

Gang-gang

FEBRUARY 2025

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

**Wednesday 12 February 2025
7:30 pm**

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

The February 2025 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 and use their common sense and stay home if they have COVID symptoms. Mask wearing is recommended.

Jack Holland - Eastern Koel as the Bird of the Month

Antonia Hürlimann - Spatial memory strategies of a highly social bird - Collective navigation in a changing environment

Please note that construction is still occurring around the Gabriel Drive parking area, and access to there is still 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](#).

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Summary/analysis of the past two months and what to watch out for in February

At the beginning of the 9-week period from 27 November 2024 to 28 January 2025 inclusive covered by this column, the dry spell of the previous period changed into 10 days of storms and significant rainfall (over 150 mm at my place in Chapman). This was followed by a month of hot weather with little rain, before another 10 days of possibly even more stormy wet weather (with even more rain at my place), before another two dry and hot weeks. The effect this had on bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aol) during the period is not clear. My analysis below shows that, despite the dry conditions, many of the inland spring/summer migrants continued to be present in relatively low numbers, with for several species most seeming to have already departed. While there have been more “unusual” birds reported, none of these could be considered “special” and their numbers still seemed to be well below those of last summer/early autumn.

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Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Shorty

Everyone welcome

FEBRUARY MEETING—continued from Page 1

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 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 either 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 after the meeting and a torch for finding your way back to your car is recommended.

For the first meeting of 2025, there will be two presentations of roughly equal length:

The first talk will be by **Jack Holland** who will be presenting the “**Eastern Koel as the Bird of the Month**”.

The **Eastern Koel** is a parasitic cuckoo which is a total spring/summer migrant in the ACT. It has been very prominent again this season, including the reporting of many fledglings to date, already well over last season’s total. Jack will show how to separate in particular the females from the juveniles, and discuss their range of calls. He will show how they have only come to Canberra in the past 50 years, and outline both their increase in numbers and in breeding since the first young were reported in 2009. He will also briefly discuss some unanswered questions which has risen again this season for this enigmatic species.

The second speaker will be **Antonia Hürlimann** who will be presenting on “**Spatial memory strategies of a highly social bird - Collective navigation in a changing environment**”.

Most animals - including humans - must make movement decisions every day while navigating through complex habitats. Spatial memory can help adapting to this complexity and substantially increase fitness. This effect is especially notable in group-living animals, as collective intelligence can improve decision-making accuracy during navigation. However, to date, our understanding of how group-living animals make use of spatial memory in habitats with changing environmental conditions is still limited. In this talk, Antonia will present the fascinating **Vulturine Guineafowl**, a highly social terrestrial bird that inhabits the Kenyan savannah, which is very prone to drought. Based on fine-scale GPS tracking of their long-distance movements, her research gives insights into drivers of spatiotemporal dynamics of movement patterns and the collective use of spatial memory, shedding light on behavioural and cognitive adaptations to harsh and changing environments.

Antonia completed her B Sc in Biology and Philosophy, as well as a M Sc in Animal Behaviour, specifically Behavioural Ecology, at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. For her M Sc she spent some time in Kenya researching a wild population of **Vulturine Guineafowl**. Currently she is a visiting researcher at the ANU in Prof. Damien Farine's group, collaborating with different people on her project as well as some of the projects conducted with Australian birds.

Summary/analysis of the past two months and what to watch out for in February continued from page 1

Spring/summer migrants

Of the spring/summer migrants usually present in limited numbers over summer, over the past month **Horsfield’s Bushlarks** were only reported from 3 main locations either side of the NW ACT/NSW border (West Belconnen Pond, Dunlop Grasslands and Parkwood Rd) where up to 2 birds were observed to 26 January, as well as 2 birds on Greenwood Road Murrumbateman on 13 January. Similarly, there were reports of the **Brown Songlark** from 2 locations on either side of the Northwestern ACT to NSW border, mainly from the Parkwood Road (a maximum of 5 birds to 13 January) but also from the West Belconnen Pond (up to 5 birds to 19 January, the most recent report), as well as a single bird at Lake Bathurst on the surveys there on 14 January.

In the past month observations of **Rufous Songlarks** have also been concentrated along this border, with reports of up to 3 birds from 6 locations to 13 January, with surprisingly only a single report of a bird at Parkwood on 25 January since

(a very early departure for this species). Other reports were from only 4 locations, up to 2 birds from Greenwood Road Murrumbateman between 1 December and 13 January, a single bird near Smiths Rd on Naas Road on 8 January, at the nearby Naas Rd at Spring Station Creek on 10 January, and a single bird at the Warri Bridge on the Shoalhaven River (right on the E edge of the COG Aol) on 6 January. Likewise, the **White-winged Triller** has been reported only from 13 locations during the past month, with the most recent report being from the Pinnacle NR on 22 January. So, both species have been present in much lower numbers than usual and most seem to have departed earlier than their usual first half of February exit.

Confirming that despite the often-dry local conditions, other inland migrants are not present in large numbers is that there have been only reports from 3 locations of **White-browed Woodswallows** during the past month, with 3 birds at Mulligans Flat Nr on 11 January, 3 at the Woods Reserve campground on 14 January, and 20 at Rendezvous Creek Namadgi NP on 12 January. However, there have been no confirmed sightings of the **Masked Woodswallow** during this time.

Similarly, the **Pallid Cuckoo** was reported from only 1 location (a single bird at Whiskers Rd Carwoola on 13 and 20 January) in the past month. It has been another very poor summer for this species. In contrast the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** was still reported from 17 locations, only slightly down from the 18 in November.

The coastal spring/summer migrants seem to be present in more usual numbers, though the run of sightings of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** seems to have ended. During the period there were reports from Giralang on 26 November, one was heard multiple times at the ANBG on the morning of 27 November, and with the final observations being one reported from Kaleen, and one heard over my house in Chapman (the second time this season) on 13 December. In contrast the **Eastern Koel** has been very loud and conspicuous at many locations including my local patch of Chapman/Rivett, with a significant increase in fledglings reported compared with the 2023-2024 season (see below).

Amazingly, despite the two 10-day periods of significant storms, there have been reports for the **White-throated Needletail** from 5 locations. These are, in order, 8 birds over Widgiewa Rd Carwoola on 14 January, 3 over the Bendora Rd (upper) in the Namadgi NP on 15 January (note both these were during the stormy period), 2 at the nearby Mile Hill Rd on 20 January, 10 over Watson on 22 January and 2 over the Tidbinbilla NR on 23 January (all when drier). There have been no reports at all for the related **Spine-tailed Swift**.

So, during February please keep a lookout for the species mentioned above which have only been present in relatively small numbers this spring/summer, and, except for the swift species, are usually also the first to depart.

Autumn/winter altitudinal migrants

Of the species that come to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, the **Scarlet Robin** was reported 10 urban/peri-urban locations, of which 4 were from the Mulligans Flat NR area, in the past month, well up from November. On 12 December a juvenile was recorded following a male during the woodland survey at the Majura Defence Training Facility. In contrast there were no such reports for the **Flame** or **Rose Robin**, and there have been no **Pink Robin** sightings.

There have also been no such reports of **Crescent Honeyeater** or reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** anywhere within the COG Aol. However, on 14 December a **Brown Gerygone** was reported from the Bendora Rd (upper) in Namadgi NP, easily the most westerly report in the COG Aol I can recall for this coastal species.

There were still reports of a **Bassian Thrush** from the ANBG on 31 December and 25 January, and the **Olive Whistler** was also still reported from there on 13 December and 19 January.

Unusual species

While there were no special “unusuals” reported during the period, perhaps the most unexpected was Sandra Henderson finding a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** again near the Rock Valley Homestead at Tidbinbilla on 1 January, exactly a year after they were first reported from there in 2024. While up to 2, and on one occasion 3, birds have since been reported by other observers up to 26 January, it seems there has been no evidence of them breeding there this year, as none of the many photos on eBird appear to show a juvenile or immature bird.

On 13 January Mark Clayton posted that that evening on the Facebook site *Native Birds in Australia* there was a photograph of what obviously was an **Apostlebird**, taken "at the Deep Space Centre, Canberra", with the photographer stating, "Can't for the life figure what bird it is". Unfortunately, no other observer seems to have been able to confirm this sighting, possibly due to access problems. The most recent record of an **Apostlebird** in the ACT was the long-staying one from around the North Watson wetlands reported from September 2016 to June 2018. So, in answer to what the bird was doing there, there are examples of single birds well away from their usual inland distribution. More recently, on 18 August 2019, Sandra Henderson reported 2 by the Hume Highway south of Goulburn, also in the COG Aol.

Up to 2 **Magpie Geese** were reported from the Wet Lagoon near Breadalbane between 13-27 January, but there no **Plumed Whistling Duck** reported from the COG Aol during the past month. **Freckled Duck** were reported from 4 locations. Up to 4 ducks have continued to be present at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR) throughout the period but again by far the largest number was the 85 ducks counted at Lake Bathurst during the surveys there on 14 January (30 were there on 11 December). Up to 2 ducks were reported from Greenwood Road Murrumbateman between 1 December and 25 January, and 3 ducks from the SW corner of Lake George on 11 January. An **Australian Shelduck** was photographed at the Mulligans Flat big dam on 27-28 January. As is usual, in the past month this duck was reported from 10 locations to the N through to the E of Canberra. By far the highest numbers were the 1090 on Lake Bathurst on 11 December and the 850 on 14 January (a maximum of 8 on these dates at the adjacent Morass), with the next highest being the 110 on the Bungendore Meadow Dam on 11 January.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 6 widely spread locations, with up to 9 ducks at the Upper Stranger Pond. This has been a hot spot for them, being reported throughout the period, including further ducklings. Elsewhere up to 3 ducks were reported from the JWNR (and at the adjacent FSTP), 1 at Greenwood Rd Murrumbateman on 25 January, and up to 2 ducks at Rowses Lagoon as well as at the Foxlow Lagoon near Hoskintown. However, by far the highest number was the 87 ducks recorded at Lake Bathurst during the surveys on 14 January (there were 48 there on 11 December).

Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 11 locations, with up to 2 birds reported from Upper Strangers Pond, causing identification problems for some with the **Blue-billed Ducks** also present. Again, the highest numbers were the 27 ducks recorded at Lake Bathurst on 14 January (10 on 11 December when there were 13 reported from the adjacent Morass). Otherwise, the highest number was 3 at several locations.

It also seems to have been a very good summer for **Great-crested Grebes** which were reported from a remarkable 8 locations, with again the maximum being the 31 reported from the Lake Bathurst survey on 11 December (17 on 14 January but a maximum of 2 at the adjacent Morass). There were also up to 11 birds (on 21 January) reported from Bracks Hole Rd Coree (Cotter dam), and up to 2 birds regularly from the West Belconnen Pond and the adjacent Dunlop Grasslands. The up to 3 birds reported regularly from Upper Strangers Pond allowed a rare opportunity to observe this and the above 2 species at the one location within suburban Canberra.

Stubble Quail were reported from 18 locations during the past month, well down from the 60 locations in January 2024, reflecting the drier conditions with less long grass available. Again, the highest number was the 18 birds recorded during the Lake Bathurst surveys on 14 January, also said to be a conservative count as they were calling constantly near the lake shore. Up to 4 **Brown Quail** were reported from 10 locations, well down from the 17 in November. **Painted Button-quail** were reported from 2 locations, up to 2 birds from Bluetts Block between 14 December and 13 January and 2 from Whiskers Creek Rd on 13 January. However, no **Little Button-quail** were again reported during the period.

During the past month, up to 2 **Brush Bronzewing**s were reported from 2 locations in their preferred habitat in the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River, and up to 2 **Peaceful Doves** from 2 locations along the Cotter Road (a well-known spot for them). However, no **White-headed Pigeon**, **Brown Cuckoo-Dove** or **Diamond Doves** were reported during the period. Three **White-throated Nightjars** were reported from the Hospital Creek Hut in Namadgi NP on 13 December, and up to 2 birds from the Pierces Creek area (where many were found early in 2024) between 21-30 December.

Baillon's Crake were reported from 2 locations only, with up to 4 birds regularly observed from the JWNR, with otherwise a single bird at Greenwood Rd Murrumbateman between 1-13 January. Up to 2 **Spotless Crakes** were reported from 7 locations, but again only regularly from the JWNR from where up to 6 were reported. On 26 December Shorty posted that he had photographed 2 juveniles there, noting it had been a few years since he had seen one there. Otherwise, reports were of single birds except for the 4 reported from the Tin Hut Dam Googong on 15 January. Up to 6 **Australian Spotted Crake** were also very regularly reported from the JWNR, and 1-2 birds from a further 10 locations

except for the Wet Lagoon near Breadalbane where 6 were observed on 13 January.

Buff-banded Rail were reported from 6 locations, again regularly from the JWNR where up to 3 were observed between 10 December and 9 January (note 3 birds at the nearby Eyre St wetlands on 23 January), but also regularly at the Big Dam at Mulligans Flat NR where a maximum of 5 was recorded. Four birds were also recorded at the Little Burra Estate dam on 13 January. **Lewin's Rails** were reported from 4 locations, with single birds from the JWNR between 10 December and 12 January, and otherwise single reports of a single bird other than the 3 observed at the Tin Hut Dam on 15 January. The **Black-tailed Nativehen** from near the Mulligans Flat NR Big Dam in November was last reported there on 5 December.

Pied Stilts were reported from 3 locations, with the 54 birds seen during the Lake Bathurst surveys on 14 January (25 were there on 11 December) the highest number. Otherwise, there were 17 at SW Lake George on 23 January and 2 at Yerrabi Pond on 30 December. **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were reported from 2 locations with again the 13 recorded during the Lake Bathurst surveys on 11 December (3 on 14 January) the highest number. Two birds were also reported from SW Lake George on 11 January.

The **Common Sandpiper** has been very regularly reported at its usual spot at the gross pollutant trap at the inlet of Village Creek, but no **Red-necked Avocet**, **Australian Painted-snipe**, **Banded Lapwing**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Red-necked Stint** or **Pectoral Sandpiper** were reported during the period. There have also been no further reports of the **Pacific Golden Plover**, the most recent being from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Ponds (FSTP) on 23 November 2024.

Up to 3 **Caspian Tern** were regularly reported from the JWNR and the adjacent FSTP up to 1 January, but with then only a single report of 1 bird at the latter on 24 January. No **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Tern**, **Australasian** or **Australian Little/Black-backed Bittern** were reported during the period.

No **Little Egret** was reported during the period, and up to 3 **Plumed Egret** reported only from the JWNR between 27-29 December. **Great Egrets** were reported from 6 locations during the past month, but regularly only from the JWNR where a maximum of 5 were reported on 30 December. **White-necked Herons** were reported from close to 30 locations in the past month, similar to November. **Royal Spoonbill** were reported from 16 locations (well up from November) with over half of these from northern Canberra. In the past month up to 4 **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 7 locations, but no **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.

In the past month 2 **Barn Owls** were reported only from the Youth Haven, Kambah Pool Rd on 23 January. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from around 30 locations in the past month, up from the 20 in November, indicating a possible reversal of the decline in spring. A grey morph **Grey Goshawk** was photographed on wires in Griffith on 26 January. A **Spotted Harrier** was photographed on the Molonglo Woodland Track on 3 January, and the nearby Lower Molonglo Reserve on 5 January. Both are where this species was present during April

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 11 February

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

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



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Good birding, good food

2025 Plains-wanderer Weekends

25 & 26 October 2025
8 & 9 November 2025
22 & 23 November 2025
6 & 7 December 2025

The 2025 November weekends will be limited to 6 participants per weekend & the October and December weekends will have the usual 8 participants.

Personal tours to the Deniliquin district, Victorian mallee, NE Victoria, Gippsland and the Melbourne area.

Personal tours to anywhere you need to go to bolster your Australian bird list.

Please contact Patricia Maher for information, itineraries and costing.

www.philipmaher.com

2023, but no further sightings have been reported. A **Black Kite** was reported from the JWNR on 3 December, but there were no reports of the **Pacific Baza** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from 3 locations, with most reports being from the well-known Cotter Bend/Reserve, and single report from the also known location of the Sanctuary at Tidbinbilla NR on 16 January. A new location was the downstream picnic area at the Googong dam from where one was reported also on 16 January. A **Red-backed Kingfisher** was reported from the COG/Canberra Birds outing to Warks/Blundells Creek Roads on 19 January (see separate report). This is an unusual spot for this species with other sightings in previous years being mainly from along the NSW border in NW Belconnen as well as Campbell Park. No **Forest Kingfisher** was reported during the period.



Azure Kingfisher

Shorty

No **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**, **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted**, **Purple-crowned** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period. **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 4 locations, single birds at Mt Majura on 6 December, and where Village Creek enters Lake Tuggeranong (Greenway) on 22 December and 26 January, as well as 2 birds from Holt on 10 January and Watson on 25 January, respectively.

For the **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** sightings please see above. At least one **Scarlet Honeyeater** was reported from near Bungendore on 29 December. **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from 6 locations during the period, including single birds from Curtin on 11 December and from the JWNR on 13 and 18 December, as well as Hughes on 14 December. Up to 5 birds were then reported from various locations in Farrer and the adjacent Mawson between 22 December and 4 January with up to 3 juveniles reported. On 23 December John Leonard had reported 3 birds at his place in Hughes, two immatures begging and being fed by one adult in the next-door front yard, and on 27 January Mariko Buszynski had two **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** visiting their garden in Hughes with the adult chasing the juvenile all over the place for over 30 minutes. A **Little Friarbird** was reported from Zosterops Corner on 19 January, but no **Singing** or **Painted Honeyeaters** were reported during the period.

White-fronted Chats were reported only from the Lake Bathurst surveys on 11 December (9 bird) and 14 January (4 birds). **Red-capped Robins** were reported from 2 locations only including a single bird at the Goorooyaroo NR on 29 December. Most exciting was the 3 birds recorded at Bracks Hole Rd Corree between 21-25 January, with on one occasion 2 juvenile birds with a male parent photographed. However, on 28 January a male was photographed feeding two juveniles, and 50 metres further along the track were two slightly older youngsters - one chasing the other. This suggests 2 successful breeding events there.

Up to 3 **Black-faced Monarchs** were reported from 3 locations in the Tallaganda area between 2-22 January, as well as 3 on Majors Creek Mountain Rd on 22 January. However, no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finch** were reported during the period.

Again, while there have been a quite a few more “unusual” birds reported, the low numbers have continued, in particular of pigeons/doves, raptors and parrots.

The **Jacky Winter** was reported from 8 locations during the period, with 3 from the COG woodland site near Tharwa and a single bird at the Namadgi NP Visitors Centre on 2 December. Numbers at other known locations include up to 3 birds from the Glendale Depot between 19 December and 10 January (with a juvenile reported early in this period), a single bird at the Mulligans Flat NR on 11 January and 2 on 19 January, respectively, and one at the Namina TSR on 4 January. From new locations there was a single bird at the Mundoonen NR on 31 December, 4 birds in Sutton on 11 January and one on Lake Rd Bungendore on 18 January.

Hooded Robins were reported from 4 locations, with considerable interest being focussed on the up to 5 birds, including two juvenile/immatures, at Spring Station Creek on the Naas Rd (a known location) between 9 and 20 January (Kym Bradley’s has also reported successful breeding at her patch to the S of Canberra). Other reports were of a male

bird at Nass Rd at Apollo Rd (a known location), and a single bird at the new location of Cooma Rd Krawarree on 18 January.

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 6 locations, with regular reports of a single bird (2 on one occasion) at the Glendale Depot between 19 December and 11 January, 2 birds Mullion on 30 December (both known locations). New locations were two birds at Tharwa on 2 December, a single bird at the Casuarina Sands NR on 27 January and two birds on Majors Creek Mountain Rd on 22 January. However, most exciting were the adults first reported on a nest at the known location of the Nelanglo TSR on 29 December, from which 3 juveniles were reported to have successfully fledged on 17 January.

Breeding

While the breeding season is largely over, due to the recent publicised interference to obtain good images of the **Great-crested Grebes** starting to build a nest at West Belconnen Pond, *I again first need to remind readers of the care that needs to be taken around breeding birds as outlined the [COG Ethical Birding Guidelines](#) which can be found through the link on the Home Page of the Canberra Birds web site (in particular please read and follow the sections on Nesting Birds and Bird Photography):*

Apart from the **Blue-billed Duck**, **Spotless Crake**, **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Scarlet**, **Red-capped** and **Hooded Robins**, **Jacky Winter** and **Restless Flycatcher** reports above, a few other observations follow:

After a number of successful fledging of young on different nests in my GBS site, on 6 December I noticed **Crested Pigeons** building a nest on top of a **Magpie-lark** nest from which the young had fledged only about 6 weeks earlier on 22 October. On checking, HANZAB has no record of this situation. The birds continued to sit, brood and feed young, successfully fledging 3 young (one more than from the previous nests) on 10 January.

A pair of **White-browed Scrubwrens** successfully raised 2 young from a nest in a pot plant, with throughout the whole period both (usually separately) vigorously attacking our nearby TV room window, as well as occasionally afterwards. A pair of **Superb Fairy-wrens** also likely bred before Christmas based on their vigorously attacking of my much higher study window. Interestingly the brown bird did much more of the pecking than the male, which always soon seemed to lose interest.

Contrary to my predictions in my December column, it has been a very good season so far for **Eastern Koel** fledglings with at the time of writing 105 juveniles (some very early ones) having come to my attention. This is already 50% greater than the total for the 2023-2024 season. This has resulted in fledglings been seen in together or in close proximity with other fledglings and/or adult birds, raising again the questions of whether a female laid both (or more) eggs and as to whether the adults and young are truly interacting.

The only information on flocks or roost flights that have come to my attention is Sandra Henderson observing a loose group of well over 30 **Australian Ravens** at the high point near quarry fence during her Callum Brae woodland survey on 6 December.

During February, please watch out for the inland spring/summer migrants usually expected to have left by the end of the month mentioned above, as well as for **White-throated Needletails** and **Spine-tailed Swifts**, for the first Mixed Feeding Flocks and large numbers of single species, and for any late summer breeding activity. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported so that they will 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/ Canberra Birds 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

Birdlife Photography Award Winning Photo

Congratulations to member Richard Arculus whose photo of a Welcome Swallow feeding young won the Bird Behaviour category in the 2024 Birdlife Australia Photography Awards.

Welcome Swallow feeding young at Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Canon R5 with Canon RF 800mm f/11 IS STM, 1/5000 sec, f/11, ISO 1600



Richard said: 'With their speed and manoeuvrability in flight, swallows are a photographic challenge. I knew that Welcome Swallows were feeding their young at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands in Canberra and had tried with a Canon R5 Mk 1 and RF100-500 lens to photograph the bird's activities – but my reaction time and tracking abilities were not up to the task. So, I tried a different approach a few days later. The next time I used an 800mm prime with the R5, cable shutter release, tripod and gimbal. With the cable release, I could watch the whole scene and not just what was shown in the viewfinder and could trigger the shutter as the parent swallow approached the post. This photo is one of the successful captures.'

Summary of the 15 January COG Quiz Night.

Quiz Master Mark Clayton organised and ran another very successful COG Quiz Night at our 15 January 2025 meeting.

It was again very clear to everyone that Mark had put another amazing amount of thought, effort and work in designing the quiz and we were all very grateful for this.

Attendees were again impressed at the range and depth of the questions and very much enjoyed the evening. They were challenged by the wide variety of questions, not only about birds but on a range of related topics which allowed some to use their general knowledge if they were relatively new to birds.

Also, importantly it again provided the perfect opportunity for COG/Canberra Birds members (many attendees again were long time COG members) to have an enjoyable get together for our first meeting for 2025, which possibly eased the pain of trying to answer some of the more challenging questions.

Once again, on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members, many thanks to Mark for organising and running another COG Quiz Night and for the enormous effort he put in to make it very successful.

Also, a very special thanks from us all to Marion and Gil Pfitzner for taking on the very crucial role of the markers, which as usual was a pressured and stressful task.

Finally, the COG/Canberra Birds committee has accepted Mark's very kind offer to plan, organize and run another "Quiz Night" for January 2026.

Jack Holland

A festive BBQ and 60th Birthday Celebration!

December 2024's annual Christmas BBQ had an additional festive atmosphere as we celebrated the 60th anniversary of Canberra Birds. The occasion was marked by a special birthday cake decorated with the new Canberra Birds logo.

The official cake-cutter was Chris Davey, who was the longest-serving Canberra Birds member present.

The Committee would like to thank Bill Graham and Sue Lashko for organising the event and to Kim Farley for arranging the cake.



Chris Davey doing the honours cutting the cake
Julie Hotchin

News from the Committee

A very happy New Year to all Canberra Birds members.

The Committee had its first meeting of the year on 23 January. We started the year well, being delighted to welcome Brittany Brockett back to committee membership. Our work program is busy again this year, with a range of interesting projects continuing or commencing. More on that as the year (and our work) progresses. We still have plenty of opportunities for additional committee members to join us, so your interest is invited. Please contact me or any other of our current committee members if you would like to chat about this.

Despite the holiday shut down period, the committee and notably Jenny Bounds considered several conservation matters that had deadlines for response in early January. Planning has also commenced for the autumn honeyeater migration survey being run by Chris Davey. The survey is strongly supported by the committee and our members' involvement will be very important to the success of the survey. See more in the article about the survey in this issue.

I look forward to seeing you at Coffee and Chat at the Gardens on 11 February and at the first members' meeting of the year on the 12th.

Kim Farley, *President*

'Through the binoculars backward: some of the COG Atlassers at the Canberra Birds AGM'

The December issue of Gang-gang included a report on the entertaining talk by McComas Taylor after the AGM in November on how the ACT Bird Atlas and Field Guide came about. Several members involved in surveying for the Bird Atlas were present at the occasion and are captured in this photo.



Left to right: **Michael Lenz, Alistair Drake, McComas Taylor (kneeling), Margaret Robertson, Bill Graham, Jenny Bounds, Coral Dow, Ian McMahon, Sue Beatty, Barbara Allen (kneeling), Chris Davey and Jack Holland.**

Like to be involved in the honeyeater migration survey in April?

A feature of the local birding scene is the annual honeyeater migration which passes through the ACT each spring and autumn. The autumn movement is the more obvious as birds return in flocks from their breeding grounds in the Brindabella Ranges and beyond.

In autumn 1985 and again in 1997, surveys of migrating honeyeaters were conducted along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. COG members helped with the surveys, and we are again seeking volunteers for a repeat of the survey in April 2025. The aim of the survey is to identify the number of birds and species on migration and the direction of their movement.

All levels of experience are welcome. If you haven't surveyed before or want to develop your identification skills this is a great opportunity to do so.

The passage includes not only Yellow-faced and White-naped honeyeaters, but many other species including Red Wattlebirds, White-eared and White-plumed honeyeaters, and various raptor species. In 1997, ninety-three species were reported during the passage. The survey therefore provides a great opportunity to view the migration and to record other species in the area.

Much has happened over the past 22 years including bushfires, habitat changes and expansion of the urban footprint. It is timely to repeat the survey and to document any change in honeyeater numbers passing through the local region.

For information about the earlier surveys see Chris Davey, [Canberra Bird Notes, Vol 11 \(no 1\)](#), pp 2-14, and Nicky Taws, [Canberra Bird Notes, Vol 24 \(no 3\)](#), pp 145-166.



Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Shorty

What's involved?

The survey involves counting the number of birds passing through nine locations on the Murrumbidgee River corridor.

When: The mornings of 12, 19 and 26 April 2025, to coincide with similar survey dates in 1997.

What: Count the number of each migrating species over 15 minute periods between 8:00 am and 1.00 pm and record these on a special survey sheet.

Where: The sites are at Williamsdale, Angle Crossing, 2 sites at Gigerline Nature Reserve (Tharwa Sand Wash), Pine Island, Kambah Pool, Casuarina Sands, Point Hut Crossing and Uriarra Crossing.

Who: Teams of 2-3 observers will count birds at each site. Experienced observers will be teamed with less-experienced observers.

Help and support: For those who want to take part, but are not sure of their honeyeater identification, a bird identification outing along the Murrumbidgee Corridor will be held. All volunteers will also receive an information kit.

To sign up or to discuss the survey, please contact Chris Davey at daveychris12@gmail.com.



White-naped Honeyeater

Julie Clark

While volunteering for all 3 dates would be ideal; surveying for two or even one of the designated dates would still be useful. Let Chris know if you would prefer any of the nine sites or are happy to be assigned to a site. There is also the option to survey at a different site on each date.

Depending on the number of volunteers, additional sites may be added.

I encourage you to get involved with this interesting survey. It will be a lot of fun, and you will be contributing to a very worthwhile citizen science project.

Kim Farley
President, Canberra Birds

Field Trip Reports

Saturday 30 November 2024 – Aranda Bushland NR beginners' outing

The forecast for last day of November wasn't good, but neither was it bad enough to cancel the trip, although I appreciated the sense of those who did cancel, especially those with children.

By 8:30, 4 people had arrived and it was still not raining heavily, so we stood under the little (very little) shelter provided by a tree, and all practised using binoculars. We also listened to **Noisy Miner**, of which there were several calling on both sides of Bindubi St, and discussed bird watching really being bird listening, much of the time. We also discussed the 'quality' of different bird species' calls, and the extent to which that can be helpful in determining 'what bird is that'. We had a good look at a large black bird perched in the top of a dead tree across the road, especially noting the shape, length of tail, and whether there was any other colour than black in its plumage. However, it didn't call, and we didn't get a good enough view to see its throat hackles, so think, but couldn't be sure, it was an **Australian Raven**.

We soon heard a **Noisy Friarbird** and saw it fly over, so we discussed comparing size, shape, silhouette (lighting conditions were not good) and flight pattern, as well as call, being useful for identification. Everyone got a good view of its undulating flight, even if the body was mainly a silhouette. We heard at least 2 or 3 more during our walk, which was good reinforcement for learning the call.

We heard at least two, maybe three, **Olive-backed Oriole**, but didn't see any. I heard several **Superb Fairy-wren** and other small birds but didn't venture into the wet scrub to try and make sure what they were. As the light and rain made it challenging to identify the small birds, we practised our ability to use shape and behaviour as well as call and plumage to identify birds.

The highlight of the morning was the **Common Bronzewing** which showed well on the fire trail. Even though the light wasn't good we could see the lovely green-bronze wings, that it didn't have a red-brown mantle, and at least some people could pick up the light 'eye brow' and pinkish colour on the chest, and we all got a good understanding of shape, size, movement and behaviour (feeding on the ground).

While watching the pigeon we saw a **Pied Currawong**, with distinctive plumage colours and shape, fly across the track. We heard, but didn't see a **Laughing Kookaburra**.

Our good luck continued when we saw another **Common Bronzewing** slightly further up the track and, as it approached and fanned its tail at the first pigeon, the buff forehead and brighter pinkish/rose breast were obvious and we were sure we were watching a courting pair; at least we were clear the male was courting, but we weren't sure the female was keen.

One of the party then saw what they thought was the Currawong on the ground, in the bush, to the right of the track. Once encouraged to look carefully at the shape of the bird's body and bill, and its eye colour, the party realised we had a **White-winged Chough** foraging close by, which quickly became two. This was a very good example of shape of body and bill, and eye colour, being as useful as plumage colour and size.

We also saw about six **Crimson Rosella** fly across the track. Their shape, size and colour left no doubt as to their ID, and as they were all clearly blue and crimson, none with any green in their plumage, we agreed the flock were all adults. There was a large white bird at the top of the transmission tower. It wasn't calling so we looked carefully at the top of its head and discerned the tell-tale yellow, curved plume of a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**.

A little further up the track, the bush on the right was more open, and the rain maybe slightly lighter, so we went in search of the birds which were calling. By then the group had improved their discernment of size, shape and behaviour, as well as the nature of calls, and soon found several **Superb Fairy-wren**, with the characteristic long tail, including a full-coloured male. We also spotted a **Grey Fantail**, which gave a great display of its characteristic fanning of tail and flight patterns, and we were able to associate its behaviour with its call. We also heard a **Spotted Pardalote**, and saw but didn't clearly identify a thornbill.

The rain began to get heavier and, after an hour standing in rain, we were all a bit wet, so we headed back to cars well pleased to have become more discerning about bird shapes, sizes, colours (eyes and legs, as well as feathers), behaviour and calls under what were challenging conditions.

Michael Robbins

Sunday 1 December, 2024 – Bluetts Block

Eight of us ventured forth on what turned out to be a very wet morning. Initially we had sunny breaks and hoped for the best, but after an hour the heavens opened, we all got wet and the paths became slippery; we abandoned the walk at that point. However, despite the less-than-ideal conditions we had some interesting sightings among our total of 25 species. Highlights were the two **Tawny Frogmouths** sitting in a eucalypt near the car park. In the same tree were a **Leaden Flycatcher** and a **Noisy Friarbird**, with both of these very active and appearing to harass the frogmouths. We also had nice views of a different **Noisy Friarbird** building its nest in the foliage of a eucalypt by the walking track. And further on, we encountered a pair of **Brown Thornbills** at a nest in a shrub. Other species we recorded were **Yellow-rumped**, **Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalote**, **Weebill** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**. We counted 12 **Grey Fantails**.

Several of our party had not previously visited Bluetts, so we had a chat about Bluetts Block itself, including the role of the late Jean Casburn who was instrumental in raising community awareness and establishing the case for Bluetts Block to be reserved. While walking we also talked about bird species we were NOT seeing but which do occur here, and where they are typically found at Bluetts. Several of the first-time visitors said they would return on a better day!

Kim Farley

Sunday 8 December, 2024 - Tuggeranong Hill NR

Sixteen members met at 8 am at the electricity sub-station in Callister Cres in Theodore. The children immediately discovered the rocks and kept themselves amused on them until the whole party had assembled, were briefed and ready to go. It was a pleasant winter's morning, with just an occasional light breeze and everything was fresh after the recent rains. Those who arrived early were treated to a single **Gang-gang Cockatoo**, which unfortunately didn't stay long enough to be enjoyed by everyone. We did an anti-clockwise loop of a very small part of this large reserve and then walked north-east along the fire trail at the back of the houses, where we saw a flock of **House Sparrows** feeding in a grapevine. Other highlights were a **Noisy Friarbird** on a nest and a **Leaden Flycatcher**, which tantalised us for some time with an occasional short call. Eventually we managed to get nice views of it. We searched nearby for its nest for some time, without success.

In all, 31 species were observed.

Lia Battisson



Noisy Friarbird, House Sparrow, Leaden Flycatcher

Tee Tong Teo



Sunday 15 December, 2024 – Cuumban NR

Our group of nine started the 4km walk from the car park on Captains Flat Road at 8:00am, heading south along the Link Trail. **White-throated Treecreepers**, **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Grey Shrike-thrushes**, a pair of nesting **Sacred Kingfishers** and two **White-eared Honeyeaters** were loud and prominent as we made progress through the very dry eucalypt forest. A quaint **Buff-rumped Thornbill** nest was seen right next to the trail, with the inhabitant monitoring us closely from nearby trees.

As we headed east on the Queanbeyan River Trail and northward on the Swamp Trail, additional sightings included **Weebills**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, a pair of **Rufous Whistlers** and **Silvereyes**. Additional highlights included **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** and **Sahul Brush Cuckoos**, and a **Leadren Flycatcher's** distinctive calls were also heard. Including many common species, a total of 27 species was recorded by the time we finished up at 10:20am. Mark Tindale



Buff-rumped Thornbill nest

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 8 January 2025 - Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve

Thirty participants turned up for this increasingly popular evening outing at Mulligans Flat. Our aim was to find some of the nocturnal inhabitants, but we started out in daylight, allowing us to see **White-winged Choughs**, **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, **White-throated Treecreepers**, **Black-faced Cuckooshrikes** and several other species. **Pacific Black Ducks** and **Australasian Grebes** were seen on the first dam. Our first night bird, a **Tawny Frogmouth**, was spotted in the light, but further along the route, and in complete darkness, an adult with two fledglings were also seen by all in the group. A lucky few saw two **Bush Stone-curlews** near the woolshed, but most of us missed out. We also had good views of several Bettongs and Brush-tailed Possums.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 19 January – Blundells Creek Road & Warks Road, Namadgi NP

Our slow amble down Blundells Creek Road began in cool, almost autumnal temperatures and, after recent rain, the birds were active and vocal. A **Superb Lyrebird** was in full voice and kept us entertained as it switched from imitating one species after another. There were good numbers of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and their begging young near the top, while **White-naped Honeyeaters** were more plentiful lower down the slope. Their begging young stayed still long enough for the yellowish bare skin above the eye to be clearly seen. A male **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** (with pink eye ring), perched on a stag, caught our eye and we soon realised it was sitting opposite the entrance to its nesting hollow with begging young at the entrance. **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, **Australian King Parrots**, **Crimson Rosellas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** added to the parrot list. Pairs of **Grey Fantails** were our constant companions, and we also recorded a single **Rufous Fantail**. **Golden** and **Rufous Whistlers**, good numbers of **Striated Thornbills**, **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **Satin Bowerbirds**, **Eastern Whipbird**, **Satin Flycatchers** and two **Wonga Pigeons** also contributed to the list of 30 species on this part of the walk.



White-naped Honeyeaters, Wonga Pigeon



Tee Tong Teo

It was almost midday by the time we reached Warks Road so, after a short walk to the left, it was time for a sit-down lunch in the shade. Rather obligingly, a pair of **Red-browed Treecreepers** waited until we were just finishing before they called and we all jumped to our feet to see what was for several people a new species. They were quite mobile but we were able to get quite good views of the red brow and lores, and compare them to **White-throated Treecreepers** which were also present. We strolled along Warks Road for several hundred metres as the day warmed up but conditions were still very pleasant, locating another **Red-browed Treecreeper**. An unusual but distinctly kingfisher-type call had us searching for the source and we soon located a bird partially hidden before it flew, revealing a very conspicuous rufous back and rump as it flew away - a **Red-backed Kingfisher** in an unusual setting. **Sahul Cicadabird**, **Sahul Brush Cuckoo** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** were heard. Perched **Dusky Woodswallow** chicks were being attended by at least one parent, and more **Satin Flycatchers** and a very calm **Wonga Pigeon** pottering along the road contributed to the 27 species seen on Warks Road, making a total of 38 species.

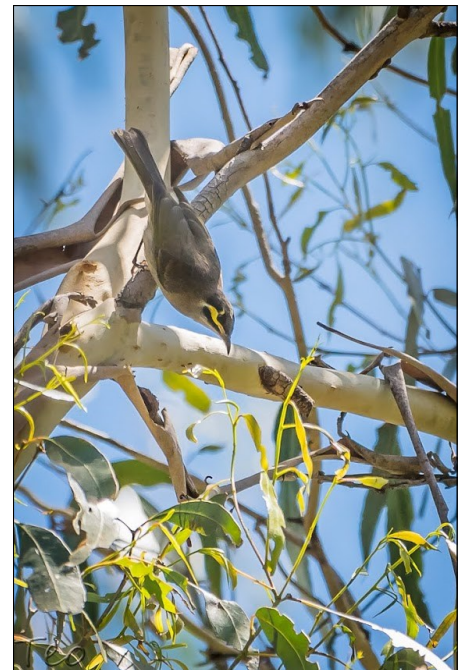
Sue Lashko



Red-browed Treecreeper Brian Jones



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Yellow-faced Honeyeater



Tee Tong Teo

Sunday 26 January - Red Hill Nature Reserve (Hughes side)

On a hazy-bright Australia Day morning, 20 COG members, visitors and neighbours gathered to explore Hughes Grassy Woodland and the western end of Red Hill Nature Reserve, led by Denise Rawling. Despite some initial concern at the number of **Noisy Miners** about, the outing had a promising start as four **Superb Parrots** flew overhead. Denise led us through a Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus bicostata*) woodland to two recent **White-winged Chough** nests, on adjacent branches of the same blue-gum. **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** could be heard, most likely feeding in some nearby backyards. Once out of the gums we were delighted by sustained and clear views of more **Superb Parrots** at the interface of bushland and suburbia, including a juvenile soliciting food from an adult male.



Gang-gang Cockatoo

Lydia



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Gang-gang Cockatoo
Munn family

After crossing Kent Street into Red Hill Reserve, the vegetation changed to Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Blakely's Red Gum (*E. blakelyi*) grassy woodland. Here we encountered four pairs of **Gang-gang Cockatoos**, vigorously squabbling over access to what initially appeared to be a nest hollow, but was soon revealed to be a rainwater-fed drinking hollow high in a very old and tortured Blakely's gum. Once satiated, one of the males began investigating other hollows, including backing completely into one, perhaps as reference for a future breeding season. We were blessed by the calls of Gang-gangs throughout the rest of the walk, as well as by a sighting of an uncoloured juvenile accompanied by an adult male and female.

We also enjoyed numerous prolonged and vivid views of **Australian King Parrots**, including the sight of one female hanging upside down just a metre above the ground in a Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum linearifolium*) as she appeared to eat the green, unripe fruit. At one point on our return, we witnessed **Superb Parrots**, **King Parrots**, a **Grey Butcherbird** and a **Pied Currawong** all in the same Ash (*Fraxinus* sp.) bush at the same time. Two **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** finally revealed themselves by flying overhead. And a close and confiding **Laughing Kookaburra** prompted a very useful discussion on the different appearance of adult males, adult females, and juveniles.

Small woodland birds were distressingly absent from most of the walk, as expected by the prevalence of Noisy Miners. No wrens, scrub-wrens, pardalotes, fantails or Willie Wagtails were encountered and, of the thornbills, only **Striated**, and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, and **Weebills** were heard, in just one location. We noticed that the woodland trees sported very few mistletoes, possibly as a result of the missing small birds.

Over the two sites we saw a total of 23 species of birds, with almost half of these (10 species) being parrots and cockatoos (**Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo**, **Gang-gang Cockatoo**, **Galah**, **Little Corella**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, **Superb Parrot**, **Australian King Parrot**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Eastern Rosella** and **Rainbow Lorikeet**), a fitting ratio for the national day of the 'Land of Parrots'.

Thanks to Denise for leading and for so generously sharing her local knowledge of this fascinating habitat, and to Lia Battison for keeping the bird list of the walk.

Mitchell Kelly



Laughing Kookaburra
Lindsey Gilbert



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Future Field Trips

COG Trips

Each participant must register prior to their chosen trip with their name and contact number and, before proceeding on the trip, must comply with the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An emergency contact name and phone number are required.

"I declare that I am capable of undertaking the trip having discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured that I am adequately equipped. I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group."

New birders and visitors are welcome. If you do not have your own binoculars, COG can lend you a pair, so please advise the trip leader when you register.

Changes to trips are notified on:

the COG chatline <http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/discussion-email-list/> and
trips page of COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/category/trips/>.

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give preference to members for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people

Do NOT attend if you have tested positive for Covid, have been a close contact within the past 5 days, or have any Covid, cold or flu symptoms.

Sunday 9 February – Brooks Hill Reserve, Bungendore

Brooks Hill Reserve is on the Kings Highway. Often passed, but less frequently visited, the reserve car-park is located on the right-hand side at the bottom of the last hill before the flat stretch leading to Bungendore.

We'll plan to walk back up the old highway and then through the bush, which is fairly open, and not especially uneven ground, back to the car park. We'll be out for about 2 to 3 hours, depending on how many birds are around, so those that need a mid-morning snack should bring one, as well as water, sunscreen and appropriate clothing.

Meet at 8 am at Spotlight, Queanbeyan for carpooling, or 8:30 am at the reserve parking area.

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

Sunday 16 February – private property near Hoskinstown

Description: Mixed-eucalypt forest, including post-burn regeneration; garden around house. A range of forest species expected including **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Superb Lyrebird**, thornbills, **Australian King Parrot**, rosellas, **Wonga Pigeon** and **Laughing Kookaburra**, as well as spring/summer migrants.

Meeting time and place: 8.00 am, Spotlight car park, Queanbeyan for carpooling.

Walking distance: 4 km

Degree of difficulty: medium

End time (approx.): 12.00pm

What to bring: water, morning tea, hat, sunscreen, sturdy shoes

Registration: participants must register with the leader at least 36 hours in advance, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Numbers limited: maximum of 16

Name of leader and contact details: Peter Smith 0427 879 774 smith.peter899@gmail.com

Wednesday 19 February - Trevillian Quay and Kingston Foreshore

Meet at 8.30am at the parking bays next to the vacant block bounded by Kerridge St, The Causeway, and Eyre St. There are parking spots straight across from the Eyre St end of Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

We will walk around the foreshore, hoping for **Pied Cormorants** and **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, both of which have been reported in that area. Depending on time, we may check out that end of Jerrabomberra Wetlands and the woodlands, or Norgrove Park, all within easy walking distance.

Registration is not necessary, but please be there on time! Sturdy shoes, sunscreen, water, hat are all recommended. Sandra Henderson

Sunday 23 February – Yerrabi Pond and Ginninderra Creek, Amaroo

Description: Yerrabi Pond is a hotspot for **Superb Parrot** and many species of waterbirds including **Musk Duck** and **Black Swan**. Ginninderra Creek runs beside Moncrieff Ridge and has **Tree Martin**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **European Goldfinch**.

Meeting time and place: 7.30 am in the carpark off Wonderlich St, Gungahlin. The second meeting place will be Jorgensen St, Moncrieff.

Walking distance: Yerrabi Pond 2 km, Ginninderra Creek 2 km. Degree of difficulty: easy

End time: 12.30 pm

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

Numbers limited to 16.

Participants must register with the leader, by email to bsgraham1948@gmail.com at least 24 hours before, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Bill Graham



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Sunday 23 to Friday 28 February – Crowdy Bay NP – camping

Protecting a pristine sweep of coastline between Port Macquarie and Taree, Crowdy Bay National Park is a beautiful coastal park. Habitat includes coastal heath, swamp and woodland which harbours some fantastic species such as **Grass Owl**, **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, **King Quail**, **White-cheeked Honeyeater**, **Southern Emu-wren**, **Eastern Ground Parrot** and potentially Koala. We will be camping at Kyles Beach National Park Campground. Contact Kathy and John on [walter.goldie](mailto:walter.goldie@gmail.com) (at gmail.com) for further information and to book your place. Please provide your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Note: numbers are limited.

John Goldie and Kathy Walter

Sunday 2 March – Stony Creek NR and Uriarra East

Description: Stony Creek Nature Reserve is an extensive reserve along the Murrumbidgee River. Today we will explore the section which adjoins the southern end of the Uriarra East Picnic Area, walking along the edge of the river. On our return we will spend some time in the picnic area as well. **Collared Sparrowhawks**, **Pied Butcherbirds**, **Dollarbirds** and **Tawny Frogmouths** are just some of the species which have bred here in the past, so hopefully we will see them.

Meet at southern end of the Uriarra East Picnic Area carpark at 8:00 am

Walking distance: 3.5 kms

End time (approx.): 11:00

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

Name of leader and contact details: Please **register** with the leader, Lia Battisson by email to liabattisson@outlook.com, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Please do so **before 7pm on Friday 28 February**. Numbers will be limited to 16.

Sunday 9 March – Wallaroo district

For this outing we'll explore the Wallaroo district, an old pastoral district now mainly taken up by hobby farms between the Barton Highway and Murrumbidgee River just over the border from Hall. There will be opportunities for woodland and grassland birds, and we'll also go down to the river corridor a couple of times, including using a secret path that few people know about. Because most of the area is private land, we'll mainly be driving between those sites that are accessible without too much walking involved, but sensible shoes and gaiters/long trousers are always a good idea. Bring morning tea to enjoy by the river.

Numbers will be limited to 16. Parking can be limited so we'll need to carpool. **Meet** at the old Hall Primary School on the corner of Victoria Street and Hoskins Street in Hall at 8.00am.

Please register with Marcus Hellyer (pickelbarrel@gmail.com, 0418 264 868) with your name, mobile number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Sunday 16 March - South Aranda Bushland (Ian Loiterton) Walk

Experience a newish trail in the southern section of Aranda Bushland. It is named after Ian Loiterton, a long-term member of the Friends of Aranda Bushland, who established the walk. We will follow a loop track of approximately 2.5 km with a gentle gradient, passing through woodland, native grasslands, swamps, and a stony ridge for 1.5 -2 hours. The walk starts at the same point as the Aranda Snow Gums trail and, if time permits, we may also walk part of that trail. We may expect to see a variety of woodland and smaller birds. At an outing on this trail last October, 39 species were recorded.

Meet at 8.30 am at the stile on Caswell Drive; access is via William Hovell Drive, city bound left lane.

If driving from north Canberra, drive south down Bindubi Street, turn left into William Hovell Drive and turn left into the access road signposted for Black Mountain just before Glenloch Interchange.

If coming from south Canberra, turn left from the Tuggeranong Parkway into William Hovell Drive, move immediately into the right lane, then after 100 metres or so turn right into the turning bay marked Black Mountain car park, then turn left into the access road.

Limited parking available (4-6 cars) opposite the stile, or drive into the car park on the left hand side of Caswell Drive, which exits onto Caswell Drive, and walk back to the stile.

Please bring a hat, water and wear sturdy shoes.

Numbers limited. **Register** with Julie at julie.hotchin@gmail.com. Provide name and mobile number and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Julie Hotchin

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 March – Eden pelagics

Two one-day pelagics have been booked, departing from Eden at 7am to approximately 3pm each day. Cost will be about \$164. Currently, the boat is fully booked on both days but there are usually cancellations, so if you would like to go on the waiting list, I require the following information (please reply by numbering 1 to 4 and providing your answers):

1. Name and mobile number
2. Name and number of an emergency contact
3. Which day do you wish to register for? Sat 22, or Sun 23, or don't mind

Would you like to express an interest in a second day if it becomes available? yes or no.

Register at smlashko@gmail.com

Sue Lashko and Julian Teh

Sunday 30 March – Rob Roy NR

Rob Roy Nature Reserve is on south-east fringe of Canberra.

Better birders than I have seen some pretty special birds in Rob Roy NR, such as **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** and **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**. While I've not been as lucky, there are usually a good range of bush birds on the lower north slopes of the reserve.

This part of the reserve is rough terrain so good walking boots are essential, as is a reasonable standard of fitness. However, the length and route of walk will depend on the weather, attending COG members and birds.

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of Haxton Place, Condor. As parking is limited we will try to car pool and only have 4 to 5 cars.

Because of the rough terrain and parking this trip will be restricted to 16 people.

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

Friday 16 April to Monday 21 April – private property at Wanganella – Easter camping

As with past visits to this location, we will camp at the old shearers' quarters, which means that there is space for tents and camper vans. We will have access to a basic kitchen (tank water, fridge/freezer, a sink for washing up), a microwave which I will provide, a large dining table, as well as very basic bathroom facilities (toilets and hot showers). There is limited internet access around the shearers' quarters. We will bird on the property, including one night excursion, as well as at some spots closer to Deniliquin. Numbers strictly limited to 16 participants.

I anticipate most will plan to arrive from Thursday 17 April, and depart on Monday 21 April.

To register contact Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com) with name and mobile number, and name and number of an emergency contact.



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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Woodland Surveys – December 2024 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

The official survey period in the first week of December coincided with much needed rain after a drier than usual spring. Some surveys had to be undertaken in the following week.

Note: not all sites are reported.

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team did the quarterly survey on Sunday 8 December. After a week/10 days of rain most days, and humid warm to hot conditions, it was a relief to find the survey day clear, fine and sunny. There was a light breeze and temperatures in the low to mid 20s. The first impression was less than the usual birds calling, and they wondered if the recent rain had stimulated a late nesting (quieter birds!) after the very dry start to spring, or perhaps some birds may have moved on to other places such as the ranges. The total species came to 48, indeed on the low side considering the early December survey range of total species, and the lowest in five years#. However, **Olive-backed Orioles**, **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Sacred Kingfishers** stood out as reasonably vocal, and **Olive-backed Orioles** were recorded at 7 sites across the survey area. Highlights were a **Common Bronzewing** at site 12 on the central ridge, an **Aust. Owllet Nightjar** calling in the woodland at site 11, **Superb Parrots** at a couple of sites, a **Bush Stone-curlew** calling near site 1, a **Channel-billed Cuckoo** heard calling from the north-central part of the reserve, and a **Scarlet Robin** north of the Woolshed. A record of a **Welcome Swallow** hawking over site 9 (open site on the west ridge), was a nice record as this species is not often recorded in the mostly woodland sites. Only one **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** was recorded, calling in the north of the reserve near site 10. A few species were absent (or not calling), no raptors were recorded, and only a few very common waterbirds on the dams, which would have influenced the total species.

In the last five years from 2020, the total number of species for December survey has been 51, 57, 58, 63, and 48 in 2024.

Goorooyaroo NR (southern area)

Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley surveyed on 11 December in pleasant conditions, partly cloudy, mild to warm, and with light to moderate wind. The reserve looked a lot greener than a couple of weeks previously, with water in creek beds and dams. A total of 53 species was recorded, with 44 of these during point counts, compared to 50 and 42 for 2023.

Interesting records included an incidental **Pied Butcherbird** heard, a **Speckled Warbler** at site 9, a **Grey Currawong** at site 8 and a **Golden-headed Cisticola** calling near site 1. **Noisy Friarbirds** were fairly plentiful, other summer migrants recorded were **White-throated** and **Western Gerygones**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. **White-throated Treecreepers** are normally thin on the ground in this part of Gooroo but were heard at 4 different sites. Thornbills and other small birds were in rather low numbers. Breeding records included a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** entering a hollow and an **Australian Magpie** sitting on a nest, which seemed rather late. Three **Wedge-tailed Eagles** were seen flying over Old Joe Hill; two chicks were successfully fledged this season from a new nest in that area. The old W-TE nest had been used every year since 2009 but increased human traffic nearby since the opening of the visitor centre may have led to them relocating.

Mt Majura NR

Duncan McCaskill, Kathy Walter and John Goldie did the surveys over 2 days in the first week of December week dodging the rainy days. Monday 2 December turned out to be a beautiful sunny morning perfect for surveying four of the sites by Duncan. Friday 7 December, while fine, was hot and humid even at 7am when John and Kathy started. 31 species were recorded over the 9 sites. The highlight was stunning views, at eye height, of a single **Musk Lorikeet** feeding on fruits in a native Cherry Ballart. Most of the sites had the usual suspects with **Superb Parrots** and **Rainbow Lorikeets** adding to the usual parrot count. Smaller passerines included **Speckled Warbler** at one site, **Superb Fairywrens**, **Buff-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills**, **Grey Fantails**, **Silvereyes** and a couple of **Weebills**. **Leaden Flycatcher** was heard at one site, along with a **Grey Shrike-thrush** at another. A family of 10 White-winged Choughs was also recorded.

Majura Field Range

Kim Farley was able to get access for the survey on 12 December in near perfect conditions. Not a cloud in the sky, a very light breeze and a nice range of flowers to be seen (including Blue Devils one of Kim's favourites). The recent rain

had topped up the numerous dams around the Defence Area, though there were no creeks flowing. A total of 43 species was recorded across the eight sites, with three additional species seen between sites (**White-winged Chough**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**, **Pied Currawong**).

Highlights included a pair of **Tree Martins** visiting an occupied nest in a dead tree, a juvenile **Scarlet Robin** following an adult male, and what was probably a single **Brown Falcon** seen several times. A **Brush Cuckoo** was heard calling at one site and a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** at another. Brush Cuckoo is not commonly reported at the Range, so that bird was a bonus. Recorded at nearly all sites were **White-throated Gerygone**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Fantail**. **Western Gerygone**, **Common Bronzewing**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater** were recorded at several sites. Unusually, **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** was recorded only once. **Noisy Miners** continue to be reported in lower numbers than in the past, and only two birds for the site where they are most common.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

The December woodland survey of the 9 sites on the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie was carried out by Robin Hide and Michael Lenz on 11 December. Conditions were pleasant, partly overcast, light wind. Several sites were very weedy. However, mistletoes appeared to have recovered and many had started to grow flowers. Overall bird activity was low, even the normally widespread **Crimson Rosellas** were present only in small numbers. Small bush birds were also scarce. Only 25 species were recorded at sites and a further 10 species outside sites. The **Noisy Miner** was again the most widespread species.

Observations of interest included **Dollarbird**, **Brown Goshawk** (begging heard from either young or the females), 2 pairs of **Leaden Flycatchers** and single records of **Superb Parrot**, **Gang-gang**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **White-winged Triller**. **White-throated Gerygone**, **Western Gerygone** and **Noisy Friarbird** were present across the area. A pair of **White-faced Herons** was standing next to and on their nest. There was no indication if they had either eggs or young. Absent again was Common Bronzewing and White-throated Treecreeper.

Newline

Sue Lashko carried out the survey on 3 December in mild conditions, with cloudy conditions and a couple of light showers. Bird numbers were quite low which was not surprising given the very high level of weed infestation and almost total lack of bare or sparsely-covered areas for ground-feeding birds. **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **Silvereyes** were the only ones taking advantage of the many luxuriant blackberry thickets.

Migrants included **Dollarbird**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallow** (one pair feeding at least 2 small chicks), **Tree Martin** and **Mistletoebird**, but no gerygones or cuckoos were recorded. Pairs of **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Australian Wood Ducks** were behaving suspiciously next to hollow entrances. The only raptor seen was chased by **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and a **Noisy Friarbird** into a tree. When Sue approached to get a better look, it swooped in a half-hearted way and revealed the rounded tail of a **Brown Goshawk**. The species count of 39 was slightly lower than usual for a summer survey.

Symonston sites (Callum Brae & Isaacs Ridge NR)

Sandra Henderson did the survey on 6 December. The noise from cicadas was very obvious, and ranged from loud to deafening right around the reserve. Listening for small birds was very difficult throughout. There were Common Brown butterflies in very large numbers. The bird species count (28) was the lowest for the summer survey, and much lower than on the recent Canberra Birds outing to the reserve. The most obvious birds were **Australian Ravens**, with a loose group of well over 30 birds at the high point near the quarry fence. The throat hackles and distinctive calls ensured there was no confusion about the species ID. Perhaps they were feasting on the cicadas? At the first site light rain started to fall, but by the final site it was sunny and very warm. Unusually, no **White-throated Gerygones** were heard, and only a single **White-throated Treecreeper** was heard. No pardalotes, no

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cuckoos, and very few thornbills. The **Southern Boobook** seen in the previous survey appears to have moved on, and parrot numbers were very low.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson, surveyed on Saturday 7 December when it looked as if there might be a dry morning. It was very mild, with a very pleasant light breeze. Ten **Rainbow Lorikeets** were recorded at site 2, after a brief absence. Site 6 was the most interesting site, with three species which rarely make it onto a survey site, namely a **Mistletoebird**, **Laughing Kookaburra** and **White-throated Treecreeper**. Other species of note, between sites were **White-winged Choughs**, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Olive-backed Orioles**. The only breeding records were two juvenile **Pied Currawongs** and an **Australian Magpie** feeding young. In all, 37 species were observed, 19 of those within sites. This is very close to the average for Tuggeranong Hill at that time of the year.

Naas Sites

Julie Hotchin and Steve Read did the survey on this rural leasehold south of Tharwa on 2 December. It was a bright, clear morning after heavy rain on the preceding weekend, becoming hot as the morning progressed. The site looked much greener than in the spring. Birds were active on arrival and at most sites; a more densely treed site continued to have lots of bird activity late in the morning. A total of 48 species was recorded, of which 32 species were in the six sites and 16 species between sites. The total species was slightly higher than in 2023 (44) and a third greater than in 2022 and 2021 (34).

Highlights included three **Jacky Winters** (one heard at a site, and a pair active in trees between sites), a pair each of **White-winged Trillers**, **Restless Flycatchers** and **Australasian Pipits**, and several **Rufous Songlarks** (seen and heard). Raptors seen were a **Collared Sparrowhawk** being harassed by **Dusky Woodswallows** above one site and a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** hunting over a grassy area.

Spring-summer migrants present included **White-throated Gerygone** (heard or seen at every site), **Western Gerygone**, **Rufous Whistler** (heard or seen at all sites except one), **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Tree Martin** and an **Olive-backed Oriole**. There were few honeyeaters present except for a single **Yellow-Faced Honeyeater**, a couple of **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, **Noisy Friarbirds** and the resident **Noisy Miners**. Few smaller birds were observed; those seen or heard included **Striated Pardalotes**, **Grey Fantails** and numerous **Willie Wagtails**. **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** was the only thornbill species recorded.

A range of breeding activity was observed. Several parrot and cockatoo species were seen at hollows, including **Eastern** and **Crimson Rosellas**, **Galahs**, and a **Crimson x Eastern Rosella hybrid** seen investigating a hollow with an **Eastern Rosella**. **Rufous Whistler** and **Common Starling** were observed carrying food, while a pair of **Dusky Woodswallow** fledglings were perched on a branch, and juvenile **Australian Magpies** heard begging.



Canberra Birds members, Blundells Creek Road and Warks Road field trip

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