

Gang-gang

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc

Canberra Birds Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2025

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NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 12 November 2025
7:30 pm

Canberra Girls Grammar School,
Chapel, corner Gawler Cres and Melbourne Ave, Deakin

The November 2025 meeting will be a normal face-to-face one at the Canberra Girls Grammar School but will again be held in the Chapel where we will be meeting for the rest of 2025 while the Multi-media Theatre (MMT) is being renovated (see details below).

AGM – see details under [Annual Reports and Administrative Papers](#)

Lucy Aplin - Clever Cockies: Innovation and urban adaptation in Sulphur-crested Cockatoos

The Chapel is much easier to find than the MMT. As for previous 2025 meetings entry and exit for the Chapel are 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 parking area to your left. Once parked proceed to the Chapel using main path as previously before turning left at the Admin Hub, or use the more direct (but darker) route keeping the Boarding House to your left – see the amended [map](#).

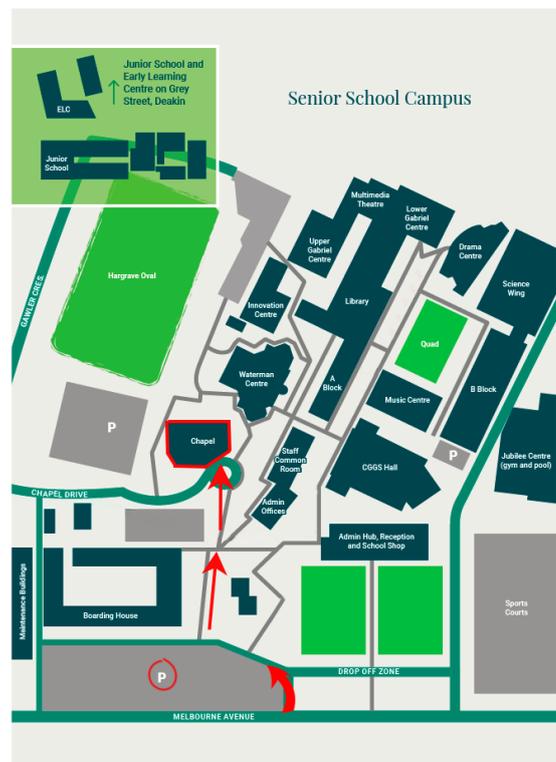
Limited parking will also be available using the Chapel Drive entrance on Gawler Cres and car park, this gate should also be open.

Though it is well lit, as it will be dark before and after the meeting, a torch for finding your way to the Chapel and 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.

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.

After the AGM (for details see p 3 or [Annual Reports and Administrative Papers - Canberra Birds](#)) there will be a single main speaker, **Dr Lucy Aplin**, Associate Professor, Research School of Biology at the ANU on “**Clever Cockies: Innovation and urban adaptation in Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**”.

Lucy and her team investigate social behaviour, cognition and culture in urban Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, asking whether the spread of new innovations can facilitate adaptive behavioural responses to anthropogenic change. While some of her team have presented to COG/Canberra Birds before, Lucy will be giving a broad overview of the program. So come to hear about, *inter alia*, how a group of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in one part of Sydney learned how to operate drinking bubblers, and how another group open and steal from rubbish bins, with this behaviour spreading in an ‘innovation arms race’ with local residents. Lucy will also tell us about how citizen science can be used to characterise when and where such innovations first emerge and present some recent experimental work in Canberra’s cockatoos identifying the factors that influence the spread of innovations.



News from the Committee

The **Committee** met on October 18, with our discussions including preparations for the AGM on 12 November and discussion of various pieces of work nearing completion. In other news:

- The planned **Mulligans Flat bird hide** project is advancing. Kim Farley representing Canberra Birds, and Jenny Bounds representing the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust on this occasion, met for a second time on October 23 with the ACT govt staff who are project managing the work. The hide is being jointly funded by Canberra Birds and the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust from the generous bequests to both bodies by Bruce Lindenmayer. The hide is planned to be sited at the Big Dam at Mulligans.
- The **Canberra Birds Blitz** took place over the weekend of 25-26 October, though with some changes necessitated by not having a Blitz Coordinator. Using just eBird data at this stage, 158 species were reported in 205 Checklists by 78 people. Submission of the COG data sheets will change that picture once these are received.
- The **autumn 2026 Honeyeater Migration Survey** is now calling for **volunteers**. Read all about it in this issue
- Finally, put the annual **Canberra Birds BBQ** into your calendar for the 10th of December. Black Mountain Peninsula - from 6:00pm. All welcome!

Kim Farley, *President*

Don't forget the AGM on Wednesday, November 12th!

Attend in person at the CGGS Chapel

<https://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/other-resources/cog-monthly-meeting-location/>

Or attend by Zoom using this link

<https://anu.zoom.us/j/84818118982?pwd=arli9XfJDnYllhSRT5ThaBJHICPd5a.1>

Meeting ID: 848 1811 8982 Password: 528668

Find the meeting papers here

<https://canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/annual-reports/>

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

The weather over the nearly the 5 weeks from 24 September to 26 October covered by this column has been much drier than in the previous period, with lots of strong westerly winds so that by the end conditions had dried significantly and many of the grasses were starting to brown off, though there were several small rain events near the end. My analysis below indicates that while bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) has picked up, this has been mixed. Most of the later expected spring/summer migrants have been slow to arrive, but others have come in large numbers, in particular the cuckoos and the **Sacred Kingfisher**. While reports of “unusual” species have picked up they have remained lower than in previous years.

Highlights

While less “unusual” than the honeyeater species previously featured in this section, there were three species that drew much of the attention over the period.

The first of these was the two **Whiskered Terns** first reported over the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant (FSTP) by Nik Froelich on 3 October and subsequently reported from there or at the adjacent Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (JWNR) by many, many other observers up to 25 October, with a maximum of 3 seen on 13 October. While this species was recorded from these 2 spots around the same time in both 2023 and 2024, this is by far the longest time it has stayed during this period. It was also reported from SW Lake George from 10-14 October, including a remarkable 40 terns on the first date, as well as a single bird at NW Lake George on 5 October. These are 2 of the 4 other locations in the COG Aoi where it has been reported since the start of 2023.

The second was the **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** first observed by Peter Christian and then put on eBird by Christine D on a small dam in the Dunlop Grasslands on 11 October. In response to Ben Milbourne’s query on the COG chat line whether it was a juvenile as there did not appear to be 'boomerang' markings on its throat, breast, or below, Stuart Rae responded “It looks like all the coverts and tertials are the same age, new, with buff edges and no wear and tear. So, it is in its first year. Hatched this June or July (what a remarkable feat to have travelled so far from the breeding grounds on tundra in Russia in this short time).

Later Kim Farley also confirmed this based on Nik Froelich’s photos clearly showing the breast and the lack of markings. She also noted Nik’s photo captured the chestnut crown very clearly - which she noted is a useful feature to look for when learning to identify the ever so tricky shorebirds. This bird only stayed there for the next day, so fewer people were able to observe it. Interestingly there were no reports of it from other locations within the COG Aoi during the period, compared with eight other previous locations since the start of 2023. To me it certainly reflects how numbers have dropped for what COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) notes as the most common of the Scolopacidae which can be seen between August to April on some wetlands.

The third species was the **Australian Little Bittern** first reported and photographed at the JWNR by Nik Froelich on 14 October. That this can be a very difficult species to observe is supported by that only 8 other observers had reported it to 22 October, but many more since. The JWNR is also the main spot where it has been reported in the COG Aoi since the start of 2023, being from late December 2023 to mid-March 2024, with a report from only one other location (the wet Lagoon at Breadalbane in January 2025 during that time). However, between 2018-2022 it was reported from 4 other locations, all within the ACT and N of the Lake.



Whiskered Tern - Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant, ACT - October 2025 - *Shorty*



Australian Little Bittern - Jerrabomberra Wetlands, ACT - October 2025 - Deb & Rod Ralph

Spring/summer migrants

Of the spring/summer migrants expected to first arrive in September but had not yet been reported by the Gang-gang cut-off of 23 September to allow them to be included in my previous column, the **Leaden Flycatcher** was first reported at 3 locations (Zosterops Corner, Mulligans Flat NR and during the Booroomba Rocks to the Apollo Rd field trip) on 28 September, with 8 locations by 3 October and over 40 locations by 27 October, so it is now very well established.

The **Rainbow Bee-eater** was first reported from two locations (Scullin and Shepherds Lookout) on 27 September, then from Zosterops Corner the next day, but at only 2 more locations by 8 October, and a total of 14 by the end of the period, in indication of how this species is much more thinly spread over the COG AoI. Two **Dollarbirds** were first reported from the Kambah Pool NR on 30 September, then from 3 more locations to 10 October and a total of 20 by 26 October, with the vast majority of these being from in or around Canberra.

For those species for which there had been only single or few reports, the next one for the **Rufous Songlark**, first reported after the one from the “Monash waterway” on 17 September, was from the Googong Dam on 1 October, with then only 4 more locations to 10 October and a total of 17 by 26 October, an indication that this inland species is not as widespread so far this spring as compared with the **White-winged Triller** reported from around 60 locations to date. There was only one further report for the related **Brown Songlark**, which was first reported from SW of Yass on 20 September, was 3 birds at the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October, and so far only a single report of the **Horsfield’s Bushlark** from the Dunlop Grasslands on 10 October.

Of the other inland species which visit the COG AoI in varying numbers depending on the conditions, the **White-browed Woodswallow** has been reported from 2 locations only, 5 and 8 birds from the Whiskers Creek Rd Carwoola on 18 and 21 October, respectively, and 2 birds from the Hall woodland on 23 October. A single **Masked Woodswallow** was reported from the Whiskers Creek Rd on 21 October. So, despite the strong W winds it does not appear that the inland has dried out sufficiently for large numbers of the above six inland species (with the one exception) to visit the COG AoI this spring/summer.

Interestingly the 2 inland cuckoo species, the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Pallid Cuckoo**, seem to be present in reasonable numbers, reported from 24 and over 30 locations, respectively, during the period, the latter quite remarkable given its quite scarce presence in recent spring/summers.

Following the first report from the JWNR on 22 September, the **Eastern Koel** was reported from just 4 more locations (Kaleen, Eddison Park, Stirling Oval and Richardson) in September and a total of 15 were on eBird by 10 October. However, it was in the few days from 12 October that many observers (at least a dozen) reported the first calls from their local areas on the COG chat line. I heard my first *ko-el* call in Rivett on 13 October, quite late compared with recent years, but rather than being quiet for a while, birds in Rivett/Chapman were very active soon after, with all 3 main calls regularly heard, including in a couple of noisy aggregations, and in particular a very dark brown female conspicuous.

There have been reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** from 2 locations, from O'Connor and Flynn on 12 and 22 October, respectively. Readers may be interested in Sean Dooley's account in the Spring edition of Australian Birdlife [Vol 14, No 3, 32-37 (2025)] of how in Melbourne this species and in particular the **Eastern Koel** above have replaced the formerly common four smaller cuckoo species. However, this does not seem to be the case in the COG Aol, at least in this spring where, in addition to the above two, there have been reports of the two coastal cuckoos, the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** from a remarkable around 60 and well over 80 locations, respectively.

There have been reports of the other coastal species the **Sahul Brush Cuckoo** from around 15 locations, the first being from the Casuarina Sands NR and the Glendale Depot on 28 September. So, it does seem to be an excellent spring for seeing cuckoos in the COG Aol, I think the best in some years.

In contrast, of the passage migrants, the **Satin Flycatcher** has been confirmed from just two locations only, 3 birds at the Warks/Blundells Creek Roads on 18 and 19 October, and a male at the Tidbinbilla NR on 25 October. The **Australian Rufous Fantail** has been reported from 6 locations, 3 of these on passage through Canberra, including the first report from the Cotter on 13 October. There has also been only the single report of the **Sahul Cicadabird**, a bird at the Warks/Blundells Creek Roads on 18 October.

So, during November please keep an eye out for those species mentioned above which have yet to reach the COG Aol in numbers, especially the inland ones (as well as the **Black-eared Cuckoo** and **Red-backed Kingfisher**) should it dry out further.

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 **White-eared Honeyeater** and **Golden Whistler** were still reported from around 20 and close to 30 urban/peri-urban locations, respectively. This is around half of the 35 and 60, respectively, in September, they seem to be leaving slowly this year.

In contrast most **Scarlet Robins** have already moved away, with reports from 7 urban/peri-urban locations, compared with around 20 in September. **Flame Robins** seem to have moved out completely, reported from none such locations, compared with 15 in September, as does the **Rose Robin** reported from just one such location (The University of Canberra on 30 September) compared with from 15 such locations in September. There have been reports from 4



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Plains-wanderer Weekend

6 & 7 December 2025

Wet Season
Kutini – Payamu
Iron Range NP

7 to 13 January 2026

Small personal tours in the
Deniliquin district, Victorian
mallee, NE Victoria, Gippsland and
the Melbourne area or anywhere
you need to go to bolster your
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locations in the mountains to the West of the Murrumbidgee River, as well as 3 in the Tallaganda area. Again, there have been no confirmed **Pink Robin** sightings during the period, the closest location being from the North-East of Melbourne.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** has also moved away from such locations, with the last, a single bird being reported from Bluetts Block on 24 September, and with 2 reports from 2 locations only to the West of the Murrumbidgee, but with 4 more locations in the Tallaganda area. The only reports of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** within in the COG Aol during the period were up to 9 and 5 birds at 2 close together locations around 10 km SSE of Michelago on 14-15 October, respectively.

The **Bassian Thrush** was reported from 9 locations (compared with 5 in September) with single birds at the ANBG on 13 and 21 October. The other peri-urban location was 2 birds Andrea and our daughter Allison found at the National Arboretum on 18 October, with the remaining locations in the mountains to the W of the ACT, except for one in the Tallaganda area. **Olive Whistlers** were reported only from single locations in these 2 areas, but no **Brown Gerygones** or **Swift Parrots** were reported from anywhere within the COG Aol during the period. Very few of the latter have overwintered in NSW this year.

During November, please keep an eye out for the species mentioned above in urban/peri-urban locations as they continue to move away.

Unusual species

There were no other “unusual” species reported from the COG Aol during the period that captured the attention similarly to the **Whiskered Tern**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** and **Australian Little Bittern** noted above.

Again, there were no **Magpie Geese** or **Plumed Whistling Duck** reported during the period. **Freckled Duck** were reported from 3 locations, with up to 5 ducks continuing to be present at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands throughout. There were 96 ducks (a bit down from the 123 in September) counted on the Lake Bathurst waterbird survey on 25 October. No ducks were reported from Lake George, but an unusual location was one reported from Garran on 21 October.

During the period, the **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 12 locations in an arc from the North through to the East of the ACT, with 205 ducks on the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October (even with none on the adjacent Morass; this is nearly 10-fold larger than in September). Otherwise, the maximum number was the 17 ducks seen on the Wollogorang Rd on 14 October, with the next highest 12 ducks.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 4 locations during the period (compared with 5 in September), with again up to 8 ducks regularly reported from the Upper Stranger Pond. Up to 4 ducks were regularly reported from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and up to 3 from the adjacent FSTP, and up to 20 ducks were reported from Rows Lagoon. There were no **Blue-billed Ducks** recorded on the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October.

Musk Ducks were reported from 6 locations (up from 5 in September), with the only one in the ACT being the single duck on the Uriarra Station large dam on 13 October. Sixteen ducks were recorded at Lake Bathurst on 25 October when there were also 10 reported from the adjacent Morass (combined around 1/3 of the 75 ducks there in September). Up to 4 ducks were also reported from Rows Lagoon as well as a single duck from Greenwood Rd, Murrumbateman on 28 September. The remaining location was one duck on the large dam at Ingelara during the K2C surveys on 12 October, a known spot for them.

The **Great-crested Grebe** was reported from 5 locations (up from 3 in September), with 9 on Lake Bathurst and one on the adjacent Morass on 25 October (compared with 3 in total in September). One was also reported from Paddys Park in Strathnairn on 4 and 11 October, and from the Googong Dam shoreline walk on 6 October, and from the FSTP on 6 October (surprisingly an unusual spot for them).

The first **Stubble Quail** for this spring were reported from 2 locations during the period, with 6 birds at Lake Bathurst and one at the adjacent Morass on 25 October. Clearly with the dry conditions the grass is not yet long enough, so listen out for them as it grows and they start calling. **Brown Quail** were reported from 6 locations (as for September), all within the ACT, with a maximum of 2 birds at several locations. The **Painted Button-quail** was reported only from 1 location (as for

September) with 1 bird at The Pinnacle NR from 19-22 October, and again no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

A **White-headed Pigeon** was reported by 2 different observers at the Kambah District Playing Field No 3 on 11 October, and 5 **Peaceful Doves** were reported from the Cotter Rd on 12 October, but again, no **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Brush Bronzewing** or **Diamond Doves**, or **White-throated Nightjars** were reported during the period.

A single **Baillon's Crake** was reported from the JWNR, the only location (compared with 2 in September) where up to 7 **Spotless Crakes** were reported, both throughout the period. Up to 3 **Australian Spotted Crake** were also regularly reported from here, with the only other location being 1 crake from the Coaldrake Ave Pond in Denman Prospect on 4 October.

Buff-banded Rails were reported from 5 locations (compared with 3 September), with up to 5 birds regularly from the JWNR. There were also single birds at Paddys Park on 25 September and 5 October, at the West Belconnen Pond on 25 October, at the Big Dam in the Mulligans Flat NR on 18 October and at the Goulburn Wetlands from 29-30 September. Single **Lewin's Rails** were reported from 2 locations (down from 3 in September) with up to 3 birds regularly at the JWNR to 7 October and one at the Franklin Ponds system on 24 September and 5 October. However, no **Black-tailed Nativehen** were reported during the period.

Nineteen (compared with 4 in September) **Red-capped Plovers** were reported from the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October. **Pied Stilts** were reported 5 locations (up 1 from September) with up to 3 birds regularly at the JWNR and the adjacent FSTP, and 2 birds from the adjacent Canturf farm on 4 October. There were up to 35 birds reported from the SW end of Lake George between 12-25 October and 5 from the NW end on 5 October, with 4 on Lake Bathurst and 16 birds at the Morass on 25 October (slightly down from the 26 in September). A **Red-necked Stint** was also recorded at Lake Bathurst on 25 October.

However, no **Red-necked Avocets**, **Australian Painted-snipe**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Banded Lapwing**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Pectoral** or **Common Sandpipers** (the latter does not seem to have returned to its favoured spot on Lake Tuggeranong this season) were reported during the period. A **Caspian Tern** was reported from the SW end of Lake George on 14 October and from the NW end on 22 September and 18 October, but no **White-winged Black Terns** or **Australasian Bittern** were reported during the period.

No **Little Egrets** were again reported during the period. **Plumed Egrets** were reported from 4 locations (compared with none in the previous period), with a single bird at the JWNR on 24 September and 8 October, and at the FSTP on 17 October. There was also one reported from Kenny on 4 October, and one on the Murrumbidgee River at Bloomfield Flats (at the E end of Lake Burrinjuck) on 10 October. Single **Great Egrets** were reported from 8 locations (double that in September) during the past month.

Up to 3 **White-necked Herons** were reported from 16 locations (more than triple that in September) and up to 5 **Royal Spoonbills** were reported 10 locations during the period (a remarkable turnaround from the none in the previous period). Up to 4 **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 6 locations (double that in September), but no **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.

Eastern Barn Owls were reported from 2 locations (compared with 1 in September), one at North Lyneham on 1 October (where a couple of **Pied Currawongs** flushed it out of a tall shrub) and 1 at Springrange on 20 October. No **Powerful Owls** were reported during the period. **Black-shouldered Kites** were again reported from around 20 locations in the period, and up to 3 **Black Kites** were reported from 3 locations on the Hume Hwy North of Yass between 4-26 October.

However, no **Spotted Harriers** were reported (compared with 2 locations in September). Readers may be interested in the item on p.15 of the spring issue of the Australian Birdlife Magazine (see details above) which notes Harriers have an auditory system similar to owls, with this species' typical foraging by "quartering" - drifting low back and forth over the landscape with their beaks pointing towards the ground, not just allowing the bird to search for prey, but also helping it to listen for it. Also note no **Pacific Baza**, **Grey Goshawks** or **Black Falcons** were reported from anywhere in the COG Aol during the period.

A single **Azure Kingfisher** was reported from the JWNR on 11 October, but no **Red-backed** or **Forest Kingfishers** were reported during the period. It seems to have been a very good year to see **Sacred Kingfishers** with it being reported from close to 100 locations during the period.

Five **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** were reported from the Scotts NR on 19 October, but no **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted**, **Little** or **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were reported over the period. **Musk Lorikeets** were reported 2 locations (as for September), single birds from Garran and Wanniasa on 4 and 17 October, respectively.

The **Little Wattlebird** continued to be reported from the ANBG up to 14 October, and the **Brown Honeyeater** at the Fassifern Pond in West Macgregor was last reported on 30 September. One was also reported from Paddys Park (in



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - Tidbinbilla NR, ACT - October 2025 - *Kevin Gale*



Scarlet Honeyeater - Australian National Botanical Gardens, ACT - October 2025 - *Angela Booth*

Strathnairn about 1.5 km further S on 24 September). However, the **Singing Honeyeater** at the northern corner of Cresswell and Chowne Sts in Campbell has continued to be reported by its original discoverers Jack N and Carmel P, at least to 24 October. It was also reported from Legacy Park about 200 m to the SSE on 6 October. Two **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were reported from the known location at the Rock Valley in the Tidbinbilla NR on 25 October. A male **Scarlet Honeyeater** (the first in the COG AoI for some time) was reported from the ANBG between 2-17 October.

Blue-faced Honeyeaters were reported from 5 locations (compared with 1 in the previous period), with 3 birds in Red Hill on 28 September as well as in Garran on 4 October, and a single bird at the Yass Weir on 26 September. On 21 October John Leonard posted that for the third year running, a pair was spotted between Jensen Street and Hughes Primary. They were feeding together, and he hoped they'd nest in the area again. Maurits Zwankhuizen responded that they're also now regular around Capital Tower in Acton. He was lucky to have a very close encounter 2 weeks before when an **Australian Magpie** visited his balcony and as he went outside to say 'hi', a **Blue-faced Honeyeater** swooped in as well. It flew straight off again when it saw him.

White-fronted Chats were reported from 3 locations to the NE of the ACT, 10 birds (compared with 11 in September) were recorded on the Lake Bathurst waterbird survey on 25 October, 6 and 2 birds from the Wollgorang Rd on 6 and 24 October, respectively, and 2 from SW Lake George on 14 October. A **Little Friarbird** was reported from Garran on 11 October. However, no **Striped** or **Painted Honeyeaters** or were reported during the period.

Up to 3 **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** were reported from 2 locations (compared with 1 in the previous period), with up to 3 regularly from Whiskers Creek in Carwoola and 2 birds at the Cuumbeun NR on 29 September. Dark morph **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes** were reported from 2 locations, one bird at Campbell Park on 28 September, and 2 at Mulligans Flat NR on 30 September. A pair of **Red-capped Robins** were reported from the Bracks Hole Fire Trail on 24 and 26 October, where it has been seen over some years. A female/immature bird was also reported from Zosterops Corner on 25 October. A **Black-faced Monarch** was reported from Wallaces Gap Rd, Bendoura (SW of Braidwood) on 4 October. However, no **White-browed Babbler**, **Apostlebird**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finches** were reported during the period.

Jacky Winters were reported from 6 locations (compared with 8 for September), with 1 bird at Zosterops Corner on 8 October (the first record there, at least since the start of 2023), and at the Mulligans Flat NR on 29 September and 5 October, with 2 birds there on 25 October. To the South of Canberra 2 birds were reported from the Glendale Depot on 28 September (and 1 on 26 October), as well as 2 birds at Illilanga and 3 at Ingelara on 12 October (both on the K2C surveys) and 2 birds at Castle Hill (a new but restricted site) on 26 October.

Hooded Robins were also reported from 6 locations (double that in September), with a male reported from the Uriarra TSR (a new location) between 2-10 October, and a pair there on 15 October. Three birds (one a male) were reported from the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on the 20th of October, and a single bird from the Wallaces Gap Rd, Bendoura (a new location South-West of Braidwood) on 5 October. The remaining 3 locations were all reported at known locations from the K2C surveys on 12 October, a pair at Ingelara, a single bird at the Strike-a-light TSR and up to 3 birds at the Scottsdale Reserve.

The good news is that **Restless Flycatchers** were reported from 7 locations (compared with 2 in September), with 1-2 birds at the known location the Nelanglo TSR, 1 bird at Blundell's Flat on 6 October, 1 at the Black Mountain on 18 October and one at the Cotter Bend on 25 October (the latter 2 being new locations). The two known locations to the South of the ACT were one bird at the Point Hut Crossing on 30 September and 13 October, and one in the Orroral Valley on 18 October. Greg Wood had one briefly in his Chapman garden (again a known location) on 15 October which we haven't been able to re-locate since.

Brown Treecreepers were reported from 5 locations (up 2 from September), up to 4 birds at the Nelanglo TSR, and the remainder all to the South of the Canberra. Three of these were on the K2C surveys on 12 October, single birds at Mullungubie, Karool (both private properties) and at the Strike-a-Light TSR. The final location was 1 or 2 birds at 2 close together locations around 10 km SSE of Michelago on 13-15 October.

While activity has picked up, the number of "unusual" birds reported overall has remained low, with in particular there were very few reports of pigeons/doves, raptors or parrots.

Breeding

First I need to remind readers of the care that needs to be taken around breeding birds as outlined the [Ethical Birding Guidelines - Canberra Birds](#) which can be found through the Canberra Birds web site (in particular please read and follow the sections on Nesting Birds and Bird Photography).

Surprisingly very little spring breeding has come to my attention to date, and the following are a couple of my own observations:

The **Australian Magpie** seems to be having another poor breeding season in my local area. I have heard/seen very few begging young on my twice daily dog walks around Chapman and Rivett, or our walks in the wider area of Cooleman Ridge, Narrabundah Hill or the Molonglo. The ones in my GBS site in Chapman very quietly built an obscured nest in a neighbour's gum, which I only realised when they could be seen occasionally taking food to it, and then to another spot after fledgling.

Finally, a single very undemanding fledgling was observed with 3 adults in attendance, though I haven't been able to determine which have been feeding it. In the interim another **Australian Magpie** built and then commenced sitting on a different nest less than 100 m away in our garden. It seems to be just the one bird and I'm not sure it is one of the above, it has been making a rather sweet call that I don't normally associate with Magpies.

In comparison the local **Red Wattlebirds** have had a pretty good season, with the first fledgling heard on 4 October and at least another 7 different ones in Chapman/Rivett including from different pairs in my GBS site. This is from their first brood for the season, with the second expected from early December. So, with the current **Eastern Koel** activity it may be expected that the first Koel fledgling being hosted by a **Red Wattlebird** will be reported around then.

While I was drafting this column a pair of **Superb Fairy-wrens** were increasingly coming to and attacking my study windows. Interestingly the brown bird was often the main instigator.

Flocks, including of migrating birds

With the onset of the breeding season very few, if any, mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have been reported. Large flocks of single species also seem to have broken up with nothing significant to report for the period.

On 13 October Anthony Overs posted that he'd been living in Hawker for almost 15 years. During that time, he had essentially lost count of the number of times he had seen or heard **Superb Parrots** flying over his home. The birds have a flight path from a breeding site in the Molonglo Valley into the suburbs, right over their part of Hawker. That path is so well utilised that he and his son (along with a bunch of legendary volunteers) completed a study on it a few years ago. Today, some **Superb Parrots** finally (he meant FINALLY!!) realised that he has bird baths for them to drink at. Maybe they caught on to the behaviour of the local **Red-rumped Parrots** that visit the water multiple times a day! Anthony's heart stopped as he glanced at the baths from inside the living room windows and three male Superbs came down for a drink. He grabbed the camera and hastily fired shots through the window which turned out alright!

Following the Booroomba Rocks to Apollo Rd field trip on 28 September Michael Robbins contacted me about the large numbers of honeyeaters seen, particularly when they walked the valley towards Bushfold Flat (Mt Tennant trail) there were lots (conservatively estimated as 480 **White-naped** and 120 **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** - see separate report) flying up the valley heading towards the west. I agreed it was an unexpected observation, as it is unusual to see streams of honeyeaters migrating back in spring compared with autumn. Usually, in spring in my experience they just suddenly seem to come in overnight and move on slowly.

Michael agreed, noting that over Murrumbidgee Country Club Golf Course west of Urambi Village Kambah (a known major migration route in autumn), he couldn't recall, since 1977 having heard/seen more than "drips & drabs" of honeyeaters moving west in spring, or more recently in his surveys etc at the Urambi Hills NR. He wondered if spring honeyeater migration follows different routes than autumn, and the "COG corporate wisdom" about them "streaming east in autumn and trickling back in spring" has been based on observer effort being in the "right" place in autumn, but not in spring.

I recalled some counting had been done in the Shoalhaven Valley to the South of Braidwood of returning honeyeaters on their inward spring migration. So, I did a search of the Canberra Bird Notes (CBN) on the web and found a paper by Muriel Brookfield [CBN 25: 113-115 (2000)] another by Elizabeth and Bill Compston, Harvey Perkins and Muriel [CBN 26: 77-83 (2001)]. In the first paper Muriel concluded "Certainly this spring migration stream rivalled anything I have seen along the Murrumbidgee in autumn.". The second paper involved "A concerted effort was made on Sunday 15 September, by nine COG members split into four groups, to cover as much of the valley as possible to assess how widespread the migration activity might be, and where the main routes were.", and includes a mud map of the valley and likely migration routes.

I also found a later paper by Henry Nix [CBN 35 117-120 (2010)] who in 2009 did counts from the "Bredbo Badlands" of honeyeaters moving West around Scottsdale, noting it was 50 km further west than the above and came to the following conclusion "Systematic surveys in September and October along carefully selected east-west and north-south salients, that are centred on Canberra, would be a start. "

This would be much more difficult to plan and co-ordinate and has never been formally taken up by COG/Canberra Birds. However, following the K2C surveys on 12 October, I asked Nicki Taws and she confirmed that numbers of honeyeaters migrating West in spring had been observed in these surveys carried out to the South of the ACT (but not much this year due to the very windy conditions – see separate report). Nicki also confirmed that honeyeaters migrating West in spring has also been observed in the ACT, but the migration is never as spectacular and has never been formally documented as have the autumn ones.



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Finally, on 27 August Rob Parnell posted on the COG chat line (as well as directly to me) that there has been a **Superb Lyrebird** hanging around the northern end of Blackall St in Barton near the Charles Sturt University for a couple of months or longer. It had also been seen near the NFF building on Brisbane Ave. Rob was alerted to it the day before

and had no problems finding it that afternoon in the Rainforest Gully below the Outdoor Chapel. He took a couple of photos and put them on Canberra Nature Map (where there were already 5 photos from 25 Feb 2024 to 21 Jun 2025) and noted there was also a post on Facebook "Canberra Wildlife Photography on 13 Oct 2024".

Rob found it odd that it hasn't found its way into the Gang-gang newsletter, eBird or the bird chatline. I responded to him that I had included a paragraph on this bird as well as some sightings in Mawson on 11 and 18 August 2023 in my column in the November 2023 issue of Gang-gang. Checking eBird confirmed there were records from 47 Blackall St Barton on 16 September 2023, and from St Marks and Barton Grasslands between 6 December 2023 and 3 March 2024, as well as a very recent one from Barton on 3 August 2025 (which may have been his NFF one). There was also a quite recent one in Garran on 8 May 2025.

Further checking by Rob found a number of social media posts, some quite recent (July 2025), one of which also mentions it being reported from Deakin. So, it seems this female **Superb Lyrebird** is quite resilient and happy to remain in the area where it has been for at least 2 years, attracting the attention of the local residents and the "non-birding" public.

November is the last month of the spring significant bird activity in the COG AoI. So please watch out for more of the returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last of the leaving altitudinal migrants, for roost sites and flights, for any single species flocks, and for any breeding activity. 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 8 October meeting presentations

First **Kushini Kalupahana**, a Ph D student at the Research School of Biology, gave a fascinating presentation on "**Mimicry under pressure: Investigating accuracy variations in the vocal mimicry of Brown Thornbills**".

It was very well prepared, particularly the slides which, including the use of short videos and sound to illustrate her points, were simple but very effective. Her presentation was also delivered clearly and confidently and was thoroughly appreciated by all attendees.

Kushini began by showing a short video of the male **Superb Lyrebird** mimicking a range of species to attract a mate. She then indicated that the tiny **Brown Thornbill** employs a very different strategy as it can mimic the alarm calls of various sympatric species to deter nest predators, "impersonating" species up to 20 times their size (she showed sonograms of 8 of them up varying in size up to the **Crimson Rosella**) when under threat. Kushini also showed an example of a **Pied Currawong** attacking a model nest—rushing away when these alarm calls were played.

She then noted that her research has revealed that these tiny mimics face significant anatomical constraints - they can accurately replicate calls from similar-sized species but struggle with the lower-frequency alarm calls of larger models. She illustrated this very clearly, initially using the comparison of a piccolo versus a tuba, then showing how the accuracy for the male **Brown Thornbill** drops off with the size of the species it is mimicking but also that the smaller females have proven to be weaker mimics than their larger male counterparts.

Finally, Kushini noted that these accuracy limitations undoubtedly impact predator deterrence effectiveness, and that she is now investigating this further through playback experiments with nest predators.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members, many thanks to Kushini for giving this fascinating presentation on the mimicry of the **Brown Thornbill**, a species many of us are familiar with, including its range of calls, but probably

didn't appreciate their mimicking ability or the possible reasons for this. We wish her the very best with her proposed further Ph D studies on this very interesting topic and to hearing about them in the future.

The main presentation was a very interesting one by **Russell McGregor** on "**Enchantment by Birds: Writing the history of birdwatching in Australia**". It was very well prepared, and delivered clearly and confidently, and clearly of interest to many of our members as judged by the large audience.

Russell began by noting that writing this book required a different approach from his training of many years of solemn writing as an academic historian, as it needed not just to describe what happened but to capture the passion that consumes many bird watchers. He also noted while there were some possible overseas examples his was the first history book anywhere to be structured around birds, the only Australian example (Libby Robin's What Birdo is that?) being one of the history of bird watching.

Russell noted that a different bird is in each chapter title, and the final 22 birds changed quite a bit, varying between 20-24. He noted some very well publicised species such as the **Night Parrot** were omitted as the acrimony of the controversy around it would have changed the nature of his book. On the other hand, the story of the rediscovery of the **Noisy Scrub-bird** was included (readers might be aware that it has recently been translocated to West Cape Howe National Park, considered to be the last remaining possible suitable habitat in which to do so).

Also not included (or only briefly) was a discussion of bird banding, the use of smart phones or digital photography. Russell noted that this was because his aim was to prove that a history of birding can deepen our appreciation of nature. It is a book not just aimed at birders but, as their magic captivates them too, for all nature lovers. In this respect it has been widely mentioned or reviewed in many non-birding specific publications such as the ABC Gardening Magazine.

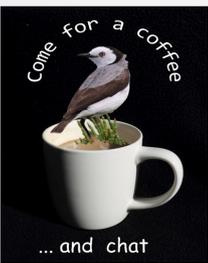
He finished by noting that the final chapter "Superb Fairy-wren: The Wild Near Home" emphasizes the avian assets we tend to overlook. As indicated by Neville Cayley nearly a century ago these "feathered jewels" are easily found in the parks and gardens of Australia's capital cities. Much other dazzling bird life may be found on our urban and suburban doorsteps, and one does not need to travel to remote corners of the continent to connect with nature.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members, many thanks to Russell for giving up his time during a bird-watching visit to Canberra to deliver this very interesting presentation on the background and writing of his ground-breaking book. Our very best wishes for its further success and his continued passion for birds, not just observing but also writing about them.

Russell's book, *Enchantment by Birds: A history of birdwatching in 22 species*, is available from the publisher, Scribe, <https://scribepublications.com.au/books-authors/books/enchantment-by-birds-9781761381447> and from all good bookshops. Readers might also be interested to read an in-depth review of this book by Kevin Windle in [Canberra Bird Notes](#) 49 (2) 146-148 (2024).

Jack Holland

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens
Tuesday, 11 November



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.



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Volunteer for the 2026 honeyeater migration survey

NOW CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS

In April 2025 Canberra Birds conducted surveys of migrating honeyeaters along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. Many of our members took part, with preliminary results presented by survey coordinator, Chris Davey on page 11 of the May issue of [Gang-gang](#) and in more detail at the July members meeting.

The honeyeater migration is a feature of the local birding scene and occurs twice a year, with birds passing through the ACT in spring and autumn. The autumn movement is the more obvious, as birds move in flocks from their breeding grounds in the Brindabella Ranges and beyond.

The April 2025 survey was very successful and revealed that numbers of migrating birds were well down from our previous survey in 1997. Impressions from the local bush telegraph indicate that the main passage of migratory birds may have been in late March-early April. So we will repeat and extend the survey in autumn 2026 - starting mid-March and finishing mid-May.

We are again seeking volunteers to take part. 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. It is not necessary to commit to attend all 10 survey days!

In 2025, eighty-eight species were reported during the passage. The survey therefore provides a great opportunity to view the migration and also record other species in the area.



White-naped Honeyeater - John Hurrell

What's involved?

Our volunteer surveyors count the number of birds passing through nine locations along the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. Teams of 2-3 people count birds at each site, with experienced observers teamed with less-experienced observers.

When and Where: The mornings of 14, 21 and 28 March, 4, 11, 18 and 25 April and 2, 9 and 16 May at Casuarina Sands, Pine Island, Gigerline A (Tharwa Sandwash) and Angle Crossing. In addition, if we have enough volunteers, we will survey Uriarra Crossing, Kambah Pool, Point Hut, Gigerline B and Williamsdale on the 11, 18 and 25 April.

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.



Yellow-faced Honeyeater - John Hurrell

Information and support: WE ARE NOW CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS. Could you please email Chris Davey (daveychris12@gmail.com) providing your mobile number and indicate which survey/s and sites you would like to be involved with. If you wish to survey at different sites on different surveys that would not be a problem.

The survey sites, their location and a copy of the recording sheet can be found on the [Honeyeater Survey web page](#) on the Canberra Birds website

Please get involved with this interesting survey. As in 2025, it will be most enjoyable, and you will be contributing to a very worthwhile citizen science project.

Kim Farley
President, Canberra Birds

The Gift

By Trevor Costa

I have been reading about the benefits of sharing awe. This concept supplied a neat label to slap on my hobby of wildlife photography and the sharing of my photos on social media. I really did feel the benefits of reaching out to others in the appreciation and total awe of nature. I was thinking about this as I trudged the banks of the Cotter River in the early morning light. This morning's top rating awe would be a photograph of an elusive Azure Kingfisher. With their vibrant colours and swift flights, low and fast above the running water, these diminutive migrants were making their presence felt again with the onset of the warmer weather. But on this morning, there was no sign of the tiny blue arrows.

A little disheartened, I found a comfy bench by the riverbank and poured a cup of tea from my thermos. As I sipped my brew, I could see trout rising to grab insects and the occasional mistaken fallen twig from the water's surface. I had photographed them before with some success. On that day the sun had been higher, and it reflected off their shiny scales and the play with the disturbed water highlighted their rainbow colours and patterns. It also meant I could track them in the clear water and anticipate the rise. Awe inspiring stuff. But not this morning. I left the bench and sat by the riverbank trying to track the fishes progress, but in the slanted early morning sun this proved impossible. There was no clear window into their world, and they were way too quick. Watching them alone was awe inspiring. But just a photo of silvery ripples without the actual fish meant no awe to share.

I concluded this just wasn't one of those mornings and I set my camera down, finished off my tea and still sitting on the riverbank began to stuff the backpack for the walk back to the car. That's when I saw it, above my boot laces. Directly opposite on the far bank. An Azure Kingfisher, perched on a low-lying branch above the water in the dappled shade. Its brilliant plumage shimmering and dancing in tune to the flashes from the water's reflection. It hadn't been there a second ago, but there it was. It must have zoomed in while I was focussed on the rising trout. It felt like a gift, an awesome gift, a gift to share.



Azure Kingfisher - Cotter Bend, ACT - October 2025 - *Trevor Costa*

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 28 September -Booroomba Rocks to Apollo Road

A group of eight led by Michael Robbins had lovely fine weather with little breeze for a walk in Namadgi NP. Starting from Booroomba Rocks carpark we walked through mountain forest, featuring dense post-bushfire shrub growth, to the grassland of Bushfolds Flat and then along Mt Tennent Fire Trail to Apollo Rd.

A total of 48 species was identified, starting with a pair of **Flame Robins** at the carpark. Most numerous and noisy were multiple small flocks of honeyeaters flying west. **White-naped Honeyeaters** (480), **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** (120) and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** (20) were all on the move. **White-eared Honeyeaters** (60) were also numerous and noisy but seemed to be 'on site'. **Crescent Honeyeaters** (3) were heard and seen feeding.

Fan-tailed Cuckoos (24) were heard frequently plus one **Shining Bronze Cuckoo**. **Red Wattlebirds** (30), **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, a **Gang-gang Cockatoo**, **Crimson Rosellas**, **Satin Bowerbirds**, **Grey Currawong**, **Pied Currawongs** (including one visiting a nest), a calling pair of **Eastern Whipbirds**, **Grey Shrike-thrush** (14) and **Grey Butcherbirds** made up the list of medium to large forest birds.

The smaller birds of the forest were represented by frequently heard **Spotted Pardalotes** (23), **Grey Fantails** (11), **Eastern Yellow Robins**, **White-throated Treecreepers** and **Brown Thornbills**. Whistlers were calling but the number of **Golden Whistlers** versus **Rufous Whistlers** in the forest was unclear. Two of the latter were observed once the forest gave way to less dense woodland.

There we also observed **Dusky Woodswallows** (16), an **Eastern Rosella**, **Laughing Kookaburras**, a **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Eastern Spinebills**, a **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **Superb fairy-Wrens** and a **White-browed Scrubwren**.

Three **Brown Goshawks**, one **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and 2 **Nankeen Kestrels** made up the raptor list.

Emerging from light forest into pastureland with a dam, we observed **Australian Wood Ducks**, **Grey Teal**, **Masked Lapwings**, **Australian Magpies**, **Magpie-larks**, **Galahs**, **Willie Wagtails**, **Welcome Swallows**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Silvereyes** and an **Australian Raven**.

Many thanks to Michael Robbins for leading such an interesting and varied walk.

Nina Johnson

Sunday 5 October – private property at Ballalaba, near Braidwood

Twelve members of Canberra Birds were hosted by John and Celia at their Ballalaba block (pronounced B'allal a bar), to follow up an initial visit in October 2023. The ridge of the Deua National Park formed the green horizon to the east. The current owners bought the run-down farm of 120 acres 5 years ago. Today it has a small herd of beef cattle and is being rehabilitated to bring back biodiversity and health to the environment, using Natural Sequence Farming. It includes creating contour banks, slowing water flow using a chain of ponds, and enormous structures that John calls medieval compost heaps. The latter include fallen branches, dead feral pigs and roadkill. Over time the minerals and nutrients from these heaps are dispersed. The cattle are rotated through paddocks and excluded from parts of the creek line with electric fences. This will allow regeneration. We saw how much improvement has occurred to the pasture, soil, and waterways and how much it will benefit birds.

A total of 34 species was observed. There was a large dam just below the living quarters with **Pacific Black Duck**, **Welcome Swallow**, **White-faced Heron** and **Little Pied Cormorant**. The nearby woodland included Snow Gums, and it fell away into a small valley. Here we heard the constant call of **Sacred Kingfishers** loudly advertising their territories. **Varied Sittellas** entertained us as they constructed their tiny nests in dead sticks at the top of the tree, but went quiet when **Noisy Miners** arrived. Flocks of **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, **Red Wattlebirds** and **Silvereyes** were on the move though the morning. Other woodland birds included **Tree Martins**, **Grey Fantail**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, **Brown**, **Striated** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Rufous Whistlers**. **Little** and **Australian Ravens** were seen with a **Little Raven** on the nest.



Red Wattlebird with moth - Queanbeyan, NSW - October 2025 - *Richard Marris*



Magpie Lark - Queanbeyan, NSW - October 2025 - *Sandra Henderson*

Red-browed Finch, as well as the larger **White-throated Treecreeper**.

A most enjoyable morning. Thank you Sandra.

Michael Robbins

Saturday 18 October – Eden pelagic

Despite losing the Sunday trip to bad weather, the second round of Eden pelagics for 2025 was highly anticipated; southerlies in the preceding days were countered by a strong northerly push on Saturday afternoon, with just enough of a lull between the two for us to make it to the shelf. To avoid the afternoon's bad weather we left harbour an hour earlier than planned, which gave us a chance to catch more of the morning activity further out.

The list started strongly, with **Arctic Jaeger** and **Brown Skua** recorded as we motored out of the shelter of the heads, along with a very unexpected **Wilson's Storm-petrel** within 45 minutes of the dock – much closer to land than is typical for this species. As we moved into pelagic waters, we were surrounded by a constant stream of migrating **Short-tailed**

We followed the creek down and came to a clump of unruly exotic trees which yielded **European Goldfinch**, a pair of sittellas and some had brief glimpses of **Rufous Songlark**. Raptors seen were **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Nankeen Kestrel** and a **Collared Sparrowhawk** heading into the woodland that sheltered migrating honeyeaters. In contrast to the birdlife in Canberra, there were only four **Australian Magpies** and one **Common Starling**. Our hosts provided us with tea, beef sausages from their own beasts, pork and apple cider sausages, and chocolate brownies. The luncheon capped off a delightful morning with our charming hosts. We have been invited back in two years' time.

Bill Graham

Wednesday 15 October – Bicentennial Park, Queanbeyan (and Queanbeyan Bushland Cemetery)

Buy one, get one free, was the option offered and accepted by all attendees on this Wednesday walk. The wander around the park gave us time to check out the cemetery, not too far away. And how worthwhile: after having excellent views of a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** at Bicentennial Park, at the second venue, Queanbeyan Bushland Cemetery, views were had of **Peregrine Falcon** and **Rufous Fantail**. We also scored orchids at the first venue and strange looking new wattle 'leaves', which turned out to be extremely immature seed pods. Fortunately, some birders attending were also plant people, one of who used 'phone a friend' to help name an orchid!!

It was pleasing to hear, although not see, **Sacred Kingfisher** at the first venue, and hear or see many of the birds we expected, including various parrots and **Common Bronzewing**. We didn't note many migrants, although an **Eastern Koel** was heard in the distance.

The second venue was probably more 'rewarding' as we observed nesting by **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** and **Magpie-lark** fairly close together in the same Eucalyptus. We also had quite good views of some smaller birds, including **Red-**



Southern Giant Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Wilson's and Grey-backed Storm-petrels, (top R.) Cape Petrel- Eden pelagic, NSW - October 2025 - *Julian Teh*

Shearwaters (a conservative estimate of 33,000 birds recorded over the course of the day), with smaller numbers of **Wedge-tailed, Hutton's** and **Fluttering Shearwaters** mixed in. Picking out a **Sooty Shearwater** was hard work with only one confirmable individual seen by a lucky few before it vanished into the crowd. Albatross numbers were relatively low; nevertheless we recorded four species: **Shy, Black-browed, Buller's** and **Indian Yellow-nosed**.

Our time spent drifting at the shelf was rewarded with a steady trickle of new birds, including **Grey-faced, Pintado** (Cape), **White-chinned** and **Southern Giant Petrels**, the latter showing brilliantly as the only bird to sit and feed off the back of the boat all day. **Wilson's Storm-petrels** put on a good show with up to 15 birds feeding at close range, eventually joined by a single **Grey-backed Storm-petrel** that allowed unusually good views.

The return journey was punctuated with incredible close views of breaching **Humpback Whales**, along with our customary stop at the sawmill to view the resident **Black-faced Cormorant** colony.

Many thanks to Mark and Lindsay from Freedom Charters for their ongoing skill, enthusiasm, flexibility and well-timed biscuit runs; and to all of the participants who made it such an enjoyable day on the water.

Julian Teh

Sunday 19 October – Private property, Brindabellas

It is always a privilege to have access to private property that is set aside for conservation and this outing, to a forested area that abuts both Brindabella and Kosciuszko National Parks, was very much enjoyed by the 13 participants who joined our host, Mel, on a perfect spring day. The hilly property has a network of well-graded tracks and, after a car shuffle, we did a slow walk downhill, with **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** being the dominant species, with some **White-naped** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** also present. **Rufous Whistlers** were also a constant presence, and there were



Canberra Birders at lunch- Goodradigbee River, NSW - October 2025 - *Sandra Henderson*

good numbers of **Grey Fantails**, **Spotted Pardalotes** and particularly vocal **White-browed Scrubwrens**. At least one **Superb Lyrebird** was heard, and **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** also joined the chorus.

After a morning tea break, during which our wildlife carer host fed a baby **Galah** and the cutest **Greater Glider** with different, specific baby bird and animal formulas respectively, we did another car shuffle before walking into Kosciuszko National Park as far as Perkins Flat Campground. A **Pilotbird** was heard along the way, along with **Sahul Brush Cuckoo** and **Sacred Kingfisher**. A late lunch was enjoyed in an idyllic setting on the banks of the very clear Goodradigbee River, with more focus by then on socialising rather than birding in a group that was quite content with the 32 species recorded.

Very many thanks to Mel for inviting us to visit and for sharing her passion for such a beautiful part of the Brindabellas.

Sue Lashko



Spotted Pardalote, Greater Glider, Galah - Brindabella Range, NSW/ACT - October 2025 - *Marcus Hellyer*

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 November – Mt Mugga Mugga

The walk will be on Mt Mugga Mugga.

Meet at 8am at Domestic Animal Services, Mugga Lane. For a description of the reserve, see: <https://www.parks.act.gov.au/find-a-nature-park/canberra-nature-park/mount-mugga-mugga-nature-reserve>

The walk will explore parts of the reserve deemed suitable for the weather on the day, and the people who register. It should take 2-3 hours.

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

Michael Robbins

Sunday 9 November – Old Boboyan Road & Yankee Hat

Description: We will start with a short walk along the wooded area at the beginning of Old Boboyan Road (where it comes off Boboyan Road), where **Fuscous Honeyeaters** may be sighted. Then we will proceed to Yankee Hat carpark. We will have a quick look along the 100 m before the locked gate where we might see **Brown Treecreeper** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. We will then walk through open grasslands along the Yankee Hat track, stopping for lunch at the rock art site before turning back.

Meeting time and place: 8.00 at the Namadgi Visitor Centre carpark, for carpooling.

Walking distance: The Yankee Hat walk is an easy 6 km return, taking about 2.5 hours.

End time: Mid-afternoon

What to bring: sturdy boots, hat, sunscreen, water, morning tea and lunch

Registration: Please register by 5.00 pm on Friday 7 September by email to Evan Bitmead (efbitmead@gmail.com ; mob. 0409 225 475), providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Numbers limited to 16.

Sunday 16 November — Campbell Park, Morning Nest workshop

Description: This outing will be a repeat of the very popular and practical nest workshops held over for twenty-one years. As usual it will be a very informal outing which has been timed to coincide with the peak of the breeding season. The morning will start with the usual very short presentation, including tips on the types of nests built by different species of birds, and how to find nests or nesting behaviour. This will be followed by several hours putting this into practice, with participants looking for breeding behaviour, signs of nests, etc. This will also allow plenty of opportunities for bird watching.

The workshop is particularly suitable for beginners or those relatively new to bird watching, though more experienced members and repeat customers are also very welcome.

Proposed attendees are reminded of **the care that needs to be taken around breeding birds as outlined in the new COG Ethical Birding Guidelines which can be found through the link on the Home Page of the Canberra Birds website ([Ethical Birding Guidelines - Canberra Birds](#); in particular, please read and adhere to the guidelines on Nesting Birds and Bird Photography).**

Walking distance: While every year has been different, we often don't walk very far as there usually is a "hot spot" where most of the breeding activity occurs around 500 m from where we park. Maximum distance = 2.0 km of easy flat walking.

End Time: Between 11 am and 12 pm. Please remember to take morning tea which we will have out in the field.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at the far end of the car park. Take Northcott Drive up to the start of the Campbell Park Offices, where you take the right fork and keep to the outside of the very large car park, skirting it until you get to the end. Intending participants might also like to look at the Campbell Park map on the COG website under the Maps, Forms and Lists button.

Name of leader and contact details: Registration is essential no later than Friday 14 November. To participate, please contact Jack Holland by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact. Could any new members who need to borrow binoculars please advise when you register?

Jack Holland

Wednesday 19 November – Denman Prospect Ponds

Meet on Stella Young Way at 8.30am (there are parking bays overlooking part of the creek/pond system).

We will walk 2-3 kms on tracks, taking in a number of the ponds. As usual, I recommend a hat, sturdy shoes, sunscreen and water. Apart from water birds, we'll be looking for various finches and other small birds.

Register with Sandra shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name and number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 23 November – West Belconnen

Description: This outing will be an opportunity to visit the grassy rural landscapes where Gooroomon Ponds Creek meets Ginninderra Creek beyond suburban West Belconnen. We will begin at Fassifern Pond before walking along the National Bicentennial Trail to explore the surrounding paddocks and grassland reserve. Many interesting birds are often found in the area, including waterbirds, birds of prey and grassland species.

eBird hotspots: Fassifern Pond (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2543573>), Jarramlee Homestead Road (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2070131>), Ginninderra Creek in West Macgregor (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2543568>)

You will also be close to some great local birdwatching sites, such as West Belconnen Pond and the Dunlop Grasslands, should you wish to visit these following the formal outing.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at Fassifern Pond in Dunlop. Park safely in Hugh McKay Crescent or surrounding streets and then walk down to the pond. The meeting point is also a short walk away from the R2 bus route.

Walk details: A moderate walk of approximately 6-7 kms that may take 3-4 hours at birding pace. There may be gates or stiles to navigate, as well as some wet or boggy sections. We will be flexible with the itinerary depending on weather conditions and creek levels.

What to bring: Sun protection (very important in this exposed grassy landscape), water, morning tea, binoculars, sturdy footwear (preferably waterproof in case we need to navigate boggy tracks or a high creek).

Registration: Please register with Lachlan by email (poephila@outlook.com), no later than Friday 21 November. Participants should provide their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Lachlan Duncan

Sunday 30 November – Namadgi NP – Pabral Road

Pabral Rd is a mostly flat fire trail in the wide valley below Mt Coree and is reached via Brindabella and Curries Roads. We will walk for approximately 2kms, or a little less than that if we see a lot of interesting birds. The return will be the

same way. The road skirts a wetland and then winds through tall forest where several small creeks running off Mt Coree provide moist conditions for the plants and wildlife that favour this habitat. The area hosts interesting bird species more usually reported higher up in Namadgi National Park. In particular we will be looking for summer migrants such as **Satin Flycatcher** and **Rufous Fantail**, but also hoping for **Eastern Shrike-tit**, **Red-browed Treecreeper**, **Rose Robin** and **Wonga Pigeon**. **Pilotbirds**, **Eastern Whipbirds** and **Superb Lyrebirds** occur in the area, though are more often heard than seen.

We will meet at 8:00 am, car pool for the drive up into Namadgi, start our walk around 8:30 and be back at our cars by about 11:30.

Bring a hat, water and morning tea, and wear appropriate footwear. We will stop for morning tea at a very nice little grassy meadow about halfway along our walk.

Register with kimlouisefarley@gmail.com with your name, mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Once you register you will be advised of the meeting point and other information.

Kim Farley

Sunday 7 December – Grabben Gullen TSR, Narrawa Bridge TSR & Narrawa Stockpile

This is an all-day trip of medium difficulty, in the Crookwell district. The first stop will be Grabben Gullen Travelling Stock Reserve, a thicket of small eucalypts with sightings of **Dollarbird**. The next stop will be the Narrawa Hall with views over the rolling countryside and possible raptor sightings. There is a TSR on the other side of the road with a low bird count.

Narrawa Bridge TSR on the Lachlan River has a riverside walk, uneven in parts with wombat holes and tussocks to look out for. We will follow the fenceline up a steepish hill in open woodland. Species recorded here include: **Peaceful Dove**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **White-bellied Sea Eagle** and **Striped Honeyeater**.

Narrawa Stockpile follows the curve of Narrawa Creek. It is a riverine woodland with 70 species on record including **Eastern Shrike-tit**, **Restless Flycatcher** and **Diamond Firetail**. We will lunch at Barbour Park in Gunning on the way back.

Meeting time and place: Victoria St. carpark by Sutton Primary School at 8.00 am for carpooling. End time about 3pm. Bring morning tea and lunch, sturdy shoes, hat, sunscreen, water and walking poles optional.

Walking distance: less than 5 km.

Registration. Please provide your name, mobile number and name and mobile number for your emergency contact. Register with Bill on bsgraham@gmail.com. Numbers will be limited to 16 people in 4 vehicles.

Bill Graham

Saturday 13 December - Urambi Hills Nature Reserve

Joint outing with Urambi Hills Park Care Group

Meet at 8:00 am in Meredith Circuit, Kambah, between houses 34 & 42 for entrance to Urambi Hills Nature Reserve. Please bring binoculars, a hat, water, sunscreen, morning tea and wear sturdy shoes.

This walk will explore the lower western slopes of Urambi Hills to Tuggeranong Creek. Depending on the day we may visit Urambi Hills trig via the new path, an easy zig-zag to top. Then on the return route to Meredith Circuit, we will visit a few of the sites Michael surveys*, as well as other 'birdy' spots and note a few interesting plants in the Reserve. This is a repeat of the successful outing held in July 2025, which was oversubscribed, and on which **Southern Whiteface** were seen. In December, besides maybe **Speckled Warbler** and **Scarlet Robin**, we will hopefully see some of the summer migrants, such as **White-winged Triller**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, and **Dollarbird**.

Registration is essential to mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au, with your name and phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact. Maximum 20 attendees.

* Michael has been helping the Urambi Hills Park Care group by conducting bird surveys at 8 sites each three months since 2017 using the Woodland Bird Survey protocol.

Michael Robbins

Sunday 14 December – Angle Crossing & Tharwa Sandwash

On this field trip we'll be exploring the Murrumbidgee Valley, in particular Tharwa Sandwash and then Angle Crossing. There's lots to see. Angle Crossing is well known for **Wedge-tailed Eagles** as well as **Rainbow Bee-eaters**.

Parking is limited at Angle Crossing so we'll meet in Tharwa and carpool from there. Our meeting point will be the parking area by the loos just on the left as you cross over the bridge into Tharwa. We'll start at 7.30 to beat the heat.

Getting over Angle Crossing requires driving through shallow water. I'll check out the crossing in advance and if the water is too high, our fall-back option will be to go Namadgi Visitor Centre after the Sandwash and walk the grounds of the centre and the foothills of the Mount Tennent Track.

Wear sensible shoes and bring your morning tea.

Please provide your name, mobile number and name and mobile number for your emergency contact to - pickelbarrel@gmail.com or 0418 264 868

Marcus Hellyer

2026

Advance notice of a trip in early 2026 for which participants will need to book a campsite once their registration is confirmed.

Friday 27 February to Sunday 1 Mar 2026 - Weddin Mountains Camping weekend

Weddin Mountains National Park, near Grenfell, consists of a small rocky range of mountains with a mix of Callitris and eucalypt woodlands. It has an interesting range of birds as it is the transition between the flat inland and the western slopes region. Special birds might include **Turquoise Parrot, Bluebonnet, Red-capped Robin, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, White-browed Babbler** and **Barn Owl**.

Ben Hall campground is about 3 hrs drive from Canberra. This is a weekend camping trip to a National Park campground where you will need to bring all your own supplies, including water.



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

ERNIE. A POEM BY EDWINA SMITH

Like all fathers of his kind
Ernie sat and stayed
Upon a clutch of eggs
That Mother Emu laid
He's waited, wished and wanted
For the past eight weeks
Longing for 'a chirping
From happy little beaks

Then came 'a chirping
What has he heard?
Could it be the sound
Of a baby bird?
Ernie took a look
One plus one is two
What shall he call them?
How about Dan and Drew!

Ernie has a plan:
"When your feathers dry
And you've found your feet
We'll have a scratch about
And find some grass to eat
While you're wet and weak
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a little rest."

So they have a little rest
Ernie sits upon the nest
Then a chirp is heard
From another baby bird
More chicks are here!
Two plus two is four
What shall he call them?
How about Nell and Noor!

Ernie has a plan:
"When your feathers dry
And you've found your feet
We'll have a scratch about
And find some seeds to eat
While you're wet and weak
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a little rest."

So they have a little rest
Ernie sits upon the nest
Then a chirp is heard
From another baby bird
More chicks are here!

Four plus two is six
What shall he call them?
How about Phil and Felix!

Ernie has a plan:
"When your feathers dry
And you've found your feet
We'll have a scratch about
And find some grubs to eat
While you're wet and weak
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a little rest."

So they have a little rest
Ernie sits upon the nest
Then a chirp is heard
From another baby bird
More chicks are here!
Six plus two is eight
What shall he call them?
How about Kim and Kate!

Ernie has a plan:
"When your feathers dry
And you've found your feet
We'll have a scratch about
And find some fruit to eat
While you're wet and weak
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a little rest."

So they have a little rest
Ernie sits upon the nest
Then a chirp is heard
From another baby bird
More chicks are here!
Eight plus two is ten
What shall he call them?
How about Bob and Ben!

Ernie has a plan:
"When your feathers dry
And you've found your feet
We'll have a scratch about
And find some shoots to eat
While you're wet and weak
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a little rest

The sun is going down
It's been a busy day
Now it's time for sleep
Not a time to play
Because you're all so new
I'll sit upon the nest
Keep you safe and warm
So have a BIG rest."

"Goodnight Daddy Emu."
Says Dan and Drew
"We are very sleepy now
Because we're so new."
"Goodnight Daddy Emu."
Says Nell and Noor
"Look at our legs!
What are they for?"

"Goodnight Daddy Emu."
Says Phil and Felix
"We'd like to know
Can beaks carry sticks?"
"Goodnight Daddy Emu."
Says Kim and Kate
"We've must wake early.
Let's not be late."

"Goodnight Daddy Emu."
Says Bob and Ben
"We'll have a sleep
Every now and then!"
Ernie has a plan:
Now they're all asleep.
He gathers them together
Without another peep.

EDWINA SMITH.
30th June 2023. Revised 20th August
2025.



Crimson Rosella - Wandiyali, NSW - October 2025 - *Marcus Hellyer*



Birdwatchers & nature lover's accommodation

Feathers'n'Friends cottage is fully self-contained with extensive facilities to ensure guests can enjoy short or extended stays.

The secluded lodging is surrounded by tropical rainforest and beautiful gardens with varying habitats and a large variety of birds and wildlife.

Activities in the area include birdwatching at nearby Mt Lewis and other birdwatching locations, as well as Daintree River nature tours and other attractions.

Discounts available for Birdlife Australia members.

Check our website for comprehensive details, rates, and bookings:

www.feathersnfriends.com.au

Fred & Jeanette Birkbeck

244 Clacherty Road
Julatten QLD 4871

Tel: 07 4094 1665

Email: freddy@feathersnfriends.com.au

 An advertisement for a trip to Galapagos and Ecuador. The background is a photograph of a Brown Noddy bird in flight, perched on a dark rock. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top left, it says 'NatureArt Lab' with the tagline 'Learn - Be Inspired - Love Your Art'. The main title is 'Galapagos and Ecuador' in large white font, with the dates '1 - 14 January 2026' below it. The text reads: 'Book your place now for this bucket-list nature adventure! Journey through the remarkable Galapagos Islands and Amazonian Ecuador and explore spectacular scenery, natural wonders and incredible flora and fauna of these world-renowned wildlife destinations!'. At the bottom, it says 'Scan for further details: natureartlab.com.au/' and includes a QR code. The website 'natureartlab.com.au' and 'Image Credit: Alan Landford' are also mentioned at the bottom.

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

2025-2026 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

Michael Reeves
Elke Wakefield
Mel Uzzell & family
Matthew Christie
Renni Martinez
Trevor Costa
Virginia Kerr

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for December 2025 edition:

Wednesday 26 November 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.

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