinal migrant, descending from the mountains during the winter to feed—often in mixed feeding flocks. Perching on exposed branches or sallying through the air in impressive acrobatic displays; they are known to eat insects primarily. The call of the male is very distinctive and well-worth learning before you go out birding. They are also incredibly inquisitive birds—often coming in close to watch bird watchers.

At only 13cm, you’d expect them to be hard to spot, but the bright coloration of the males makes this an easier task than you’d imagine. You’ll often see them perched in the open, calling repeatedly. Personal favorite places of mine to see this bird include Bluetts Block and Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve. I tend to find best success when sitting quietly for extended periods, you’d be surprised how much behaviour you’ll observe if you just sit, wait, and let the action come to you.

Male Scarlet Robins can be distinguished from other Canberran robins by the bright red patch on their chest (not going past the breast, as in flame robins) as well as the large white patch above their beak.

It can often be hard—during cold mornings—to convince yourself to get up early and walk through the bush in search of birds—especially when so many spring migrants have long since left. The scarlet robin, however, is so fiery that a single sighting is enough to warm even the coldest mornings. Next time you’re out birding in the cold, instead of feeling miserable, try to look and listen for the beautiful Scarlet Robin. You won’t be disappointed.

Committee News

The Committee met on the 18th of March and worked through our usual busy agenda. Points of interest included:

- Discussion of **planned installation of powerlines at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR**. Canberra Birds, and the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, have been in discussion with the government contractor regarding work to route powerlines through the Reserve. Following these representations, the contractors have decided to take the powerlines underground, will not be undertaking work during Latham's Snipe season, and will reduce and restrict the removal of vegetation near the wetlands. Much of the work will take place at the Jerra paddocks, though there will also be activity just beyond the southern end of Kelly's Swamp, and also two crossings under Jerrabomberra Creek. The Nature Reserve will remain accessible during the works, which are expected to take place over a year or more, although access to the carpark will be restricted at times. We have not yet been advised of a start date but will keep members informed.
- Our **Ethical Birding Guidelines**, recently emailed to members in draft form, were finalised and approved by the Committee. The Guidelines will be published on the website and promoted over time to the local birding community. Details will appear in *Gang-gang* once the guidelines are on our website.
- Birdlife Australia is holding a **National Bird Photography Conference** in Canberra in 2026. The Conference organiser has invited Canberra Birds' involvement and was particularly interested in our leading pre and post Conference bird walks for delegates. The Committee has agreed to this. We will also take the opportunity to promote Canberra Birds and local birding at a Trade Stand at the associated Trade exhibition.

Neil Hermes, *President*

Field trips from July to December 2024

Sue Lashko is currently putting together the field trip programme for the second half of 2024 and is looking for leaders and venues. There are some suggestions below, but she is always happy to hear about new places. If you are willing to lead a trip, please contact Sue at smlashko@gmail.com

In Canberra - north of the lake

Mt Majura NR
National Arboretum
Shepherds Lookout to Uriarra Crossing

In Canberra - south of the lake

Red Hill NR
Callum Brae NR
Rob Roy NR
Wanniassa Hills NR
Tuggeranong Hill NR

Close to Canberra

Namadgi NP – Nursery Swamp
Namadgi NP – walk from Glendale Depot to Brandy Flat
Namadgi NP – Hospital Hill
Brindabellas - *Micalong Swamp Flora Reserve*

Close to Canberra

Bango NR (near Yass)
Cuumban NR (east of Queanbeyan)
Molonglo Gorge NR
Various sections of Canberra Centennial Trail

Further afield

Tallaganda NP
Burrinjuck Dam
Mittagong area
Boorowa area
Monga NP

Would you like to manage COG Book Sales?

For many years Canberra Birds (COG) has sold competitively priced books at the monthly meetings. Bill Graham took on book sales management in December after Kathy and John retired from the task after many years of sterling service. With regret, Bill now finds that he is not able to continue it.

Without a new volunteer it is expected book sales will be discontinued and the remaining stock sold off at a future meeting. But a new volunteer would be very welcome.

What's involved?

- Looking after several boxes of book stock, bringing books to each monthly meeting and setting up a simple display on a table.
- Taking payments for books, issuing receipts and passing the cash to the COG Treasurer for banking.
- Keeping a simple spreadsheet of the available titles and how many are in stock
- There is also scope for ordering new titles of interest and promoting these to members through the Chatline, Gang -gang or COG Facebook.

For more information or to express your interest, please contact Bill Graham on bsgraham1948@gmail.com or cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au before 20 May.

Titles currently available:

Australian Bird Names: a Complete Guide. Fraser & Gray. 2nd ed

Australian Bird Guide. Menkhorst and others. Rev ed

Birds of Prey of Australia: a Field Guide. Debus

Complete Guide to Finding Mammals of Australia. Andrew

Field Guide to Butterflies of the ACT. Bond

Night Parrot. Olsen

Australian Bird Names: a Complete Guide. Fraser & Gray. 2nd ed

Compact Australian Bird Guide. Davies and others

Black Mountain: a Natural History of a Canberra Icon. Fraser

Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT. Taylor and Day. 2nd ed

Field Guide to Native Trees ACT. NPA ACT

What Birdo is That? A Field Guide to Bird People. Libby Robin

Canberra Birds Brochures: Get Involved!

Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge of birds and where to see them in and around the ACT?

Do you enjoy writing?

Would you like to help us create brochures about birding in the ACT?

A working group has been established to refresh and redesign a suite of brochures that will provide people with information about birding within our area of interest and to inform people about the activities of Canberra Birds. We are developing new brochures on Birding in the ACT, bird routes for North and South Canberra and The Ranges, and a brochure on birding at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. We are looking for someone to join the group and contribute to these publications. You need not have any experience of creating brochures – we are all learning as we go! – simply an interest in sharing our communal knowledge in a compact and easy-to-use format. We're particularly keen to hear from anyone who is familiar with Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

If you're curious and would like to know more about what we're doing and what's involved, contact Julie Hotchin at hotchinbridge@bigpond.com

Field Trip Reports

Tuesday 19 to Friday 22 March – Cowra area

Participants were asked to contribute short paragraphs for inclusion in the trip report. I've attached two of these at the end of the report.

Most of us stayed at the Cowra Caravan Park on the banks of the Lachlan River. On the first morning we set off to Barryrennie Road and the Conimbla National Park. Numerous stops along the way got our bird lists off to a great start, with **Eastern Shrike-tits**, **White-necked Herons**, **Yellow-billed Spoonbills**, **Restless Flycatcher** and **Grey-crowned Babblers** among the birds seen or heard, with a lucky few also scoring a **Diamond Dove** and a small group of **White-throated Needle-tails**. In the afternoon we made our way to the Sewage Works where we had escorted access to the older ponds where six species of ducks, various egrets and other waterbirds kept us busy. The local council representative who accompanied us explained that he is looking for ways to safely increase public access to the site. Our final visit was to the Common, where we were greeted by **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, and the mystery bird referred to in Muriel's paragraph at the end of this report. The undoubted highlight, as described by Muriel, was the procession of **Brown Quail** across the track just in front of us – the birds emerged from a small fenced area around a historic hut and the final two were half-grown very cute individuals; for many, a best ever sighting of the species.

The following morning we set off for Wyangala Dam. The morning was cool and quite windy, and after a brief stop at Darby Falls Reserve we arrived at the picnic area below the dam wall and wandered along the river track, where the highlight was a pair of **Golden Whistlers**. We proceeded on to the Holiday Park, which offers some great views over the huge dam, which was interesting but not very birdy. The next stop was the Hailstones TSR, where we had good views of **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**. After a few more brief stops, we made our way back to Cowra, with several of us managing to see a **Spotted Harrier** sweeping low over the paddocks and finally disappearing into the grass.

Late that evening, Ralph and Bill saw the **Barking Owl** at the river next to the caravan park, but unfortunately the rest of us missed out on this one.

On our last morning we enjoyed a wander along a track at Koorawatha Weir, after a slightly tricky drive in. Only two of the party were fortunate enough to spot a **Turquoise Parrot**, which disappeared before the rest of us had caught up. **Pied Butcherbirds** were seen and heard, and a group of **Varied Sittellas** caught our attention. Our final stop was at the Morongla Cemetery, where we had excellent views of **Grey-crowned Babblers**. We had initially thought the babblers were in a separate reserve, but the local council assures me the site is part of the cemetery footprint.

Sandra Henderson

This trip shows how well a trip can run almost entirely using e-Bird hotspots to see new locations that most have never been to before. A huge thank you to Bill Graham for going the extra mile of doing a pre-trip reconnaissance a couple of weeks earlier. Going to entirely new places works when a trip leader is agile and birders are happy to try out each hotspot (even when unexpectedly cold and windy) for about half an hour to an hour, but are also flexible in being willing to move on to the next location if the birds are quiet. As a beginner, attending a COG trip is such a privilege, to learn from the expertise of the experienced birders and see the birds in different habitats, and share in the joy of discovering new places and finding birds like **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**. (Judi)

Cowra's Common is perched on a low hill behind the Japanese Garden. Next to farm paddocks, it's an altered landscape of rough, mown grass, large granite boulders, scattered remnant eucalypts and planted native shrubs. Although it doesn't promise exciting birding it does give us three memorable sightings like the many low-zooming, hawking **Rainbow Bee-eaters** that surround us on our arrival. They're iridescent in the afternoon sun. Memorable for the unexpected difficulty it gives us is a medium-small bird sitting obligingly still on a fence. As we later discover, this behaviour doesn't help identify a bird which some of us associate with its breeding season behaviour of calling constantly while flying back and forth between perches. We finally nail it as a **Rufous Songlark** at dinner after Ben has had time to study his photos and apply some technology. The third surprise comes as we approach some scrub next to a small fenced enclosure. Spotting something, Ralph signals us to halt and what follows is the hesitant appearance of a **Brown Quail** which dashes from enclosure to scrub. As we start to move on another quail emerges and nervously pokes towards the scrub. Then another. And another. About fourteen in all. Definitely a highlight. (Muriel)



From left clockwise:
 Cowra Area
 Grey-crowned Babbler, Brown Quail, Varied Sitella, Blue-faced
 Honeyeater
 Brown Goshawk, Rufous Songlark
 Red-rumped Parrot & Budgerigar

Tee Tong Teo
Ben Milbourne
Tee Tong Teo

Thursday 28 March to Monday 1 April - Upper Murray

There were ten (including Zoe the farm dog) who participated in the Easter Long Weekend campout. This sterling event was ably led by Marcus Hellyer (with assistance from Trish).

After setting up camp on the hill overlooking the Murray River a pleasant stroll along the aforementioned river was the order of the day. A goodly number of birds were found including **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Restless Flycatcher**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **Whistling Kite** and **Australasian Shelduck**.

Friday morning was spent visiting reserves along the Murray and the afternoon involved a visit to Pine Mountain with **Varied Sittellas** being a nice find. After Pine Mountain there was a split in the group. One group went to the Walwa pub and found a **House Sparrow**. The other group dropped into a picnic area on Pine Mountain and found **Red-browed Treecreeper** along with other nice bush birds. Back at camp the resident immature **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** did its first flypast.

Saturday found us at the Burrowa section of the Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park which had lots of nice birds including a very obliging male **Flame Robin**. There was also a rather stunning waterfall. At night we had a meal at the Tintaldra Hotel.

On Sunday it was the turn of Mount Mittamatite Regional Park for a visit. On our way there we had probably the best bit of birding for the whole trip. A rather nondescript roadside verge and paddock with a couple of trees supported twenty plus species including **Diamond Firetail**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **European Goldfinch** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. The Park also had a nice suite of birds including a pair of **Scarlet Robins** showing themselves off.

And what would a birding trip be without a visit to sewerage settlement ponds. Khancoban provided the necessary venue and amongst the birds we found were **Eastern Shrike-tit** and a **Chestnut Teal**. Once again the party split into two groups. One group had another sewerage pond fix at Corryong and found lots of **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** and **Australasian Shoveler**. The other group found **Golden-headed Cisticola** on the farm gate.

That evening a fly pass of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** was a fitting finale. The final total number of bird species was 108 (not including the Guineafowl).

Thank you, Marcus for a great weekend.

Noel Luff

Sunday 7 April – Narrabundah Hill

Twenty one members and guests, including a couple from Perth, joined me on this outing on a surprisingly dry (given the over 70 mm of rain at my nearby place over the two days before), relatively mild and partly sunny, moderately windy morning. We walked for about 1.5 km along the northern and about one quarter of the western boundaries of this reserve, returning by the same route. The aim was to observe the honeyeater migration, as well as to find any mixed feeding flocks (MFF), autumn altitudinal migrants and any late departing summer migrants.

I had expected honeyeaters to come through after the two previous likely poor migration days and we did see a conservative total of at least 150 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (YFHE). However, these were in groups of no more than about 8, and also the vast majority were seen along the northern boundary. As well as being in small groups, many YFHE were feeding quite low, including in the blackberries, even dropping to the ground, very unusual in my experience during migration. Also, quite a few were flying the “wrong way” to the west rather than east. We stopped for morning tea under the usual main migration path about a quarter of the way down the western boundary, but only about 15 YFHE came through in over 20 minutes, with some of them also heading west. No **White-naped Honeyeaters** were seen or heard amongst them.

Other birds were moving through, the most notable of these being around 85 **Red Wattlebirds**, most of these over about a 15 minute period halfway along the northern fence, with in one case around 20 birds stopping in a dead tree for around a minute. In a smaller group, also resting in a dead tree, Duncan McCaskill noticed an **Olive-backed Oriole** sitting high in the same tree, affording reasonable views for all before it moved on. Other species, partial migrants like the above, also seemed to be moving through but it was much harder to get good views of them. These included many **Silvereyes** with some of the buff-flanked Tasmanian forms seen, often feeding in the blackberries, and **Spotted Pardalotes** mainly identified by their call as they moved through. Even the **Grey Fantails**, of which we saw over 10 mainly singly or together,



Easter Camp, Upper Murray: Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Nankeen Kestrel, Straw-necked Ibis, Spot the four species, Fuscous Honeyeater, Australian White Ibis

Marcus Hellyer

didn't show as well as usual, nor did the larger 4 **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** flying over. While lots of species were feeding together, there wasn't really the classic mixed feeding flock that I had expected. **Red-browed Finches** were also feeding in the blackberries but also proved to be surprisingly hard to view.

The undoubted highlight of the morning was the **Scarlet Robins**. We first saw a male which showed very well at the north-west corner (it didn't even move when a lady with a very large dog walked right under the tree) and briefly its partner, with then another pair on the western side which allowed everyone very good views. Then the slowest of those returning to the cars saw 2 males and one female about 400 m from the car park. I was very pleased to find 7 birds there this time as they have been very hard to find in recent years.

A bird that did show itself very well was the single **White-eared Honeyeater**, like the robins another altitudinal migrant. It sat quietly at the top of a dead tree for at least 5 minutes, without calling at all. The surprise find of the morning was a female **Crescent Honeyeater** seen by only a few participants as it rested briefly at the top of a tree before it moved on with the YFHE. As often happens, there were several raptors trying to take advantage of the birds moving through, the best views being of a female **Collared Sparrowhawk** as it circled above us several times. Earlier we had seen what we concluded was an **Australian Hobby** as it flew over after having disturbed the birds. A couple of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were also seen circling around a distance away above the trig point.

At 32 species, this was the second lowest number in the now 10 trips I have led at this timing (the lowest was 31 species in 2021; there have usually been between 42 and 50). The reason for this very low count wasn't clear, as the conditions looked very good, and I had expected birds to be active after the heavy rain of the previous days. Nevertheless, participants enjoyed the morning, and I was reminded again of how important COG outings can be as social occasions.
Jack Holland

Sunday 14 April – K2C surveys, Bredbo area

The autumn K2C surveys were held on a fine morning with light winds, although with a foggy start for a few sites around Bredbo. A total of 92 species was recorded, a good number for autumn given that many of the summer migrants had departed.

A highlight for many sites was the migration of honeyeaters, even during the fog. The majority of the flocks were **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, as expected, with a smaller proportion of **White-naped**. A few small flocks of Red **Wattlebirds** were noted migrating, and one **Crescent Honeyeater**. **White-eared Honeyeaters** were present in ones or twos at many sites and occasionally seemed to be moving with the **Yellow-faced**. The more sedentary honeyeaters were also in good numbers – **Fuscous**, **Brown-headed** and **White-plumed**. No **Noisy Friarbirds** were recorded (which is usual for the autumn surveys).

Other highlights included **Spotted Quail-thrush**, a rarely recorded species in the surveys, **Australian Owlet Nightjar** recorded at 2 sites, and **Pied Butcherbird** with an immature bird – a very interesting breeding record. Eight **Hooded Robins** were recorded at Scottsdale in 3 separate locations, although this was the only property where they were recorded in this survey. Other threatened species were **Scarlet Robin** (8 properties), **Dusky Woodswallow** (8), **Speckled Warbler** (7), **Brown Treecreeper** (5), **Flame Robin** (3), **Diamond Firetail** (2), and **Southern Whiteface** (1), as well as **Restless Flycatcher** (2) and **Jacky Winter** (1).

Thank you to the volunteers, regular and new. Thanks also to the landholders for continued participation, and to Bush Heritage for hosting our post-survey lunch. The next surveys will be in October.

Nicki Taws

Wednesday 17 April – The Sanctuary, Tidbinbilla NR

Eighteen members and friends assembled at the Sanctuary car park in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve for an exploration of the bird life, led by Sandra Henderson. The weather was mild and still, with light cloud. Noteworthy birds appeared very soon, including a **Bassian Thrush**, which posed for photographs, and a **Crested**



Bassian Thrush

Sandra Henderson



Crested Shrike-tit

Duncan McCaskill

Shrike-tit, while an **Eastern Whipbird** called loudly from dense undergrowth. At the first pond we visited, an **Azure Kingfisher** darted across our field of view into cover, but soon reappeared and was seen clearly by most of our party. Our route took us on a figure-of-eight along the Sanctuary's footpaths and boardwalks. **Honeyeaters** called constantly, **White-naped** seeming to outnumber **Yellow-faced**. Several **White-eared Honeyeaters** were also heard, along with numerous **Spotted Pardalotes** and some **Eastern Yellow Robins**. **Grey Fantails** were easy to see, and one **White-throated Treecreeper** showed itself well. Some participants managed good, if brief, views of a **Rose Robin**. The resident pinioned **Musk Duck** gave an energetic performance, and a pair of **Black Swans** tended their nest right beside the boardwalk, untroubled by passers-by. Raptors were not in

evidence, with the exception of a **Brown Goshawk** circling overhead. Sandra was able to inform us that one of two **Little Pied Cormorants** seen was a flightless specimen named 'Garfield'. Towards the end of our walk, we came upon a sizeable flock of **White-naped** and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, with some **Silvereyes**, busily plunging into the water of one of the ponds and perching to preen. As we were about to disperse, a **Crested Shrike-tit** (perhaps two?) made an appearance in some tall eucalypts and offered very good views.

Our thanks to Sandra for exceeding all our ornithological expectations. Some Southern Brown Bandicoots were a nice bonus.

Kevin Windle

Sunday 21 April – McLeods Creek Nature Reserve, Gunning

On a perfect sunny and still, autumn morning, 13 members visited two sections of the 204 ha reserve. This reserve was declared in 2010 and is made up of two sections. We visited the grassland section first with some quite impressive remnant trees and recent regrowth, but severely eroded gullies. The large Eastern Grey Kangaroo population (including 2 white ones) keeps the grass mown, and there were very few weeds thanks to effective spraying. One dead tree contained a pair of **Black-shouldered Kites**, **Australian Magpie**, **Red-rumped Parrots**, **Eastern Rosella** and **European Starling**. A **Brown Falcon** temporarily disrupted things, but calm soon returned. Two **Dusky Woodswallows** and one **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** were seen, late to migrate or over-winterers? The usual range of cockatoos and parrots was recorded including one **Superb Parrot** and three **Australian King Parrots**. The grassland section yielded 29 species.

We then drove to the woodland section of the park and birded along the boundary between it and the grassland, returning to the cars through the woodland. We were hoping for robins, but none were seen. In fact, the birds were sparse and mainly unobtrusive, with **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Grey Shrike-thrush** giving just an occasional short call. A party of **White-winged Choughs** was seen, and **Eastern Spinebills** were busy in the flowering mistletoe.

As is often the case, "carpark birds" were the stars of the morning, with **White-eared Honeyeater**, a female **Golden Whistler** and a **White-throated Treecreeper** all showing well and at close quarters. The 16 species recorded in the woodland section gave us a cumulative total of 37 species, a very respectable outcome for an autumn outing.

Thanks to Bill Graham who always comes up with interesting places to go birding.

Sue Lashko

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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.

Description: This **Sunday 5 May – Square Rock**

The walk up to Square Rock from the carpark will require some energy, but is quite achievable at birdwatching pace, and the view at the top is worth the climb. The round trip is approximately 6 kilometres. Possible birds include **Bassian Thrush** and **Spotted Quail-thrush**, as well as good views of raptors at the top.

Meet at the Kambah shops at 8:30am for carpooling.

Bring water and morning tea, and wear sturdy shoes. **Bring** a warm jumper and/or a rain jacket in case of any deterioration in the weather.

Register at liabattisson@outlook.com with your name, mobile number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Lia Battisson

Sunday 12 May – North Pine Island Loop Walk

The aim is to walk from North Pine Island along the Murrumbidgee Discovery Track to the Stone Wall, then back to Pine Island via the Centennial Track and Bicentennial National Trail. This takes in a good variety of habitats. The total distance is almost 5 km, as there's a locked gate at the playground. However, the ups are small and not steep, and we could shorten the walk, if appropriate.

Meet at the Playground at North Pine Island at 9.00am. **Bring** water and morning tea, and wear sturdy shoes and appropriate clothing for the cooler weather.

Register at mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au with your name, mobile number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Michael Robbins

Wednesday 15 May- Montgomery Creek, Googong

We will walk along the Creek on paths that are mainly concrete. It is an easy walk, and the return loop is about 3 kms.

Meet in the carpark of Heazlett St, Googong at 8:30am. **Caution:** There is also a Heazlett St in Gungahlin.

Bring water and a snack, and wear sturdy shoes. **Bring** a warm jumper and/or rain jacket in case of any deterioration in the weather.

Register at liabattisson@outlook.com with your name, mobile number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Saturday 18 May- Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

This morning walk will be the first for 2024 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours.

Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter.

Registration is essential; please provide your name and mobile phone number, as well as an emergency contact name and number. Book your place with Anthony (0419202155, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide.

If you do not have binoculars, please let me know as COG can supply you with a pair to use on the day.

Note that the aim of the walk is to introduce you to **bird-watching**, not bird photography, so please leave your camera at home.

Anthony Overs

Sunday 26 May – venue required and leader required. Contact Sue Lashko if you can help.

Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 June – Eden pelagics

Currently, the boat is full on both days but there are often last-minute cancellations, so if you like to go on the waiting list, contact Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com.

Sunday 9 June - Wollgorang Lagoon and Wet Lagoon, Cullerin and Lade Vale.

This will be in open country and a good tally of raptors is possible. Wollgorang Road is about 5kms past Rowes Lagoon on the Federal Highway. Look out for **White-fronted Chats** and **Black Kite**. Wet Lagoon has **Whistling Kites** and **Swamp Harriers**. Cullerin Road at Mutmutbilly Creek had **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** recently. Lade Vale Stockpile is good for **Diamond Firetails**.



Meet in the carpark close to the road at Lyneham Netball Centre in Northbourne Ave (just north of the Mouat St/Antill St lights) at 8.00 am for carpooling. Distance covered will be approximately 200 kilometres, so the suggested contribution by each passenger to their driver is \$10 (please bring cash). The trip will be slow birding along back roads with little walking. Degree of difficulty easy. End time approx. 2.30pm. Bring water, hat, sunscreen, morning tea and lunch, and wear long pants and appropriate footwear. Morning tea will be at the park in Breadalbane and lunch in the park at Gunning – picnic tables and toilets available at both locations.

Please register with the leader by 7 June with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Numbers limited to 16 (4 vehicles).

Bill Graham (bsgraham1948@gmail.com)

Saturday 15 June - Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve - Superb Lyrebird survey

Since the January 2003 bushfires we have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. We wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join us for a morning's survey. We are calling for expressions of interest to join us at 8.00am at the Reserve car park to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. For previous survey results see *Gang-gang* p11, July 2023.

Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au) 0418 679 847 and Peter Fullagar

Sunday 23 June – Oaks Estate

Note the change of date from 26 May.

Meet at 9am at the lower end of River St in Oaks Estate. There's a small dirt parking area right at the end, otherwise park on River St, preferably on the same side as any cars already there. This is an easy walk, along the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers. Most of the time we will be in the ACT, but a diversion to the historic Riverside Cemetery takes us into NSW. It is an 'out-and-back-walk' (about 6km total distance), all on tracks.

As usual, bring hat, sunscreen and water, and wear sturdy shoes.

Register with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Sandra Henderson



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Image Credit: Alan Landford

Woodland Surveys – autumn 2024 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Note: not all sites are reported.

Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 24 March in nice weather, clear, still and mild temperatures. The total species of 57 was the highest for autumn survey since 2015; usually this is in 45-55 range. A number of spring migrants were still around in small numbers, a **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** a highlight, both **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, and a couple of **Rufous Whistlers**. There were noticeable flocks of mixed **Pardalotes (Spotted & Striated**, higher numbers of Spotted), with 40 total in one flock at site 11 just south of the Woolshed: also some **Grey Fantails** moving on the west ridge. **Scarlet Robins** (1-2 birds) were recorded at 7 sites, and near the Woolshed where a male appeared and called as the group finished morning tea and headed out. Both **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared honeyeater** were recorded at a few sites; these species occur more in the autumn/winter months. Other species of interest, small numbers of **Superb Parrots** in 1-4 range, west ridge, near site 4 north of the Woolshed, and the SE side of the reserve north of the large dam. An **Aust. Owlet Nightjar** at site 17 was a good record. **Speckled Warbler** and **Varied Sittella** were also recorded. Small groups of **Red-browed Finches** and **Superb Fairy-wrens** were seen at site 22 on the eastern side (those species are in small numbers at Mulligans). A **Great Egret** at the large dam. No flocks of migratory **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were around, just a couple of single birds in different areas.

Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve (southern area)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley did the autumn survey on 3 April in excellent conditions. It was mostly sunny, mild and with light winds. The reserve had dried out a lot over the previous month with a couple of the smaller dams water-free, and a lot of the ground vegetation having browned off. They recorded 43 species for the morning, a decent total for autumn, although only 27 of these were recorded during 10 minutes counts. Small birds were generally scarce during counts, the only mixed flocks were encountered between sites.

Amongst the more interesting species recorded during counts were a **Brown Falcon** and a male **Mistletoebird** at site 1, a couple of **Rufous Whistlers** calling, **White-throated Treecreepers** heard at sites 7 and 9, a **Superb Parrot** at site 6, and a **Dusky Woodswallow** at site 3. Another 5 **Dusky Woodswallows** were seen off site. Other incidental records included a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, a displaying male **Brown Goshawk**, a female **Scarlet Robin** with a mixed flock



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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that also included thornbills, **Silvereyes**, **Speckled Warblers** and **Red-browed Finches**, and a **Western Gerygone** with another smaller mixed flock. There were single records only of **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler**.

Mt Majura Nature Reserve

The survey was conducted over 2 days by Kathy Walter and John Goldie. Bird activity was generally quiet with 2 to 11 species per site for a total of 23 species. Three other species were heard outside of the survey areas. They usually see 1-2 **Common Bronzings** somewhere in sites 1-5, however sites 3 and 4 each had over a half dozen birds – around 20 **Common Bronzings** flushed in different places – quite an unusual number. Gang-gangs are reasonably common on Mt Majura, mostly seen in the afternoon as they move from the suburbs to the mountain to roost. However, **Gang-gangs** are not often recorded in the surveys (probably because the surveys are not at dawn or late afternoon). Site 3 had a flock of 6 **Gang-gangs** heading to the suburbs and site 4 also had a flock of 6 plus another pair sometime later, so it was good to get some records of this species in the survey. The highlight was stumbling on a mixed flock at site 5. After zero small birds at all other sites, apart from the occasional **Pardalote**, site 5 produced only small birds – 11 species in all. Two **Scarlet Robins** were calling – this species is recorded around once per year. Four **Brown Quail** were flushed and conveniently landed only 4-5 metres further away – some years they are heard in the Mt Majura area, but this is the first time they could recall seeing them on a survey.

Mt Ainslie Nature Reserve /Campbell Park

On 18 March 2024 Michael Lenz surveyed the 9 sites on the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie under mild, mainly overcast conditions. All sites had dense ground cover, to a significant extent from weeds. Overall, it was rather quiet with low numbers of small birds. The most widespread species were **Noisy Miner** (8 sites), **Crimson Rosella** (7) and **Eastern Rosella** (4). Species of interest were **Brown Goshawk**, **Common Bronzewing** (a rarity at the site these days), **Dollarbird**, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, **Speckled Warbler**, **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Rufous** and **Golden Whistler**. Only a small mixed feeding flock was encountered between sites. The only breeding record was of a **Dusky Woodswallow** feeding an almost fully grown young. 23 species were recorded at sites, a further 18 between sites.

Majura Field Range

On Thursday 21 March, Kim Farley and Sue Beatty visited the Majura Defence Training Area for the quarterly survey. It was a perfect sunny and calm morning. The sunshine was very welcome as it was only 5 degrees when they started. Overall, they recorded 35 species at the seven sites able to be accessed. As can happen at the Training Area, one site was inaccessible due to Defence activity on the day.

For the most part the species seen were the expected ones for the location and time of year. It was nice to record a male **Rufous Whistler** at one site, and an immature **Golden Whistler** with brown-edged primaries at another. **Scarlet Robins** were recorded at four sites (a total of five birds). Both **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones** were recorded at several sites. Honeyeaters were low in number with only a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, a couple of **White-eared Honeyeaters** and one **Brown-headed Honeyeater**. **Noisy Miners** were again in very low numbers at sites where they were common in past years. A group of five **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were gathered at one place between sites. The only on-site raptors were one **Black-shouldered Kite** warming itself in the sunshine atop a dead tree and a **Nankeen Kestrel** doing much the same thing on another tree at the same place. No **Cuckoos** or **Orioles** were heard or seen anywhere. The last bird of interest was a single **Diamond Firetail** on the power line by the Range Control Office. Alas, this spot is not a Woodland Survey site, so the bird didn't make it onto the survey sheets.



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Newline

Sue Lashko conducted the survey on 6 March, an initially partly cloudy morning in calm conditions with temperatures in the low 20s. Birds were generally quiet, with the exception of the many **Rainbow Lorikeets**, as well as other parrots and cockatoos. The widespread blackberry bushes were home to very healthy **Superb Fairy-wren** populations and the distinctive call of recently fledged young. **Red-browed Finches** and **Silvereyes** were feasting on the blackberries. A pair of **Dusky Woodswallows** had 3 juveniles flying around with them. There were a few **Tree Martins**, one seen exiting a tree hollow, but nowhere near the numbers that were present before **Common Starlings** became so dominant. There were single sightings of **White-throated Gerygone** and **Noisy Friarbird**, as well as several **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**. The only raptors seen were two **Black-shouldered Kites**, each perched in the top of the dead tree in different sites within view of each other. The only unusual sighting of the morning was a **Brown Quail** on the track adjacent to Site 7. The species count of 36 was about normal for an autumn survey.

Symonston – Callum Brae Nature Reserve

Sandra Henderson did the survey on Saturday 23 March. The early morning was very cool but birds were plentiful. As is often the case, some of the best birds were seen between survey points - a perched **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Australasian Grebes** with two small young, **Rainbow Lorikeets** exploring hollows, and a mixed flock of small birds about 200 metres from the 4th site, which included **White-throated Gerygones**, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, **White-throated Treecreepers** and various **Thornbills**. 44 species were seen around Callum Brae, with 20 of those species outside the designated survey points. The second site, often under water, now has a large area of waist-high very thick grass, and the blackberries are spreading rapidly in many areas.

Jerrabomberra West Nature Reserve

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey in the woodland patch on Easter Monday 1 April. The conditions were overall fine and mild, however, there was mist/fog in the valley overnight which made the ground vegetation wet (long dried grass, several weed species). Shoes and lower trousers were very damp by the time they finished just before 10am. Again, it was a survey where they had to divert around some patches of thick weed growth. Fortunately, the sites were clear of low mist by the time they arrived. A total of 31 species was recorded, the lower end of average for autumn. Noticeable species moving through at most sites were **Grey Fantails** and **Silvereyes**, and a few **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes**. Sites 4, 5 and 7 deeper in the woodland had several **Thornbill** species (**Buff-rumped**, **Striated**, **Yellow-rumped**) and **Weebills**, with two **Laughing Kookaburras** calling loudly at site 4. A few **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes** were around, one **Rufous Whistler** and one **Red Wattlebird** were recorded. **Common Starlings** were flocked in reasonable numbers, especially on the grasslands edge, and a flock of 21 **European Goldfinches** was seen around thistle patches on the way out through the grasslands. 16 **Crested Pigeons** were on the electricity wires crossing the reserve. No special species such as **Scarlet** or **Flame Robins** were recorded this time, although these species are sometimes present at the autumn survey. And there was no migratory honeyeater movement during the survey, probably reflecting the early misty, overcast conditions.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Friday 29 March, on a mostly clear, warm and still morning. Honeyeaters were represented by **White-eared**, **White-naped**, **Red Wattlebird**, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Yellow-faced**, which were moving east in small numbers. There were lots of small birds about and several small, mixed feeding flocks were observed during surveys and between sites. Highlights were three separate observations of **Scarlet Robins**, a **Common Bronzewing**, a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** and a **Collared Sparrowhawk**. In all, 22 species were observed in sites, and a further 16 in between, which is close to the average for that time of the year.

Naas Sites

Julie McGuinness conducted the survey on this rural lease south of Tharwa on 22 March. The weather was partly cloudy, cool to mild and calm. Species diversity and species numbers had remained low over the last few surveys. This survey a total of only 25 species was recorded in the sites. Both **Rosella** species and **Striated Pardalote** were the only species seen in any numbers. Only one spring/summer migrant species was seen – a couple of **Rufous Whistlers**. No small honeyeaters were observed on the move. The only honeyeater species were **Red Wattlebird** and a few resident **Noisy Miners**. Of the local woodland bird species of concern, two, **Jacky Winter** and a **Scarlet Robin** were observed.

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2023-2024 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

Mark Wood

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for June 2024 edition:

Wednesday 29 May 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.

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