



Gang-gang

JULY 2024

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JULY MEETING

Wednesday 10 July 2024

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

The July 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.

Geoffrey Dabb – Bird names and good intentions

Lori Gould – local Latham's Snipe project video

Please note that construction is currently occurring around the Gabriel Drive parking area, and access to there is not available. So please use the Chapel Drive entrance and park there. Then proceed to the Multi-media Centre (MMT) using the alternative route the Canberra Girls Grammar School has provided as shown in the [map on p 8](#).

Once parked proceed down past the Chapel and smaller Admin Offices, keeping them to your left. Just past the latter turn left along a relatively flat and straight broad path [Continued Page 2](#)

Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the first 4 weeks of winter from 29 May to 25 June inclusive covered by this column has often been cold, cloudy, windy and showery though with only one moderate rain event. Towards the end there were some more clearer days with some significant frosts. Given that it's mooted as likely to be the coldest June in over 10 years it is not surprising that my analysis below shows that bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) has remained very low. Few of the spring/summer migrants, some which don't overwinter, were reported during the period. There has again been a very low number of "unusual" species reported.

The only "special unusual" species to attract widespread attention during the period was the female **Pink Robin** which was at first somewhat tentatively and briefly reported from The Pinnacle by John Brannan on 25 May, but then confirmed on 30 May through Ben Milbourne's photographs, with it then noted a photograph had been put up earlier on NatureMapr on

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Pink Robin

Zachary Flegg

keeping the columns to you left. Near to the end, go left up the 3 m wide steps, turn half right and you will find an open glass door. Go through this, across the empty room and past the toilets, and then enter the MMT either through the bottom MMT door or go further along and up the steps where you reach the usual entry door. Though it is well lit, as it will be dark a torch for finding your way to the MMT and back to your car after the meeting is recommended.

For July there will be two presentations of roughly equal length:

The first presentation will be by **Geoffrey Dabb** on ‘**Bird names and good intentions. Why our bird names are in something of a muddle. Is there good reason to expect any improvement?**’

In Australia we have had more than 100 years of trying to arrive at a satisfactory set of bird names in English for written use. Part of the problem is that there have been too many well-meaning suggestions. Although intended to promote uniformity, most of these have barely gained some general support before a counter-suggestion has come along. This has created less rather than more consistency for the growing numbers of people who use bird names. In 2024 we are about to see further developments in the bird names arena. Are there good prospects for uniformity, or will matters get worse?

The second presentation will be by **Lori Gould** who will be showing the **video entitled “Snipe”**.

Lori will give a brief introduction to this video which shows the local Latham’s Snipe project that she has been conducting with the help of many volunteers (including some well-known COG/Canberra Birds identities) at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. It is a very good overview of this project and will complement very nicely the presentation on the Australian Painted-snipe at the June meeting. Lori will be happy to take questions about it after the showing.

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

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27 May. The bird was then seen and photographed by a number of observers up to 13 June. I found this length of time surprising as it was present in the Stringybark woodland on the western slope of the Reserve with, I understand, a grassy rather than shrubby understory.

It prefers wet forests and gullies with dense understory, and thus I expected it to move through to the ANBG from where it has been more often reported. Indeed, it was then revealed that on 8 May a female **Pink Robin** had been caught there in a mist net and photographed (it was also noted as “ringed” – banded?) by Samuelle Ramellini, a Ph D student at the Research School of Biology, ANU. COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) notes it as a rare, non-breeding migrant which occurs in higher elevation ranges and forests along the SE Great Dividing Range. The eBird map shows that, apart from the ANBG, it has been reported from only 5 other locations since the start of 2018.

Of spring/summer migrants still present in May, during June there were no further reports of the **Western Gerygone** (last report 24 April) and **Fairy Martin** (last report 19 May). However, there was a single report of a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** calling repeatedly (but not able to be located) at Campbell Park on 9 June, but there were reports from 4 locations of the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory local cuckoo. As well as this, there were reports of up to 2 **Australian Reed-Warblers** at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR to 13 June, and reports of **Tree Martin** from 2 locations, the most recent being 2 on the Gibraltar fire trail of the Tidbinbilla NR on 15 June.

Of the birds that usually leave by the end of April or in May the **Noisy Friarbird** was still reported from 1 location, 3 birds at the Googong Sewage Treatment Plant on 11 June. There was also a report of a single **Rufous Whistler** at 1 location, at the JWNR on 21 June. Up to 15 **Dusky Woodswallows** were reported from the JWNR (a favourite winter spot for them) to 25 June, but it was reported from only 1 other location, a single bird near Lade Vale on 1 June. Surprisingly the

Olive-backed Oriole was also reported from only 2 locations, single birds at the ANBG between 5-20 June and at Symonston between 31 May and 22 June.

In contrast the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was still present at around 25 locations and the **Grey Fantail** from over 70 locations. Likewise, the **Mistletoebird** was still reported from a remarkable 13 locations and the **Superb Parrot** reported from around 34 locations, 19 of these being south of LBG (from where they have been reported from many personal locations).

So, during July please keep an eye out for the overwintering spring/summer migrants mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as for any others mentioned above that.

Of the species that return to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, **Scarlet Robins** were again widespread being reported from over 40 urban/peri-urban locations. In contrast, despite the colder weather the **Flame Robin** has been reported from just 12 such locations, only slightly up from May. I have found them hard to find locally, with only up to 4 seen at their usually regular late autumn/winter spot on the SW slopes of Mt Arawang. The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 6 locations, all of them well E of the Murrumbidgee River. See above for the **Pink Robin** sightings.

There were reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** from 7 urban/peri-urban locations, including up to 3 birds regularly from the ANBG. This is from a total of 12 locations during the period, the most remarkable being the 23 birds reported from the Tidbinbilla NR on 29 May, where they are known to be attracted by the flowering silver banksias. There were reports of **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** from 4 locations, easily the maximum numbers being 12 birds reported from the Googong Sewage Treatment Plant on 11 June.

Up to 2 **Bassian Thrush** were reported from the ANBG up to 10 June, as well as one from Whiskers Rd Carwoola on 6 and 9 June, and from Mt Majura on 21 June. There was a report of a single **Swift Parrot** at the Aranda Snow Gums NR on 8 June, but there have been no reports of the **Brown Gerygone** during the period. So please keep an eye out for them as well as the other species mentioned above anywhere in the COG Aol.



Crescent Honeyeater

Zachary Flegg

Apart from the **Pink Robin** there were again very few “unusual” birds reported. No **Magpie Geese** or **Freckled Duck** were reported in the COG Aol during the period, and only a single **Plumed Whistling Duck** was reported from the Trucking Yard Lane dam. As usual the **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 9 locations to the NE through to the E of Canberra, with the maximum being the 60 ducks seen at the Trucking Yard Lane dam on 1 June. These numbers are well down from May.

Up to 6 (a female and 5 well grown youngsters) **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported only from the Upper Stranger Pond to 12 June (to where did the over 424 ducks on Lake Bathurst in April go?). Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 2 locations only, a single male on Wet Lagoon, Breadalbane on 8 June, and a female on Yerrabi Pond on 23 June. However, no **Great-crested Grebe** were reported during the period.

No Stubble Quail were reported during the period, but **Brown Quail** were reported from around 12 locations, down from May but including a remarkable 30 birds (3 different groups of approximately 10 each in different areas) from the Arawang Saddle area of the Cooleman Ridge NR on 4 June. Single **Painted Button-quail** were reported only from Bluetts Block on 28 May and The Pinnacle on 7 June, but, again no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

The status of the latter species in the COG Aol is unclear to me. The eBird map back to 1 January 2018 indicates sightings at only 8 locations in the 6.5 years since, and COG’s 2018-2019 ABR indicates only 16 records on the COG

database, importantly these are from 9 widespread areas. I suspect they may be under reported as, like other quail, many observers will not get a good enough look when they are flushed to be confident of their identification.

A single **Peaceful Dove** was again reported from the ANBG on 13 May, but no **White-headed Pigeons**, **Brush Bronzings**, **Diamond** or **Bar-shouldered Doves** were reported during the period. There were also no further reports of the **White-throated Nightjar**.

On 3 June Ben Ward reported a **Brown Cuckoo-Dove** in Griffith, noting it was a large, long-tailed pigeon with brown upperparts and pale orange-brown underparts, with obvious rufous undertail coverts in flight. It was similar in size and shape to a king parrot, but the head very clearly that of a pigeon. It was seen from about 30 metres perched in a bare tree for several minutes, before flying into a densely leafed magnolia almost directly above the footpath where it moved around for the rest of the time he observed it. Unfortunately, he was walking the dog so didn't have his camera, and by the time he was back with it the bird had gone. There were reports by Ben and others of this species in the area earlier in the year, but this seems to have been the first one of this coastal species accepted into eBird.

There were again no **Baillon's Crake** reported during the period, but **Spotless Crakes** were reported from a remarkable over 40 locations, well up from May, and again largely due to targeted observations over several days (see below). In contrast the **Australian Spotted Crake** was not reported during the period. **Buff-banded Rails** were reported from 3 locations only, single birds near the big dam at Mulligans Flat on 28 May and at the Patrick White Pond (Franklin) on 13 June, and 2 birds at the JVNR on 18 June, but **Lewin's Rails** were reported from over 25 locations, with a maximum of 7 birds over a 1 km transect.

As I mentioned in my previous column, I find the above results very interesting, in particular the remarkable numbers of **Spotless Crakes** and **Lewin's Rails**, both once thought to be very rare in the COG Aol. I understand they are from targeted surveys using Google Maps to identify potential sites in the ACT and COG Aol where the birds may occur. The focus is on natural and artificial drainage lines on publicly accessible grasslands, paddocks, parklands and roadsides, and where the satellite image shows dense vegetation along the drainage line, using playback to elicit response calls.

Three **Banded Lapwings** were reported from the Wollagorang Rd on 8 June but no **Pied Stilts**, **Red-necked Avocets**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Common**, **Pectoral** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, or **Red-necked Stint** were reported during the period. Also, no **Caspian**, **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Tern** or **Australasian Little/Black-backed Bittern** were reported during the period.

No **Little** or **Plumed** (formerly **Intermediate**) **Egrets** were reported during the period, and **Great Egrets** were reported from only 2 locations in the NE of the COG Aol (well down from May). **White-necked Heron** were reported from 4 locations, also from the N of the COG Aol and especially from the Wollagorang area from where 11 birds were reported on 31 May. No **Royal Spoonbills** were reported, but up to 2 **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 5 locations. No **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 9 July

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 on the second Tuesday of the month.

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

Look for the table with the binoculars on it.



Barn Owls were reported at 5 locations during the period, the most remarkable being the two roosting in a hollow at a property on Kambah Pool Road. The birds were reported to usually appear and spend a while at the entrance to the hollow just after 17:00 h, before departing to hunt just after dark. I thought 2 together roosting in a hollow was unusual as in my experience they are usually singly in trees where their presence is often revealed through the mobbing of other species, but checking the literature indicates this is not necessarily so.

Black-shouldered Kites were again reported from many locations, confirming that there are mice around, as suggested by single **Spotted Harriers** being reported from 5 locations. However, there were no reports of the **Pacific Baza**, **Grey Goshawk**, **Black Kite** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from 2 locations, the Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla NR on 1 June and the JWNR on 10 June. A single **Purple-crowned Lorikeet** was again reported from the Phillip area of the Woden Valley on 28 May, but no **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**, **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period, though up to 7 **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from just 2 locations.

A **Blue-faced Honeyeater** was heard in calling in Griffith on 29 May, confirming sighting of the bird briefly seen on 25 May. This appears to be the first record on the eastern side of Red Hill, but 3 birds were also reported from the ANU on 11 June and 2 birds overnight on 31 May-1 June at Yass, both known locations for this species. No **Singing**, **Scarlet** or **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period.

Again **White-fronted Chats** were not reported from the ACT, with the only location being from the Wollogorang Rd with 2 birds seen on 31 May and 10 on 8 June. Up to 4 **Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens** were reported only from Whiskers Rd Carwoola to 11 June. A **Tawny Grassbird** was heard and briefly seen on Tharwa Drive on 20 June, but no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Red-capped Robin** or **Zebra Finch** were reported during the period.

Again, very few “unusual” bush birds, in particular pigeons/doves, raptors, parrots and honeyeaters, were reported during the period.

Of the species I have asked readers to keep a special lookout for, a single **Jacky Winter** was reported only from the Top Naas Rd on 3 June, the same date and place of the only **Hooded Robin** reported during the period. **Restless Flycatchers** were reported from 2 locations in the N of the COG Aol, with single birds at the known spot, the Nelanglo TSR, on 18-23 June, and at Jerrawa NE of Yass on 1 June. These are, not surprisingly, well down from May, in particular for the last-named which often moves in closer to Canberra in late autumn/winter.

Limited breeding information has come to my attention for the first month of winter, apart from the **Blue-billed Duck** above and the **Little Corellas** below. The **Black-shouldered Kite** is a well-known autumn/winter breeder, but a trawl through the eBird records found only 2 such observations: 1 juvenile at Mt Painter on 8 June and 2 immatures and 1 juvenile at the Ginninderry Conservation Corridor on 18 June (2 fledglings were also there on 21 June). This is surprising given the high numbers present (see above) so please keep an eye out, especially for the juveniles/immatures with their orange heads.

Mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have still been reported with a feature Andrea and I have noticed, particularly from one very large one, is that they have often been very active and moving along very quickly so that it has been very hard to identify all the species, let alone the numbers of each in them. So, keep watching out for MFFs as they will keep forming until breeding starts in earnest in July.

On the morning of 7 June Anthony Overs was in his car waiting at the lights to turn right onto Lady Denman Drive from Cotter Rd. He could



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hear a couple of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos** (YTBC) calling in the mature pine trees on the north-west corner of the intersection. After pulling over he was pleasantly surprised to see a few cockies and hear several of last season's dependent young calling.

After thinking there were perhaps 20 birds present, they all took off and flew around in circles above the trees and the intersection, revealing their true number of at least 90-100 birds. At this point, they were joined by another 20-30 birds that had been in the pines across the road in the golf course. Anthony noted it was total chaos as they wheeled about above him, all calling. He didn't know what set them off, but after about five minutes they had calmed down, many returned to the old pines and some birds headed east. Despite taking photos and video with his phone, Anthony noted it was very difficult to count them. He decided on 120 birds, noting it would have been handy if they all left in one direction in an orderly fashion!

I posted that on the morning of 29 May, Andrea and I counted at least 120 **YTBC** as they left the casuarinas on the Molonglo below the Edgeworth (Holden's Creek) dam wall in small groups flying upstream to feed in the pines about 1 km away. So, I expected his estimate was accurate. On the afternoon of the morning of 7-8 June they were prominent around my place in Chapman, with at least 10 feeding on borer grubs in my large river oak. At the COG meeting on 12 June 200 were reported from Narrabundah Hill, but interestingly there have been very few in the local area since.

On 14 June Shorty had two large groups of **Little Corellas** fly over his place in Symonston, first group of about 600 heading North and then a second group of about 200 birds also flying North giving an estimate of 800. Some did land and he heard the begging calls of a young, noting that it seemed a little late in the year? Checking the BIRD INFO data on the COG website shows dependent young for the **Little Corella** from December through to May, but the numbers are very small (only 14 records to 2017-2018 with a maximum of 4 records in March). So, it may well be a first record for June.

While I was counting **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** roosts several years back, the only time I observed dependent young was from April to late July which fits into the understanding that dependent young of large cockatoos (as for the **YTBC** above) stay with their parents for a long time. Based on the many more overall breeding records the BIRD INFO supports this, but whether it also applies to **Little Corellas** remains to be determined.



Flame Robin


Marcus Hellyer

Please watch out for the overwintering spring/summer migrants mentioned above, and for more of the returning autumn/winter altitudinal migrants (especially the **Flame Robin**), the last of the 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

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: MARCH 27th

Look for the table with binoculars on it



EVERYONE WELCOME

Summary of Presentations from the 12 June Meeting

The short presentation was by **Kim Farley** on "**Pilotbird in the ACT. Rare? Yes. Hard to find? Not so much**".

Kim gave a very clear, interesting and authoritative presentation based on her recent excellent Canberra Bird Notes [47, 101-116 (2022)] article on a species occurring in the ACT with which many members were not very familiar but is clearly one of her favourite birds.

She described it as a dark brown, plump, ground dwelling bird larger than a White-browed Scrubwren but smaller than a Grey Shrike-thrush with a tan/rufous forehead, a scaly breast and which often carries its tail half cocked.

As it is shy and lives low down in wet forest with dense scrub layers, it is most easily detected by its far carrying (up to 200 m) call, which is often described as "Guinea a week". While Kim was able to demonstrate this by playing the call, she noted that it does not convey either the sweetness or the variety of the species' call. She also noted that the Pilotbird does not call much, if at all, in autumn/winter away from the breeding season.

Kim clarified that the common name Pilotbird refers to the belief that Superb Lyrebirds follow them across the forest floor, but in reality, the reverse is true as Pilotbirds forage where other ground dwelling birds have scraped away the ground litter.

Kim showed a map of the sightings on eBird which indicates that records in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) since 1986 are entirely in the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River, with also some in the Tallaganda Range to the SE. Also, there are only around 10 published breeding records in the COG AoI.

She noted that many of the COG AoI records were along roads and that she believed the Pilotbird was probably more common than indicated, so she invited members of the audience to become more familiar in targeting this species, especially by staying quiet in suitable habitat and learning its call.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Kim for her very informative and interesting presentation on a species with which many members are not very familiar. Kim is hoping that it will lead to more extensive reports of its presence in the ACT to allow clarification of its status, and in particular more information on its breeding.

The main talk was an absolutely wonderful presentation by **Matt Herring** on "**Tracking the Australian Painted-snipe, a wetland enigma**".

Matt delivered this in a very clear, entertaining manner, pitching it perfectly for the audience of professional and highly motivated amateur bird watchers.

He noted it was 6th on the recently published list of Australia's most elusive birds, and 29th on the list of the world's 100 birds based on their evolutionary distinctiveness and on being globally endangered. Its closest relatives are the Jacanas and the Plains Wanderer, No 1 on this list.

In 2007 it was re-described as a full species, distinct from the Greater Painted-snipe, and is listed as endangered with an estimated population of 340 birds. It is a dynamic, irregular species, favouring ephemeral wetlands in which it is cover dependent, but it also needs low vegetation and mudflats to feed.

As very little was known about its strongholds (e.g. is it nomadic or migratory?), key breeding or wintering sites, or even whether it has an advertisement call, following a surge in sightings after 3 wet years, in late 2022 Matt ran a crowdfunding campaign which raised \$124,048 in 40 days allowing the purchase of trackers to attach to captured birds. At the outset Matt thanked COG/Canberra Birds members and the CBCF for their strong support for this.

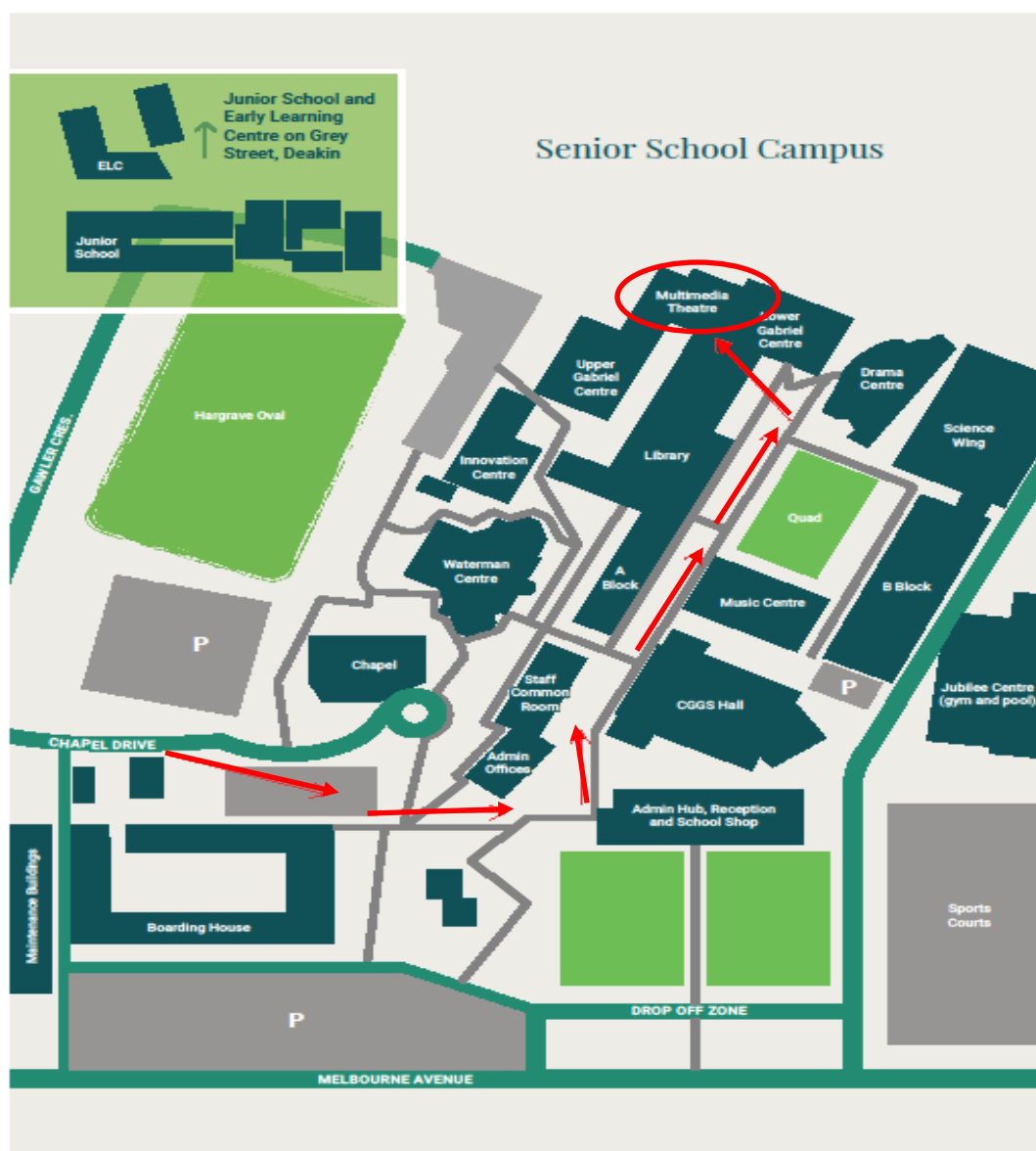
With the help of a team of experts and a very co-operative farmer who at one time had 25 Australian Painted-snipe on his Balranald property (amazingly in flooded wheat stubble) they were able to capture by mist net their first bird (Gloria) in October 2023. Tracking her movements allowed them then to capture a second female (Marcellina) in early 2024.

A very important finding from the tracking is that the birds use surprisingly dry roosts, well away from wetlands, but most significant have been their movements since leaving the Balranald site, with Gloria flying 1134 km to Glengyle Station (near Birdsville) where her tracker rebooted after a 3 months silence and where she has stayed, but Marcellina moving 2142 km in a series of steps to Newcastle Creek in the NT and continuing to move further N.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Matt for his absolutely wonderful presentation. We are delighted that the funding has resulted in such significant initial results which are already providing such important new information on the species, including that small wetlands will now be managed specifically for the Australian Painted-snipe in partnership with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. Our very best wishes that the successes will continue, and we look forward to hearing about them in the future.

Jack Holland

June Meeting : map showing access to the Multi-media Centre (MMT)



Committee News

Canberra Birds Committee met on **20 June 2024** and brought us up to date with progress on the various projects being undertaken at present. These include the COG database and new Annual Bird Reports.

However, the most urgent item at the June meeting was discussion of our submission to the **Ten-Year Review of the Nature Conservation Act 2014 - Discussion Paper**. ACT Government released this Paper on 20 May, with submissions from interested parties due by 1 July. Canberra Birds Committee, and Jenny Bounds in particular, have considered the issues and Jenny has discussed the Review with other stakeholders. The Canberra Birds submission is being finalised at time of writing.

There are three important matters that need to be addressed in a revised Nature Conservation Act. These are similar to recommendations COG made to an earlier 2011 review of the Act:

- The focus and an explicit objective of the legislation should be to achieve effective, landscape-scale conservation and connectivity.
- Lands outside the reserve system (rural, private, leasehold) need to be included in the Nature Conservation Act, as part of a biodiversity conservation network approach.
- The current system and policy of environmental 'offsets' is seriously flawed, and needs to be re-evaluated and changes made, with any provisions for 'offsets' and requirements for their management included in the Nature Conservation Act.

Neil Hermes
President

Canberra Birds Garden Birds Survey Forms

The Canberra Birds bird year is drawing to a close and so are the Garden Bird survey forms for 2023-24. The final date for recording observations from the 2023-24 season is 2 July 2024.

New survey charts will be available at the June and July COG Members Night. Any completed charts can also be left at the meeting. If observations have been entered into EXCEL files then please send to me or to Duncan at duncan.mccaskill@gmail.com

If you are unable to deliver or obtain new charts please contact me to make arrangements for delivery.

Many thanks,
Chris (MOB 0418 679 847)

Annual Membership Fees

[Annual membership fees](#) are due from 1 July each year. To renew your membership, please forward payment by direct deposit to:

Canberra Ornithologists Group
BSB 112 908
Acc No 050111462

Please use **m/ship and surname** as the reference.

We do receive a small number of cheques and these will be banked.

Please do not pay your membership fee for 2024/25 until 1 July or later.

Prue Watters,
Acting Treasurer

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 9 June - Wollogorang Lagoon and Wet Lagoon, Cullerin and Lade Vale

Thirteen keen members endured cold gusty winds throughout the morning as Bill Graham led us on a very enjoyable exploration through the districts of Collector, Breadalbane, Cullerin and Lade Vale (near Gunning). Temperatures ranged from 8 to 11 degrees, with gusts of up to 45 km/h in the morning. A total of 46 species were recorded over 7 sites (noting that there were many repeats across sites).

The first brief stop was the entrance to Collector Travelling Stock Reserve, with a highlight being a **Nankeel Kestrel** and **Australian Shelduck** and 9 other species. A roadside stop adjacent to Wet Lagoon (Breadalbane) (17 species) afforded great views of 2 active **Swamp Harriers** above the reeds and sightings of 7 **Flame Robins**, a **Brown Falcon**, 3 **Black-fronted Dotterels**, 2 **Australian Shelducks** and a lone male **Musk Duck**. 53 **Black Swans** were also counted, mostly gathered along the lagoon shore. Brief roadside stops in Breadalbane Village (11 species) and the Cullerin Range (9 species) confirmed the presence of 2 **Black-shouldered Kites**, a **Golden Whistler** and a **Yellow-faced Honeyeater**.



COG members at Wet Lagoon

Bill Graham



Golden Whistler

Bill Graham

Arguably, the highlight of the trip was a drive around the Berrebangalo Travelling Stock Reserve, followed by a 2km walk through it. **Crimson Rosellas**, **Eastern Rosellas** and **Galahs** were plentiful. Two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** battled a protective **Australian Raven** high in the skies and we also witnessed further skirmishes between a raven and **Brown Falcon** in the tree canopies. Two **Black-shouldered Kites** hovered above a nearby paddock and a **Pied Butcherbird** was active. A mixed feeding flock provided a significant boost to the species tally on the higher southern elevations of the reserve - sightings included 4 **Weebills**, 8 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, 2 **Golden Whistlers**, 2 **Grey Fantails**, 2 **Scarlet Robins**, a **Willie Wagtail** and a slow-moving **Diamond Firetail** (which was a big highlight for all participants).

Mark Tindale

Saturday 15th June 2024, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve- Superb Lyrebird Survey

The 21st annual survey of the **Superb Lyrebird**, designed to provide an index of population numbers within the Reserve since the 2003 bushfires, was run under perfect conditions with a cool morning, a slight wind and clear skies.

Thanks to the 12 volunteer we were able to survey all six trails. We had sufficient volunteers to cover five trails with one volunteer then covering the Lyrebird/Cascades Trail after surveying the Ashbrook Trail.

Lyrebird counts were as follows: Gibraltar Rocks- 3 (2), Devil's Gap- 4 (3), Fishing Gap- 10 (5), Ashbrook-3 (4), Camel Back-14 (13). Figures in brackets are numbers reported last year. It should be noted that at times a calling bird can be heard from more than one trail. In this case the sighting is designated to one trail only. There was an increase in numbers

compared with last year on all trails apart from Ashbrook. The number of Lyrebirds recorded at Fishing Gap was the largest reported so far. The previous highest was 6 in 2019.

As in previous years, the numbers from Lyrebird /Cascades (2) are not included in the total because this trail has only been surveyed since 2017 and not in the last two years. We therefore assume a total count for this year to be 34, up from the total of 27 the previous year and 18 in 2022, see Figure 1.

For the first survey in 2014 the only Lyrebirds recorded were 3 at Gibraltar Rocks and 3 at Devils Gap. Since then the numbers at Gibraltar Rocks, Devils Gap and Fishing Gap trails have remained relatively stable at around 2-3 birds with an average of 3 birds at Ashbrook. At the Camel Back, numbers increased to around 25 in 2014 and have remained relatively stable since.

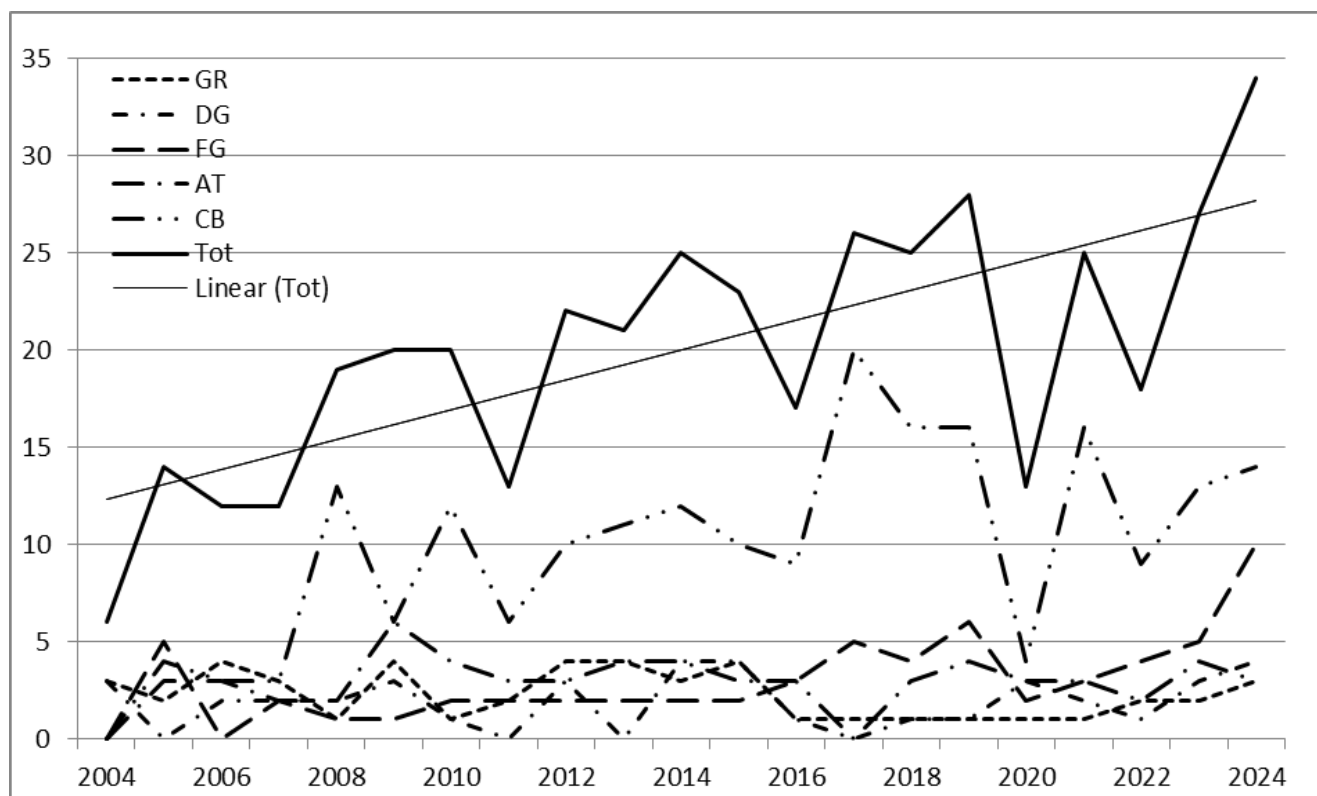


Figure 1. Numbers of **Superb Lyrebirds** recorded from walking trails at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, 2004-2024. GR-Gibraltar Rocks, DG-Devils Gap, FG-Fishing Gap, AT- Ashbrook Trail, CB-Camel Back, Tot- Total number of birds. A linear trend line has been fitted to the total number of Lyrebirds.

During the survey 32 bird species were recorded with the number seen depending very much on the trail walked; Gibraltar Rocks- 24 (25), Devil's Gap- 14 (16), Fishing Gap- 16 (20), Ashbrook- 7 (18), and Camel Back- 8 (16). There was a smaller number of species compared to the total of 38 last year. The **Tree Martin** sighted on the Gibraltar Rocks Trail had not been reported previously. The total number of species recorded over the 20 surveys now stands at 61.

The **Superb Lyrebird** was the only species seen on all six trails. The **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **White-browed Scrubwren**, **Spotted Pardalote** and **Grey Shrike-thrush** were reported from five of the trails. Four eBird checklists were submitted.

Many thanks to all the volunteers.

Chris Davey

Wednesday 19 June – McQuoids Hill

Sandra lead a group of 17 around at McQuoids Hill on a beautiful sunny and cool (VERY cool!!) morning for the COG Outing on 19th June 2024.

It was warm in the sun, but even by the time we got back to cars the temperature was probably only about 5 degrees. Initially we heard **White-eared Honeyeater**, **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Weebills**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, and **Magpie Lark**, and saw **Australian Magpies**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Pied Currawongs**.

Birds seemed keen to feed on the eastern, sunny, side of the Hill so we soon had good observations of a mixed feeding flock with large numbers of **Red-browed Finches**, some **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, a few **Superb Fairywrens**, and **Scarlet Robins**. Hardly surprising, it was a male **Scarlet Robin** which first caught our eye.

We discussed male, female and immature plumage. Those who are interested may find this link useful.

<https://absa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Scarlet-Robin.pdf>

While still on the east side, but in shade up the hill were a flock of **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, so not well seen and there were probably other species with them. However, the **Crimson Rosellas** displayed themselves in the sun and a **Grey Butcherbird** was heard.

On the north side of the Hill dead trees provided a good, although distant view of **Nankeen Kestrel**, and for some, confirmed by photograph, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. There were **Common Starlings** and both rosellas in the horse agistment paddock.

Other birds were heard or seen along the west side. Unfortunately both **Double-barred Finch** and **Golden-headed Cisticola** were heard not seen, but **Grey Shrike-thrush** was seen by a few. Our views of **Striated Thornbills** were not great. However, we had good views of a **Black-shouldered Kite**, both perched and flying. Some saw **Little Corellas** in flight.

The south side of the hill was mainly in shade. However, we saw **Common Blackbird**, **Grey Fantail** and **Australian Ravens**, and heard a **Golden Whistler**. There were other birds, but we weren't willing to linger long enough to find out what they were

Michael Robbins

Sunday 23 June—Oaks Estate River Corridor Heritage Walk

On a typical Canberra winter's day, 25 members and invited guests, including a family with four children, met at the end of River St in Oaks Estate. Many of the participants had not been to this area of the ACT before. Sandra gave us a short talk about the history of the area, then we walked south-west along the Molonglo till we reached the row of Osage orange trees that formed an effective boundary of the Oaks property, with their very big thorns.

There were lots of **Common Blackbirds** making use of the many deciduous trees and scrubs in the nearby paddocks and a few **Pacific Black Ducks** on the River. **Superb Fairywrens** and **Silvereyes** populated the blackberries.

We turned around and made our way towards the railway line, which marks the boundary between the ACT and NSW. We had nice views of **Red-browed Finch**, a male **Scarlet Robin** and a female **Golden Whistler** on the way. When we arrived at the cemetery there was a mixed feeding flock comprising **Red-browed Finch**, **Superb Fairywren** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**. On our way back to the cars we stopped to look at the junction of the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers, but it was difficult to make out. Whilst standing there we watched two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** soaring on the thermals.

Thank you, Sandra for taking us to yet another new place.

Lia Battisson

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 14 July – Wanniasa Hills

Meet at the informal car park at the top of Long Gully Road at 8.30am. We will then cross the road and enter the reserve near the reservoir and follow some of the firetrails. Birds seen in the reserve in last few years include **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**, **Painted Buttonquail**, **Common Bronzewing**s, various honeyeaters and raptors, and many of the small bush birds. Sturdy shoes are essential, and dress appropriately for the weather.

Register with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com by Friday 12 July with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 17 July - Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve

Meet at 9am at the step-thru gate along Mugga Lane. Parking is on farm side of road (a gravel lay-by) between the tip and Boral Quarry (closer to Boral site). I will be parked there quite early so look for my white car. The reserve includes some COG woodland survey sites, and was increased in size some years ago as an offset. There are no formal tracks, so sturdy shoes a must. It is often very good for small bush birds.

Register with Sandra with name, phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 28 July – Nadjung Mada NR and surrounds, Kenny

Meet at the corner of Morisset Rd and Old Wells Station Road (where the latter is actually a road) at 9am.

The first half of the walk follows Old Wells Station Road (this section is a firetrail, not a road) north through the relatively newly gazetted Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve; as such the habitat is mainly grassland with a few old

paddock trees and some wetlands as the headwaters of Sullivan's Creek run across our route. After about 1.5 km, we leave the firetrail to loop back to the south west, parallelling our outward path, but this time walking across paddocks and taking in a small woodland, before rejoining the firetrail close to our starting point. Trip distance is approximately 3 km.

The route is gently uphill/flat on a fire trail that is well maintained; but depending on rainfall, it can be quite muddy, so wear appropriate footwear. Dress warmly and bring hat, binoculars and water.

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

Michael Robbins and Peter Miller

Advance notice of trips in September and October for which bookings for accommodation or campsites need to be made soon:

Tuesday 24 to Friday 27 September – Culburra area

On this mid-week trip to the coast, we will explore Wollumboola Lake, Orient Point Wetlands Reserve, Abrahams Bosom and possibly other sights around Currarong, Silkwood Walk from Callala Bay to Callala Beach and other sites recommended by members of the Illawarra Bird Observers Club. We will encounter a range of waterbirds and shorebirds as well as bush birds. Some may wish to stay for an extra night so they can visit the Beecroft Firing Range where there have been excellent sightings of **Ground Parrots** and **Eastern Bristlebirds**. The Range is open to the public from midday Friday to Sunday afternoon.

Accommodation will be at Holiday Haven, Culburra Beach, (<https://www.holidayhaven.com.au/culburra-beach/>) which offers cabins and powered sites. Register with Prue at prue.watters@gmail.com with your name, mobile and the name and mobile of an emergency contact. Numbers will be limited to 16, so **please register early as caravan park bookings should be made soon**. Advise me if you would like to share. DO NOT book accommodation until I have confirmed your registration.

Prue Watters

Monday 14 to Sunday 20 October - Warren Wetlands and Gundabooka National Park – extended camping trip

An extended camping trip is planned to Warren and Gundabooka NP, both in inland NSW. The town of Warren is north-west of Dubbo (about 470 km from Canberra), and Gundabooka National Park is another 320 km further, to the north-west. We are planning one night at a caravan park in Warren on 14 Oct and a morning exploring the fabulous wetlands on the edge of town. We will move on to Gundabooka NP on the afternoon of 15 October and the trip ends on Sunday 20 October. Campers are to make their own campground and caravan park bookings and ensure they have a relevant National Parks Pass. Once at Gundabooka we will be birding around the broader campground area and the subsequent days we will drive to places further in the park. We have not done a "reccie" for Gundabooka so the trip will be a bit exploratory.

To register, contact John Goldie or Kathy Walter on walter.goldie@gmail.com. The trip is limited to 16 people. Please DO NOT make bookings until your registration has been confirmed. Campers are to make their own campground and caravan park bookings and ensure they have a relevant NSW National Parks Pass. Campers are also to make their own arrangements for getting to and from the start/finish.

Kathy Walter and John Goldie



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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Eastern Barn Owl

Graham Stephenson

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

2024-2025 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for August 2024 edition:

SUNDAY 28 JULY 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

President: Neil Hermes

0413 828 045

president@canberrabirds.org.au

Treasurer: Vacant

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Secretary: Margaret Robertson

cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au

Address for correspondence

The Secretary
COG, PO Box 331
Jamison Centre, ACT 2614

Canberra Bird Notes

Editor: Michael Lenz

michael.lenz.birds@gmail.com

COG website

canberrabirds.org.au

COG Webmaster

Julian Robinson

cogwebmaster@canberrabirds.org.au

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

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