

Gang-gang

MARCH 2025

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

MARCH MEETING

Wednesday 12 March 2025
7:30 pm

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

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

Rachael Grigson – Avian influenza H5N1... no longer a matter of if, but when?

Geoffrey Dabb – ‘Uncommon non-breeding visitor’: some reflections on the intermittent **Freckled Duck**, one of Canberra’s most interesting birds.

Please note that construction is still occurring around the Gabriel Drive parking area, and access to there is still not available. However, for 2025 the access gate and parking spot has changed. Entry and exit are now from the main gates on Melbourne Ave which automatically open and close. The Entry gate will be open, so please drive through and park in the main

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

It continued fine and hot for the first week of the 4 weeks 29 January to 25 February, inclusive, covered by this column, before another 10-day stormy spell (but only half the rain at my place compared with the similar two in the previous period) before it was fine again for the rest of the period though much cooler for the first week. Over the period, this sustaining summer weather pattern is unlikely to have had a significant effect on bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi), which my analysis below shows to have been rather moderate. At least some birds of the inland spring/summer migrants that seemed to be departing early stayed on over the period, and numbers of “unusual” species reported were again relatively low, with none of these considered to be “special”.

Spring/summer migrants

Of the early departing inland spring/summer migrants usually present in limited numbers over summer, there have been no

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Grey Goshawk

Ben Ward

Everyone welcome

MARCH MEETING—continued from Page 1

parking area to your left. Once parked proceed to the Multi-media Theatre (MMT) using the more direct route in the [amended map](#)

This is roughly perpendicular to Melbourne Ave. Keep the Admin Hub, Reception and School Shop to your right and then proceed 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 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, a torch for finding your way back to your car is recommended. The Exit gate is on a sensor pad, so please drive up to the gate and it will open for you.

The first speaker will be **Rachael Grigson**, Biosecurity Veterinarian in the ACT Government, on ‘Avian influenza [H5N1](#)...no longer a matter of if, but when?’

Australia remains the only continent free from high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1. Outbreaks overseas have led to mass mortalities of millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of wild mammals. It has also caused a small number of human infections. With the increased likelihood of entry via migrating wild birds, the risk to Australia is real. Does our unique wildlife stand a chance? Rachael will look at what has been done, what is being done, what needs to be done, and what we can do as bird lovers.

The main presentation will be by **Geoffrey Dabb** on ‘Uncommon non-breeding visitor’: some reflections on the intermittent **Freckled Duck**, one of Canberra’s most interesting birds.

Geoffrey has provided the following information about his presentation:

This paper began with a curiosity about the comings and goings of **Freckled Ducks** (FD), certainly not with any intention of giving a talk on the species. I thought perhaps it could be shown that the feeding requirements of dispersing **Freckled Ducks** limited them to water bodies in our area that were of a particular kind and in a particular condition.

A few months ago, I started by making lists grouping all local FD records according to time and location. This shifted my attention to how we have reported and recorded the occurrence of bird species, and whether this was useful for an intermittent bird species. Our overall observing effort, for understandable reasons, tends to concentrate on certain sites, much more than others. It can miss visits by this species, which are often relatively brief. I then consulted the wider literature, to the extent readily available.

I now have a large amount of material of varying relevance including in the early days of observing by COG members. I have made several attempts to try to organize this in an informative way for a presentation, none really satisfactory so far. However, I am still trying as I write this summary. The main points I hope to be able to talk about are: where (we are told) the species sits among Australian ducks; how it has a surprising number of historic and current associations with Canberra; what we know about its appearances around the local area; what it is doing when it is present here; and how remarkable numbers of visiting **Freckled Ducks** have been recorded at (the intermittently surveyed) Lake George. There’s also something to say about the presence of the species in the Canberra area during 2025 so far.



Freckled Duck: male, female



Peter Fullagar



Freckled Duck, Pink-eared Duck *Geoffrey Dabb*

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for in March continued from page 1

further records of the **Brown Songlark** (last reported from the West Belconnen Pond on 19 January). There have been only two reports of a **Horsfield's Bushlark**, heard there on 12 February but then photographed there on 24 February. In the period there have been reports of **Rufous Songlarks** from just 3 locations, single birds at West Belconnen Pond and at Woolcara Lane on 7 and 9 February, respectively, and 2 at Diddams Close Park, Lake Ginninderra on 23 February.

The **White-winged Triller** has been reported from just 7 locations during the period, with the only reports after 10 February being the up to 7 birds reported from the Kama NR from 18-25 February. On the first occasion a pair was reported carrying food, and then photos of up to 3 brown birds showed at least one with a blotchy head and neck and a streaked upper breast, indicating a late breeding event. The BIRD INFO data on the Canberra Birds web site supports late breeding with 20 reports up to 2017-2018 of dependent young in February, and 1 record of nest with young and 2 of on/leaving the nest.

So, while both these last two species were present in much lower numbers than usual this summer, at least some (as well as a **Horsfield's Bushlark**) have stayed beyond their usual first half of February exit.

Of the other inland migrants that have not been present in large numbers this summer there has been only a single report of **White-browed Woodswallows** during the period, 5 birds flying over the Glendale Depot on 15 February. Again, there have been no confirmed sightings of the **Masked Woodswallow** during this time.

Similarly, the **Pallid Cuckoo** was reported from only 2 locations (up from 1 in January) in the period. On 4 February John Leonard heard one calling at London Bridge, near the carpark. However, there were no further reports except for 2 birds at Callum Brae on 10 February, confirming that it has been another very poor summer for this species. The **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** was still reported from 4 locations, well down from the 17 in January, with the most recent report being of 2 birds at the Kama NR on 22 February.

There have been no reports of the coastal spring/summer migrant the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** since 13 December. Of the other less common coastal spring/summer migrants, up to 2 **Common Cicadabirds** were still reported from 9 locations during the period, 5 from the mountains W of the Murrumbidgee River, and 4 in the Tallaganda area to the SE. However, the last reports were on 9 February.

Despite the less stormy conditions, there have been reports for the **White-throated Needletail** from 15 locations, compared with the 5 in January, the maximum being 40 birds over Bluetts Block on 11 February. While between 1-23 February there were reports for the related **Fork-tailed Swift** from just 3 locations with a maximum of 6 birds, on 24 February Mark Clayton posted that at around 08:35 h he recorded at least 10, and probably more, low over his house in Kaleen. They were as low as the rooftops of nearby houses and up to several hundred metres in the air, which made making an accurate count rather difficult. He noted the weather was fine, clear, dead calm and reasonably warm with no sign of an approaching storm. Despite these conditions there was then a rush of reports on the COG chat line that morning of **Fork-tailed Swifts** from 7 other locations, from Mt Painter to the E/SE, with a maximum of 16 birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR). These are by far the most reports of these two species, particularly for the latter, for some years.

So please keep a lookout for the species mentioned above most of 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.

During March please also keep an eye out for the other departing spring/summer migrant species such as the **Dollarbird**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** (listen for them calling overhead as they migrate north) and **Sacred Kingfisher**, which all usually leave, in that order, by mid-March (all three were still widely reported during February, up to the time of writing).

Other birds that mostly have left by the end of March/early April include the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Brush Cuckoo**, **Eastern Koel**, **Latham's Snipe**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Australian Reed-Warbler** (often very quiet in March), **Tree** and **Fairy Martins**, all of which were still widely reported in February. Towards the end of March, the first **Yellow-faced**

Honeyeaters will start their migration. The passage migrants, the **Satin Flycatcher** and **Australian Rufous Fantail**, were both still reported from the mountains to the southwest of Canberra or around Tallaganda NP. However, there were 4 reports of single birds of the latter from urban/peri-urban locations, but none of the former, an indication that they had not yet started to move through.

Autumn/winter altitudinal migrants

March is also the month when many species start to come to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here. These include the **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler** for which there have been 9 and just 2 reports from urban/peri-urban locations, respectively, so far in February. Interestingly there have been regular reports of up to 4 of the latter from the ANBG.

In the period, the **Scarlet Robin** was reported 8 urban/peri-urban locations, of which 4 were again from the Mulligans Flat NR area, interestingly down from the 10 locations in January. Again, there were no such reports for the **Flame** or **Rose Robin**, and there have been no **Pink Robin** sightings reported.

There have also been no such reports of **Crescent Honeyeater**, and the only report of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** was 6 birds from the Naas Valley Firetrail Track to Horsegully Hut on 1 February. There have been no reports anywhere in the COG Aol of the **Brown Gerygone**. However, there was still a report of 2 **Bassian Thrush** from the ANBG on 19 February though none there of the **Olive Whistler** during the period.

So please during March look out for the above species as they move into Canberra and surrounds. Towards the end of March please also look out for any early **Swift Parrots** migrating from Tasmania; it will be interesting to see if they visit Canberra this autumn/winter, which is likely to depend on the amount of flowering available.

Unusual species

While there were no special “unusual” species reported during the period, perhaps the most unexpected was the reporting of wild type **Zebra Finches** at the JWNR, first a single bird by Ben Ward on 8 February, with Deb and Rod Ralph then observing 2 birds the day after. Both were quite brief but sufficient views of this well-known inland species. Surprisingly there have been no further reports since from this very much visited birding spot. COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists this as a rare breeding visitor/escapee for which there were 7 records that year and 5 the year before. However, eBird shows only a single record since that, 4 birds seen on Tuggeranong Hill on 14 February 2021 (I had been wondering whether to continue including this species in my column).

There were no **Magpie Geese** or **Plumed Whistling Duck** reported from the COG Aol during the period. **Freckled Duck** were reported from 3 locations, with up to 6 ducks continuing to be present at the JWNR throughout the period. However, the largest number was the 36 ducks counted from the SW corner of Lake George on 9 February. Up to 3 **Australian Shelduck** were reported from the Mulligans Flat big dam on 29-30 January, and a single duck at the JWNR on the COG/Canberra Birds field trip there on 2 February. During the period, this duck was otherwise reported from 11 locations to the N through to the E of Canberra, as is usual. By far the highest numbers were the 810 on the Lake Bathurst survey on 11 February (85 were also at the adjacent Morass on this date). The next highest were the 160 on the Bungendore Meadow Dam and at the SW corner of Lake George on 18 and 23, respectively, with 80 also at the Trucking Yard Lane dam on the latter date.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 4 locations during the period, with up to 6 ducks reported from the Upper Stranger Pond, which remains a hot spot for them, being reported from there throughout the period. Again, by far the highest number was the 129 ducks recorded at Lake Bathurst during the surveys there on 11 February. On 2 February Shorty reported that morning that on the bank between the ponds of the treatment plant there was a male **Blue-billed Duck** (his photo shows it sitting down amongst a lots of other ducks), he noted it was only the second time he had seen them on land before.

Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 7 locations, with the highest numbers being the 27 ducks recorded at Lake Bathurst on 11 February when there were also 5 reported from the adjacent Morass. Otherwise, the highest number was 3 at the Upper Stranger Pond on 16 February.

It has continued to have been a very good summer for **Great-crested Grebes** which were reported from 5 locations, with again the maximum being the 57 reported from the Lake Bathurst survey on 11 February (but none at the adjacent

Morass). There were also 5 birds reported from Bracks Hole Rd Coree (Cotter dam), and up to 2 birds regularly from the West Belconnen Pond. Single birds were reported from the Upper Stranger Pond and the Concrete Rd Pierces Creek.

Stubble Quail were reported from 6 locations during the period, well down from the 18 in January, again reflecting the drier conditions with less long grass available, with a maximum of 6 birds at Parkwood Rd Wallaroo on 13 February. **Brown Quail** were reported from 9 locations, slightly down from January, with a maximum of 6 birds from the Yerrabi Walking Track on 2 February. However, no **Painted** or **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

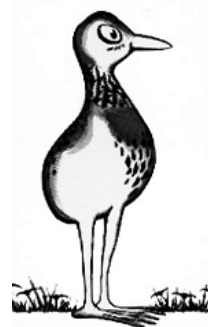
During the period, a **Brush Bronzewing** was reported only from the Warks Rd at New Chums Rd on 1 February. Up to 3 **Peaceful Doves** were reported from 2 locations along the Cotter Road and Bibaringa (well-known spots for them), with one also from the Edgeworth Pond (Coombs) on 15 February, an unusual spot but not too far from the former. However, no **White-headed Pigeon**, **Brown Cuckoo-Dove** or **Diamond Doves** were reported during the period.

While single **White-throated Nightjars** were regularly reported from the Concrete Rd Pierces Creek area during the period, it remains unclear if the multiple birds spotted at there and nearby last year were a post-breeding aggregation, a migrating flock stopping to rest and refuel, or just a good local population at that time. Another 2 birds were reported heard at the Yanununbeyan State Conservation Area to the SE of Queanbeyan on 9 February.

Baillon's Crake were reported from 2 locations only, with single birds regularly observed from the JWNR, but with otherwise a single bird at the Bungendore Common on 14-15 February. Up to 2 **Spotless Crakes** were reported from 3 locations, but again only regularly from the JWNR from where up to 3 crakes were reported. Otherwise, reports were of 2 birds at Gungaharra Creek, Flemington on 29 January and Lake Bathurst on 11 February. Up to 7 **Australian Spotted Crake** were also very regularly reported from the JWNR, and 1-2 birds from a further 4 locations.

Buff-banded Rail were reported from 3 locations, but up to 2 birds only regularly at the Big Dam at Mulligans Flat NR. Otherwise, there was one bird at the Eyre St wetlands on 19 February, and 2 birds to the WNW of Tarago on 19 February. **Lewin's Rails** were also reported from 3 locations, with single birds from the JWNR between 8-21 February, with otherwise reports of a single bird at Hoskintown and the Tin Hut Dam on 7 and 10 February, respectively. There have been no reports of the **Black-tailed Native-hen** during the period.

Pied Stilts were reported from 4 locations, with the 42 birds seen at SW Lake George on 12 February the highest number, followed by the 29 birds seen during the Lake Bathurst surveys on 11 February, with the 20 at NW Lake George on 23 February next. On the evening of 19 February Roy Harvey photographed 5 **Red-necked Avocets** at Yarralumla Bay. No one else managed to see these birds which often pay only fleeting visits to the ACT. Interestingly checking eBird shows these are the first reported from the ACT part of the COG Aol since September 2019.



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Pied Stilt

Frank Antram

The **Common Sandpiper** continues to have been very regularly reported at its usual spot around the gross pollutant trap at the inlet of Village Creek, but no **Australian Painted-snipe**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Banded Lapwing**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Sharp-tailed** or **Pectoral Sandpipers** or **Red-necked Stint** were reported during the period.

Caspian Tern were reported from 4 locations, a single bird at the JWNR and 2 birds at the adjacent Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant (FSTP), both on 2-3 February, and with a single bird on East Basin on the latter date as well as from the Tuggeranong Parkway at the Molonglo River on 15 February. No **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Terns**, **Australasian** or **Australian Little/Black-backed Bitterns** were reported during the period.

No **Little Egret** was reported during the period, and a **Plumed Egret** reported only from the JWNR between 11-15 February. Up to 2 **Great Egrets** were reported from 9 locations during the past month, but regularly only from the JWNR. **White-necked Herons** were again reported from close to 30 locations in the past month, similar to January, there seems to have been an irruption of this species over summer. **Royal Spoonbill** were reported from 11 locations (down from the 16 in January) all but one within the ACT. In the past month up to 8 (at SW Lake George) **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 4 locations (down from 7 in January), but no **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period (this species has been reported from only 3 locations in the COG Aol in the past 2 years).

Single **Barn Owls** were reported 5 locations during the period. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from around 30 locations in the period, similar to January. An adult **Spotted Harrier** was seen perched on roadside fence post at Murrumbateman Rd at Back Creek, Gundaroo on 22 February. A **Black Kite** was photographed at the Gurney VC Rest Area on the Federal Highway on 6 February. However, there were no reports of the **Grey Goshawk**, **Pacific Baza** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from 3 locations, including the well-known Cotter Bend/Reserve, with single report from the nearby Casuarina Sands on 29 January. A new location was 2 birds at the Mulloon Creek Campground in the Tallaganda NP on 29 January. No **Red-backed** or **Forest Kingfishers** were reported during the period.

Three **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** were reported from the Scott NR on 22 February (as well as 5 on 26 January) with 2 also from the Captains Flat area of the Tallaganda NR on the same day. However, no **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted** or **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were reported over the period, but a **Little Lorikeet** was reported from the ANBG on 4 February. **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 3 locations, 1 bird at Page on 29 January, 1 at Callum Brae NR and 2 birds at Nicholls on 10 and 11 February, respectively.

Two adult **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were photographed in the Rock Valley Homestead area of Tidbinbilla NR on 13 February. Up to 5 **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from the English Garden area of Weston Park between 21-22 February, with on at least one occasion 3 birds photographed had green face patches indicative of immature birds. Three **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were also reported from the Federal Golf Course, as well as 2 in the nearby Garran on 7 February. No **Singing**, **Scarlet** or **Painted Honeyeaters** or **Little Friarbird** were reported during the period.

White-fronted Chats were again only reported only from the Lake Bathurst surveys on 11 February (4 birds). **Red-capped Robins** were reported from 2 locations including from the Bracks Hole Rd Corree from 1-9 February. On the final date 5 birds were recorded, one male was seen in an area of eucalypt regrowth, being followed by a male **Scarlet Robin**. The two other adult males and two immature birds seen together further down the track (note breeding was recorded here in January). While they were actively feeding, the adults were not feeding the immatures. An immature/female was also reported from the Kama NR on 22 February.

Two **Black-faced Monarchs** were reported from 2 close locations in the Tallaganda SF area on 1 and 9 February, respectively. However, no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Apostlebird**, **Spangled Drongo** or **Tawny Grassbird** were reported during the period.

A single **Jacky Winter** was reported only from the Glendale Depot on 2 February, well down from the 8 locations in the previous period. **Hooded Robins** were reported from 4 known locations, with 2 birds at the Birrigai Time Trail on 15 February, three at Spring Station Creek on the Naas Rd on 16 February and 3 and 2 birds at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 2 and 11 February, respectively. On the earlier date an immature male was photographed (Kym Bradley also confirmed successful breeding at her patch to the S of Canberra).

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 6 locations, with regular reports of two birds at the Nelanglo TSR from 1-18 February. A single bird was reported from the Casuarina Sands NR on 29 January, and 2 birds from the Warks/Blundell Creek Roads (a new location) on the same day, as well as from the Sanctuary at the Tidbinbilla NR on 5 February. There was also a single bird at the Glendale Depot on 2 February, as well as on the Harts Road, Krawarree (a new location SE of Captains Flat) on 1 February.

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.

Breeding

Apart from the **White-winged Triller**, **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Red-capped** and **Hooded Robins** reports above (and the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** one below), a few other late summer breeding observations follow:

- On 31 January I noticed 2 green **Satin Bowerbirds** land on a fence outside my study window. One was clearly a very recent fledgling with a very short tail and a clear yellow gape. It was also a very poor flyer and soon fell to the ground where it stayed for at least 30 seconds before flying very clumsily onto a nearby branch. Looking after into the tree above I found what could be a **Satin Bowerbird** nest, as it was a shallow bowl of sticks positioned within upright forks. If so, I hadn't seen this or recorded this species in my garden since our return on 7 January, demonstrating how quiet a breeder the female **Satin Bowerbird** is, as she performs all of this process by herself.
- For the first half of the period reports of **Eastern Koel** fledglings continued apace and it seemed we were on the way to similar numbers to the 2020-2021 bumper season. However, since my presentation on this species to the 12 February COG/Canberra Birds meeting 2 weeks ago, I have had only 14 reports of clearly new Koel fledglings, despite a call for sightings on the COG chat line.
- Also, despite adults still being conspicuous up to the time, I haven't heard or seen a fledgling locally (or anywhere else for that matter) for well over 2 weeks. So, it appears that the expected bumper season is coming to a surprisingly early end, with the likely total (currently 158 fledglings) very similar to the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 seasons.
- On 28 January Peter Miller found a recently fledged **Eastern Koel**, with still short wings and tail feathers, about 80 linear metres along the fire trail that leads from the saddle of Mt. Majura to the top. He was surprised by how far away it was from suburbia. My estimate is around 700 m which makes it the furthest from houses of which I am aware.

Surprisingly few mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have come to my attention, and it seems their formation may be later than in recent years. Andrea and I saw our first clear MFF at Narrabundah Hill on 11 February and on 20 February Stuart Rae observed one on Black Mountain which contained a dependent young **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** begging for food, from **Buff-rumped Thornbills** he thought, though he didn't see any bird feed it. Also mixed up in the MFF was young **Sacred Kingfisher**, a bird of the year. This is a very good example of how some unexpected species can be mixed up in MFFs, so please watch out for them.

March is the middle month when there is lots of bird movement and activity in the COG Aol. So please watch out for the last of the departing spring/summer migrants mentioned above, particularly the **White-throated Needletail** and the **Fork-tailed Swift**, and for the first of the returning autumn/winter altitudinal migrants. Watch out also for MFFs and single species flocks, roosts and roost flights, as well as for any autumn breeding (remember the **COG Ethical Birding Guidelines**). 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/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

Summary of the 12 February meeting presentations

The first presentation was an expanded Bird of the month talk by **Jack Holland** on the “**Eastern Koel**”.

Jack noted that while the male is quite distinctive, females and fledglings can be confused. The female has white spots on a darker back, with a brown/black head/chin while the fledgling/juvenile has a “barred” back and wings, and often a golden crown. The tail may be short but grows, as does amount of black on the crown and under the chin. The fledgling colour can be also very variable from very light to quite golden, to quite brown, its size also can vary.

Jack played a variety of their calls, apart from the male’s well known *ko-el*. This included the alternative (when females/conspecifics are present) male call of *whoa whoa*, which he much prefers over *wirra wirra*, or *wurra wurra*, as sometimes notated, as well as the female’s *kek kek kek*, which he prefers, or *keek keek keek* or *quick quick quick*

He noted there was much variation in these calls as shown in the noisy association he played, including the *wek wek wek* call given by the male (and female) he had heard a lot this year. There are also a range of other calls such as: growls, slow *wows/wawks*, scratches (female?), *folau folaus* (a new one for him this year). The male can also give the female call and vice versa.

The fledgling’s begging calls are very different but also variable, from very loud (can be heard from >150 m away) to quite soft. Examples of this call can be found on the web such as Steve Wallace’s <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/201635761> or Virginia Abernathy’s <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9o76drWuhE>.

Jack also noted that while the RWB fledgling call is sharper and weaker (<https://dibird.com/species/red-wattlebird/>) there is an in between that’s very similar, which he had been hearing continuously in his GBS site this year.

He clarified that the **Eastern Koel** was a recent arrival in the ACT. While there was one record in 1946 (from the Cotter), the next was from Curtin/Lyons early in January 1981. The increase in reports was very slow to 2000 and still slow during the 2000s. The significant increase began in the 2010-2011 season after the 2010 wet year and it is now very common in late spring, summer to early-mid autumn. It is a complete migrant with just 1 winter record of a female in Narrabundah on 17 June 2019 [For more details see CBN 46, 105-118 (2021)].

Jack noted how much easier they were to locate now. During the 2000s he actually saw very few birds, and always a male, with most being aural records, always the *ko-el* call. He heard his first *whoas* in January 2011, and first *kek kek* in January 2013. A female wasn’t actually seen until January 2014 shortly before he saw his first fledgling in his garden 9 days later.

Now they are everywhere and can be seen in noisy aggregations of up to 6 birds of mixed sexes flying around and calling. Adults still call well into February/early March. They can also be seen sitting quietly on open perches in trees, on wires etc, including in a “frozen” forward-leaning position. Recent observations have been of them on the ground sunning themselves.

The first breeding of the **Eastern Koel** was reported from Ainslie in 2009. Jack showed a Table of statistics for each year since 2014-2015 which he initially kept with Virginia Abernathy (ANU Ph D student), and then through him actively seeking reports through the COG chat line etc.

From less than 30 fledglings reported for 2014-2016, numbers doubled for 2016-2017 and went up another 50% in 2017-2019, before dropping back to 71 in the dry, heat and smoke affected 2019-2020 season, which finished early. Numbers then more than quadrupled to well over 300 in the bumper 2020-2021 season, before halving again during 2021-2023. For unclear reasons in 2023-2024



Eastern Koel, Red Wattlebird

Irene Lorbergs

there were only 69 fledglings reported, the lowest since 2015-2016, but they were well up again with 144 so far this 2024-2025 season.

Nearly all confirmed hosts are the **Red Wattlebird** (RWB, over 50%) with for many others RWBs often in the vicinity if not actually seen to pass food. Jack noted this may be because the RWB can have up to 4 broods (roughly September, December, mid-January, late February/March), allowing the **Eastern Koel** to mainly parasitise the last three. Only 4 **Noisy Friarbird** hosts have been confirmed in the ACT and there is good evidence for one **Magpie-lark** (the main host in Brisbane).

Of the now >1150 fledglings that have been reported only around 32 were first seen in the nest. Fledglings beg clearly and typically stay hidden when very young but become bolder and louder as they mature. Some have stayed in gardens for very long periods (a maximum of 77 days) which has allowed some very interesting observations.

One is the possible association of adults with fledglings by being close or calling nearby, which has again been observed this season. Is this seeming contact pure chance, or are the adults present to imprint the call, or to escort them North for migration, or both? Jack noted that it was impossible to answer these questions in his “citizen science” type studies.

On behalf of COG/Canberra Bird members once again many thanks to Jack for his very interesting presentation on this species, which clearly has him fascinated, having watched and documented its rise and rise in the ACT over many years.

The second presentation was a very interesting and informative one by **Antonia Hürlimann** entitled “**Spatial memory strategies of a highly social bird - Collective navigation in a changing environment**”.

Antonia presented the results of her research on the **Vulturine Guineafowl**, a very attractive, highly social, terrestrial bird that inhabits the Kenyan savannah. This is very prone to drought, and she clearly showed the stark difference in the vegetation during the wet and the dry seasons.

Based on fine-scale solar powered GPS tracking of their long-distance movements, Antonia’s research gives insights into drivers of the spatiotemporal dynamics of movement patterns of this gregarious species. The collective use of spatial memory sheds light on their behavioural and cognitive adaptations to harsh and changing environments.

Some very interesting findings she outlined included:

- That in very dry times flocks surprisingly aggregated into a super group which turns out the most energy efficient, by using “roads” and avoiding waterbodies or raised ground;
- This is nearly as energy efficient as single females are when they leave the flock;
- When they move out the first time to find new sources of food, they make explorative movements,
- However, when they return to the same location subsequent times, they can draw on knowledge collected from previous movements through an iterative process;
- In contrast they always return to roost etc by the most direct route; and
- These flocks do not have a clear leader or any scouts but make joint democratic decisions on which way to move forward.

Antonia noted that these very important findings are amongst the first for a bird species, adding to our knowledge for other terrestrial species such as primates.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Antonia for her very interesting and informative presentation. The interest was very clear from the many more questions after her talk compared with some recent meetings. We wish her the very best for her futures studies and research on this or other species on her return to Switzerland.

Jack Holland

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 11 March

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 11:00 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.



White-naped Honeyeater

Julie Clark

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 on 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 also 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.

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, meeting at Kambah Pool carpark at 8:30 on Saturday 5 April for a walk along the river. Updated information will be made available on the Canberra Birds web site and via the Canberra Birds Discussion List (Chatline).

[Instructions and details of the survey sites](#) are on the website.

To sign up or to discuss the survey, please contact Chris Davey by **Friday 21 March** at daveychris12@gmail.com. Could you also provide a mobile phone number if you have one. To help with arranging teams can you also please indicate the suburb you live in.

Volunteering for all 3 dates would be ideal, but surveying for 2 or even 1 of the designated dates will still be useful. Let Chris know if you have a preference for 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



Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Shorty

News from the Committee

The Committee met on February 19 and noted with great pleasure the February 14 gazettal of **Bluetts Block** as a Nature Reserve. Achieving this has been the work of years, with many people involved. We remember again Canberra Birds member, the late Jean Casburn who was an instrumental person in raising awareness of the importance of Bluetts Block.

The committee and I strongly encourage you to sign up for the **Honeyeater migration survey** coming up in April. The survey is a repeat of the surveys undertaken in 1985 and 1997 and is an opportunity to go birding while also contributing to a valuable citizen science project. Read more about the survey and what's involved in the article in this issue of Gang-gang.

Finally, on February 19, Canberra Birds attended the **World Wetlands Day Movie Night** at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. We had a stall, ran two bird walks and awarded a book prize to the winner of a Bird Bingo game. Our historical nest and feather collection attracted a lot of attention, and the bird walks showed local birds to around 40 people in total.

Kim Farley, *President*

Field Trip Reports

Wednesday 18th December—West Belconnen Pond and Dunlop Grasslands

On a refreshingly cool December morning 16 members gathered at the West Belconnen Pond in Dunlop. After passing four **Red-rumped Parrots** en route to the lake edge, we were immediately rewarded by good sightings of **Pacific Black Ducks**, six **Hardheads**, an **Australian Wood Duck** pair with five ducklings, two **Australasian Shovelers** in the distance, and several dozen **Eurasian Coots** spread out across the pond. On the shore were six **Australian White Ibis** and an **Australasian Swamphen** with two large chicks. As we skirted the southern edge of the pond we spotted a **Great Crested Grebe** to the west, a view which only improved as we continued our walk. (30 minutes later we saw a second, which conveniently swam to join the first to confirm the sighting of two individuals).

From the south-western edge of the pond, we made a detour onto the Dunlop Grasslands, following the ACT/NSW border to where it intersected with the narrow Gooromon Ponds.

As well as the ubiquitous **Superb Fairywrens**, **Willie-wagtails**, **Grey Fantails** and **Magpie-larks**, our patience was rewarded by sightings of **Red-browed Finches**, **European Goldfinch**, and several **Golden-headed Cisticola**, one of which sang in full view from a strand of the fence. On the return walk a **Eurasian Skylark** flew and sang for many of us to see.

Back at the West Belconnen Pond, we paused to admire a **Great Cormorant** and two **Little Black Cormorants** each drying their wings on the same tree, as well as a **Nankeen Kestrel** hovering above and then landing on one of the electricity pylons. Walking north-east along the pond edge we soon became surrounded by a mixed 'flock' of at least 25 **Welcome Swallows** and **Fairy Martins**, all flying low to hawk for the insects that were rising from the grass. All agreed that being in the middle of, and so close to the hunting swallows and martins was utterly mesmerising, and a highlight of the walk.

Rounding the northern shore of the pond we encountered a loud-grunting **Australian Pelican**, a pair of **Black Swans** with five large cygnets, and six **Grey Teal**. The **Eurasian Coot** tally grew to an eventual 60 individuals, with just two **Dusky Moorhen** seen. On our return along the eastern shore of the pond, an extended stand of Eucalypt and Casuarina trees (one with three different years of **Magpie-lark** nests in the same tree) harboured **Silvereyes**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Striated Pardalotes**, and a **White-plumed Honeyeater**. A highlight in one tree was a sustained view of three **Double-barred Finches** preening in the sunlight.

We added three **Masked Lapwings** and a **Little Pied Cormorant** before reaching our starting point, for a total of 288 individual birds across 49 species, with 47 species recorded from West Belconnen Pond, and 11 species from Dunlop Grassland, with some overlap. Thanks to Sandra for leading us to such a stimulating spot, one which many of the walkers said they would regularly return to.

Mitchell Kelly

Sunday 2 February – Jerrabomberra NR – World Wetlands Day

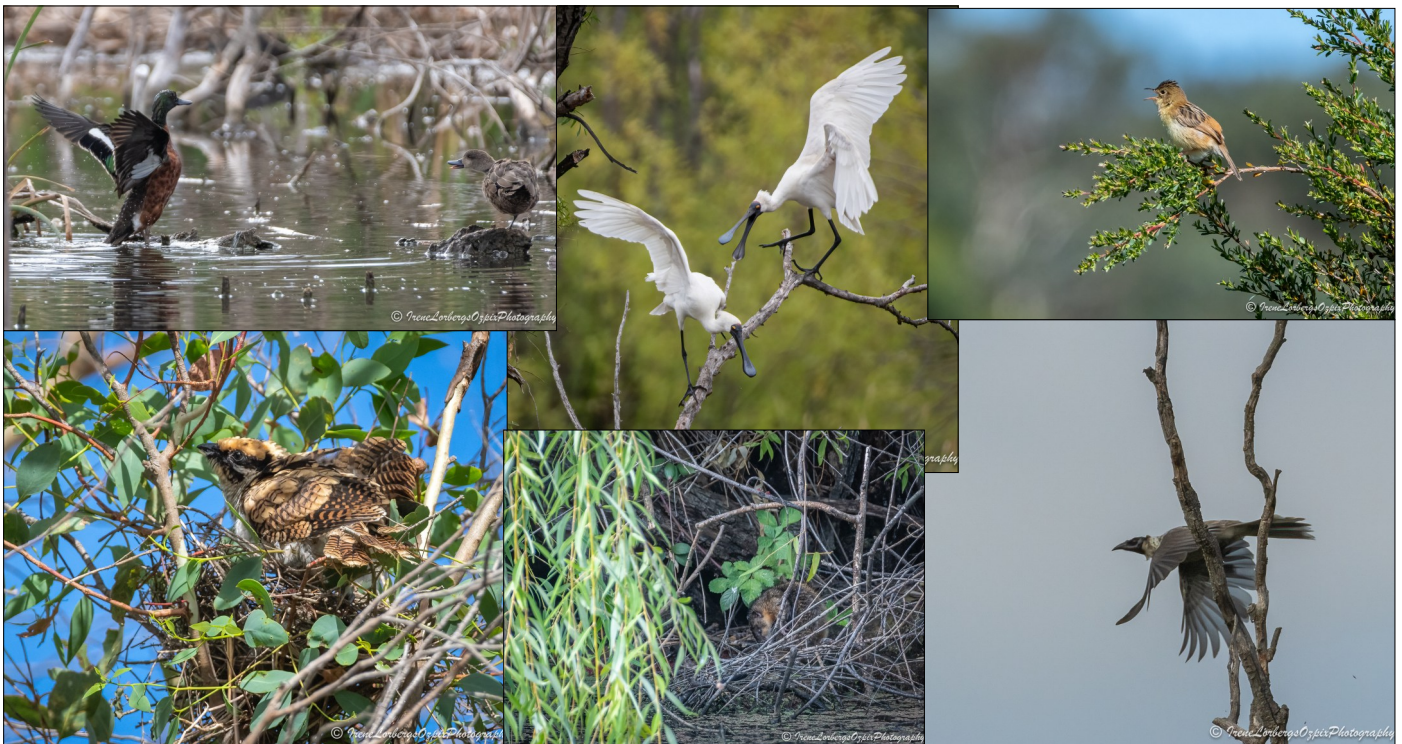
This annual outing to celebrate World Wetlands Day was attended by 24 members and visitors, including several new birders. With such a large number, we divided into two groups with the aim of targeting the more difficult birds first. The overcast conditions were perfect for viewing at the crane pond and from Ardea hide. Even with a dozen people standing not 5 metres from them, a pair of **Australian Spotted Crakes** moved casually across the mud, giving everyone perfect views. A **Baillon's Crake** gave a fleeting view to just a few people, but **Latham's Snipe** were quite relaxed and highly visible. A **Little Grassbird** came out of the reeds to feed on the mud. At least three male **Freckled Ducks**, each with a slightly different amount of red, were seen at different times, as well as females. Meanwhile, the new birders were coming to grips with the differences between **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australasian Shoveler**, **Grey Teal** and, for one group, **Chestnut Teal**.

Moving clockwise around Kelly Swamp, we added **Hardhead**, **Australian Wood Duck** and an **Australian Shelduck**. A **Royal Spoonbill** was snoozing near the cormorant log, and two **White-faced Herons** pranced across the floating grass or shuffled their feet to detect food. A **Nankeen Night Heron** flushed from near Bittern hide and flew slowly towards Jerrabomberra Creek, giving everyone a chance to see it.

Small birds were extremely cooperative with **Red-browed Finch**, **Golden-headed Cisticola**, **Australian Reed Warbler** and even **White-plumed Honeyeaters** (feeding young) showing well. After a circuit of the swamp, we finished up at the carpark watching **Red Wattlebirds** being kept very busy feeding a large **Pacific Koel** chick.

We recorded 65 species in the three hours. Many thanks to Sandra and Lia for taking charge of the second group, the latter while doing the eBird list.

Sue Lashko



Left clockwise: **Chestnut Teal**, **Royal Spoonbill**, **Golden-headed Cisticola**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rakali**, **Pacific Koel** (juvenile)

Irene Lorbergs

Sunday 9 February – Brooks Hill Reserve

A gaggle of 13 novice and experienced birdwatchers set out for a leisurely stroll around Brooks Hill Reserve. This is a reserve on the south side of the Kings Highway, just across the NSW border (second crossing) if one was driving from Queanbeyan to Bungendore.

Before talking about the birds, a touch of history is provided for those interested. It is likely that the Brooks in Brooks Hill refers to Captain Richard Brooks (1765-1833) who established a huge farming property at “Bungendow” (now Bungendore). From reviewing newspapers via the National Library of Australia’s Trove, in the 1880s there was a large population of railway workers living on the site in canvas tents, and at one stage a “Brooks’ Hill Public School” that was “held in a large canvas tent, and during the winter months it [was] pitiful to observe the poor little children in many instances crying bitterly on account of the cold” (Goulburn Evening Penny Post, 14/7/1885, p. 4).

In the intervening years, there are many reports of accidents on the hill (which is often referred to as “Brook’s Hill”). In 1989 the Brooks Hill Reserve Trust was established and the reserve appeared to be established out of Crown Land. The last update available to the board of trustees is in 2000. It is unclear what status the reserve holds, as it is not listed in the NSW Crown Reserves list, nor under State Forests, nor any form of National Park. There are slowly degrading numbered informational markers throughout the reserve and the sign at the entrance mentions that a brochure is available from “tourist outlets in Bungendore” but this has not been the case for some time. There is a copy in the ACT Heritage Library, so perhaps an intrepid local historian will go and seek this out at some point.

At any rate, we met in the carpark and some of us were a little too late to see a mixed-feeding flock including **Varied Sittellas** and **White-throated Treecreeper**. We headed off along the loop trail, towards the railway line. We spied an **Eastern Spinebill**, and many of us commented on its perhaps unusually long bill. This bird was singing as we observed which allowed many of us to notice for the first time its call, which we learned was not dissimilar from the staccato, high-pitched calls of the **White-throated Treecreeper** and **Eastern Yellow Robin**. We also had a beautiful view of a **Flame Robin** perched atop a dead tree.

We wound on and attempted to visit the small dam not far from the railway line, but unfortunately we passed a couple who had just taken their dog for a swim there, which had probably scared away most of the birds. We did see **Crimson Rosellas** in the distance which seemed agitated, possibly by a nearby bird of prey.

As we continued, we heard and then observed two **Noisy Friarbirds**. We went off track up a small knoll within the reserve (Little Brooks, perhaps?) and then the birds went somewhat quiet. Returning to the track, right by the fence that adjoins the ACT Nudist Colony, we were delighted to spot two **Shining Bronze Cuckoos** and one **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. This was a very busy corner with a **Grey Shrike-thrush**, a female **Rufous Whistler** and various thornbills. We continued on down the old road, which proved a very rich stretch with a **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Mistletoebird**, **Eastern Yellow Robin** and many **Silvereyes**, and some of us were treated to **Red-browed Firetails**, giving a total of 38 species for the morning. We ended the day back at the carpark, thanking Michael for a lovely morning out, with surprisingly gorgeous weather after all.

Lauren Reed

Wednesday 19 February 2025—Kingston Foreshore and Eyre St Wetland

Twelve members met at the junction of Kingston Foreshore and Jerrabomberra Wetlands in perfect weather. We started by wandering along the foreshore, through the garden area towards the point at which Jerrabomberra Creek enters the lake. The small pond along the way yielded, among the more common species, a male **Chestnut Teal**. A single **Pied Cormorant** flew along the creek and disappeared over the lake, while **Australasian Darters** and **Great Cormorants** were resting on logs in the water, and we were treated to ‘seven swans a-swimming’ from the lake into the creek. The highlight was the sighting of a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** flying over the lake to settle on a tree in the wetland’s paddocks.



White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Richard Arculus

We then crossed over into the adjoining Eyre St Wetlands. The most abundant birds here were **Silvereyes**, and their numerous alarm calls led us to rather unsatisfactory views of a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** moving through the trees. A small group of **European Goldfinches** were moving through the grassland trees, while several **Grey Fantails** flitted through the trees by the creek. A **Whistling Kite** was circling over the paddocks and creek. This area is also home to a group of **Dusky Woodswallows**, which we saw on the powerlines. We followed the path around the pond nearest the road and came upon a **Buff-banded Rail** to finish the morning off nicely.

A total of 54 species were sighted across the two sites
Sandra Henderson.



Chestnut Teal

Tee Tong Teo

Sunday 23 February – Yerrabi Pond and Ginninderra Creek

Bill Graham led a small group of COG members on a very pleasant morning walk around Yerrabi Pond where we saw a total of 38 species. The path we were on turned out to be very popular with runners, walkers, cyclists and dog-walkers. If we'd been intending to count dog breeds, we would have got a very good total.

Eurasian Coot spread across the pond and 36 **Black Swans**. Noticing that one of the swans was caught on fishing line, a member of our group alerted wildlife carers. There were also healthy numbers of **Pacific Black Duck**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Dusky Moorhen** and **Australasian Swamphen**. A couple of members saw a small number of **Hardheads** and a single **Grey Teal**. Early on in the walk we all admired a fluffy **Australasian Grebe** in breeding plumage close in to the shore.

A very large group of **Little Black Cormorants** was seen flying overhead, making for an estimated total of 140 seen during the morning. There were also **Little Pied Cormorants** and **Australasian Darters**.

We observed several species of parrots, including a pair of **Superb Parrots** which perched in the sun, looking in our direction, and a pair of **Red-rumped Parrots**. Bill's knowledge of the area was extremely helpful; on one occasion, he remarked that this was where he usually saw **White-plumed honeyeaters**, and there they were.

Also warranting mention are three **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**, comprising two adults feeding a young bird, an **Olive-backed Oriole** (heard) and a single **Australian Reed Warbler**.

Thanks to Bill for an excellent morning's birding.
Wendy Whitham

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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 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



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Mulligans Flat - big dam—Wednesday 19 March

Meet at 8.30am near the Echidna entry gate on Pipistrelle St, Throsby. There have been various interesting birds turning up at the dam this year, including a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** and a **Red-kneed Dotterel**, as well as the regulars such as **Buff-banded Rails** and **Pink-eared Ducks**. We will walk around the dam, mostly on track. Estimated time 2 hours. Sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen. **Please register** with Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com)

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 SE 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 8:15 am Kambah Village for carpooling.

As parking is very limited at starting point for this outing we will carpool into 4 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.

Sunday 6 April – Narrabundah Hill

Description: This outing has again been timed for the autumn honeyeater migration season, with the northern and western boundaries of the reserve having known local migration routes. We will walk along these two boundaries, depending on conditions and the species seen, and we will either return by the same or a different path. This will be around 4 km on relatively flat ground. We will also look for other autumn birds such as **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as gerygones.

Meeting time: While daylight savings will have ended that morning the **walk will start at 8:30 am** to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning in early April (we saw over 2500 birds there at a similar timing in 2019).

Meeting place: Meet at the parking area and stile at the northeast end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. **Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue and, for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy, involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care. Please take water and morning tea to have on the track.**

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your name and mobile, and the name and mobile of an emergency contact.

Sunday 13 April – K2C surveys – Bredbo area

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can witness the autumn migrations. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer.

Anyone interested in participating is asked to **contact Nicki Taws before Wednesday 9 April**.
Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210 736.

Friday 18 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.

Sunday 27 April – Mount Majura Nature Reserve, ‘The Fair’, North Watson

Description: Mount Majura Nature Reserve, on the lower slopes of Mount Majura, is part of Canberra Nature Park. The plant community here is Yellow Box - Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland, one of the most endangered ecological communities in Australia (over 90% cleared). Friends of Mt Majura work to protect and enhance the natural environment on Mount Majura and its surroundings and have undertaken significant habitat restoration.

Birds we may see include **Speckled Warbler, Common Bronzewing, Sacred Kingfisher, Golden and Rufous Whistler, Varied Sittella, Mistletoebird, Dusky Woodswallow** and **Fuscous Honeyeater**.

Meeting time and place: 8:30am. Corner of Tay and Ian Nicol St, Watson. There is a small carpark near the entrance gate to the reserve.

Walking distance: max of 3 km

Degree of difficulty: Easy, including some off-track walking.

End time (approx.): 11:00 am

What to bring: water, snack if wanted, hat, sunscreen

Registration : Please **register** with the leader, **Sally Stephens**, by email to sallysstephens@icloud.com providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Please do so **before 7pm on Friday 25 April**.

Sally Stephens and Prue Watters

Books for Sale

Canberra Birds no longer runs a book stall. We have a few remaining titles.

Anyone interested in purchasing any of these please contact prue.watters@gmail.com

| Publications | No. of copies | Sale price |
|--|---------------|------------|
| Australian Bird Guide - revised edition | 1 | \$30.00 |
| Compact Australian Bird Guide | 1 | \$25.00 |
| Complete Guide to Finding mammals - Andrews | 1 | \$28.00 |
| Field Guide to Butterflies of the ACT - Bond | 2 | \$25.00 |



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

Canberra Birds 8-pack of greeting cards

Stock up on greeting cards, and be ready for all occasions!

Each fun and vibrant card pairs a different bird species with an iconic Canberra location. The cards are drawn by local cartoonist **Stuart McMillen**, a resident of Gorman Arts Centre, Braddon.

Greeting cards **\$6 each** or **8-packs for \$40**.

Shop directly via
stuartmcmillen.com/shop

Editors Note:

Here is a wonderful poem written by local writer Edwina Smith. It follows a day in the life of a magpie named Margot. This is a shortened version of the poem. To read the full version please download it [here](#). I'd also like to remind all readers that Gang Gang is a community project, and we are always happy to receive writing and photos relevant to the birds of Canberra. If you'd like to contribute to Gang Gang, please send an email through to the editors (listed at the end of each publication).

'HERE'S MARGOT'. A POEM BY EDWINA SMITH

The quiet dark of night
Bids farewell to the moon
Margot's warbling calls
Mean daylight will come soon
Her melody of song
A delight for all to hear
Welcoming the dawn
And brings good cheer!

Everyone's gone to work
The quiet of the street
Margot begins her rounds
And wonders who she'll meet

Stan tends his yard
Shrubs, trees and flowers
He's out there most days
And works away for hours
Today he's spreading compost
Alive with wriggly worms
Margot can't believe her luck
And they are on good terms

Things could not get better
But indeed they do
He welcomes her presence
And throws a worm or two
Stan is delayed
Someone's at the door
And while he's away
She helps herself to more

Mildred's in a tizz
Her lawn's the worst she's seen
It seems to be dying
And is no longer green
Margot hops off the fence
And has a walk around
Then locks onto where
Scarab grubs are found

She tilts her head and listens
No place for them to hide
Then spears the little blighters
The best insecticide!

Margot keeps on her way
In search of more to eat
She patrols trees and lawns
The verges of the street
Spiders, snails, slugs and skinks
A variety of prey
And she doesn't stop
Until the close of day

The fading light at dusk
Bids farewell to the sun
Margot's warbling calls
Mean her work is done
Her melody of song
A delight for all to hear
Welcoming the night
And brings good cheer!

EDWINA SMITH

31st January, 2025.

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:

A Hirschfeld
J Riddell
L Reed
M Pearce
P Chandler
S Tompkins

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for April 2025 edition:

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc. to the Editors at:

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary, COG,

PO Box 331, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips) except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged.

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COG E-mail Discussion List

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

To unsubscribe, either permanently or temporarily, send an email message to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au.

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