Canberra Birds encourages interest in the birds of the Canberra region, and promotes the conservation of native birds and their habitats.

We support ethical birding and promote bird watching and photography that show consideration of bird welfare and habitats.

canberrabirds.org.au/about-cog/ethical-birding-guidelines

Canberra Birds acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we bird.

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Gang-gang Cockatoo *Patrick Cox*

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DESIGN Mariana Rollgejser

Birding in the ACT

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Why the ACT is so good for birding

As at August 2025, about 295 species of birds have been recorded in the Australian Capital Territory, approximately a third of the national total. This is an impressive list for a relatively small area, and is attributable to the ACT's wide variety of habitats, covering wet forests, drier woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, rivers and alpine areas. Many of these habitats are available in or close to urban Canberra, with the others accessible within an hour's drive of the city centre.

White-throated Gerygone *Julian Robinson*

This brochure gives information on a range of ACT habitat types and sites, enabling local and visiting birders to see a good range of ACT birds. The birds listed for each site are only a brief selection of what might be seen there. Some migratory species are only present in spring and summer.

Eastern Koel *Julie Clark*

Many of the sites listed in this brochure are managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Detailed information on access and maps is available at:
parks.act.gov.au/find-a-nature-park
and information on the various Canberra Nature Parks is available at: parks.act.gov.au/find-a-nature-park/canberra-nature-park.

The Canberra Birds website canberrabirds.org.au has bird lists and data for the ACT, latest bird information on a chatline, photographs of local birds, and a variety of downloadable brochures, bird-watching routes and much more.

Urban birds

Australian Magpie *Deb Ralph*

Canberra, the bush capital, has many urban reserves, public parks and private gardens which provide food and shelter to local birds. Australian Magpies and Magpie-larks are common, as are Crimson Rosellas, Pied Currawongs, Crested Pigeons and Red Wattlebirds. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Little Corellas feed on the nature strips, and Australian Wood Ducks graze on the city lawns.

Woodland and forest birds

Sacred Kingfisher *Julie Clark*

The ACT has an extensive network of woodland reserves through and around the urban areas, in the Canberra Nature Park system. Drier grassy woodlands near the city have some large spreading trees, and are frequented by Rufous Whistlers, Sacred Kingfishers, White-throated Treecreepers and several species of thornbill. Wet forests in the ranges contain tall trees and well-vegetated gullies, with Golden Whistlers and White-eared, White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters.

Waterbirds

Pacific Black Duck *Julie Clark*

Larger waterbirds frequent the lakes, ponds and dams. Darters and cormorants fish in Lake Burley Griffin and many other water-bodies, and nest in waterside trees along the Molonglo River. Eurasian Coots, Dusky Moorhens and Australasian Swamphens are common, as are many types of duck. White-faced Herons may also be seen. Small suburban ponds are good places to look for crakes and rails, and even the smallest city ponds have Australian Reed-Warblers singing in summer.

Waders

Black-fronted Dotterel *David Dedenczuk*

Ease of access to a variety of small to large wetlands in the ACT allows close-up views of wading birds. Local breeding waders include Black-fronted Dotterel. Latham's Snipe and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper migrate to the ACT from the Northern Hemisphere. Pied Stilts are occasionally seen at Kellys Swamp in Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Birds of prey

Black-shouldered Kite *Deb Ralph*

Canberra is one of the few places in Australia where Wedge-tailed Eagles can be seen soaring over the city skyline. They nest on low ridges and hills around the edge of the suburbs. Other locally breeding raptors include Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk and Nankeen Kestrel, while Black-shouldered Kites can be common in years of high mouse numbers. Less frequently seen raptors include Peregrine Falcon, Swamp Harrier and Australian Hobby.

Parrots

Red-rumped Parrot *Julie Clark*

Many species of parrot and cockatoo breed in the ACT. These range from the little Red-rumped Parrot, which feeds in grassland and grassy woodland, to the majestic Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo with its distinctive floating flight and eerie, far-carrying calls. The most common species are Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs, and Crimson and Eastern Rosellas. Australian King-Parrots and Gang-gang Cockatoos are found in the ranges, as well as urban reserves and older Canberra suburbs. Superb Parrots nest in some reserves and feed in street trees and parks, while Swift Parrots can visit in winter.

Migrants and rare visitors

Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Duncan McCaskill*

Summer migrants that breed in the ACT include Dusky Woodswallows, Dollarbirds, Rainbow Bee-eaters, White-winged Trillers and (in the higher altitude forests) Satin Flycatchers. In periods of drought, birds of the drier inland including White-browed Woodswallows can move into the ACT. The Welcome Swallow is probably the most widespread breeding migrant, and Eastern Koels are summer breeding visitors. The most spectacular migration is of honeyeaters, especially Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, thousands of which pass through in spring and autumn on their way to and from breeding areas in the forests.

1 Campbell Park – Mount Ainslie Nature Reserve

This wooded area is a favourite spot for local and first-time birdwatchers alike, due to its variety of woodland birds and proximity to the city.

BIRDS: Rufous Whistler, Common Bronzewing, Speckled Warbler, White-winged Triller, Varied Sittella, Dusky Woodswallow, White-throated and Western Gerygones.

Western Gerygone Julie Clark

WHERE: 4 km east of the CBD, north off Fairbairn Ave. Turn right at the end of Northcott Dr, go past the offices to the far right end of the carpark, and walk northwards into the woodland.

2 The Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG)

The ANBG is a great first stop for birding in the ACT. Visitors and beginners can gain familiarity with common and not-so-common birds, many of which are readily approachable. Many research projects on birds are also carried out at the gardens.

Satin Bowerbird Angela Booth

BIRDS: New Holland Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, White-browed Scrubwren, Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail, Red Wattlebird, Satin Bowerbird, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Eastern Yellow Robin.

WHERE: 2 km west of the CBD, off Clunies Ross Street.

3 Murrumbidgee River Corridor

The Murrumbidgee River flows through wooded hills and gorges on the western edge of Canberra, which provide food and shelter to a wide variety of birds. In spring and autumn, large numbers of honeyeaters pass through on migration.

Dollarbird Sue Beatty

BIRDS: Mistletoebird, Red-browed Finch, Leaden Flycatcher, Dusky Woodswallow, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Dollarbird.

WHERE: many access points from southern Canberra suburbs. A popular riverside spot is Casuarina Sands, 17 km west of the CBD on Cotter Road; the Cotter campground and Cotter Dam lookout are nearby.

4 Brindabellas

The Brindabellas are the forested ranges on the ACT western border, and form the northern and western part of Namadgi National Park. They are characterised by tall wet forest on steep slopes, lush gullies, and sub-alpine and alpine ridges.

Rose Robin Deb Ralph

BIRDS: Superb Lyrebird, Pilotbird, Golden and Olive Whistlers, Rose Robin, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Satin Flycatcher.

WHERE: Brindabella Rd, off Uriarra Rd, west of the CBD, leads up into the Brindabellas. Mount Franklin Road, Warks Road and Bendora Road are favourite birding locations across a range of altitudes. Some roads need 4WD.

5 Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Tidbinbilla is one of Canberra's favourite recreational areas for visits, picnics and barbeques, and has a sanctuary for wildlife. Roads and well-marked trails give easy access to grasslands, wetlands, forests and mountains.

Eastern Shrike-tit Julie Clark

BIRDS: White-naped Honeyeater, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Superb Lyrebird, Eastern Shrike-tit, Eastern Yellow Robin.

WHERE: The Visitor Centre is by the gate to the reserve, 25 km from the CBD, accessed off Paddy's River Road.

6 Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve

The best place to see waterbirds in the ACT, and meet local birders. Both local breeding birds and migrants may be seen from the various bird hides. Kellys Swamp has open water, muddy shores and reed beds, and Jerrabomberra Creek is nearby.

BIRDS: Latham's Snipe, Australian Reed-Warbler, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Shoveler, White-faced Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Golden-headed Cisticola.

Golden-headed Cisticola Julie Clark

WHERE: 5 km east of the CBD on Dairy Road, an extension of Newcastle St, Fyshwick.

7 Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve and Woodland Sanctuary

Mulligans Flat is a large area of intact box-gum grassy woodland on the northern edge of Canberra adjacent to the Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve. A fox-proof and cat-proof fence protects reintroduced native mammals and birds. Eastern Bettong, Eastern Quoll and Bush Stone-curlew are now breeding in the Sanctuary.

BIRDS: Scarlet Robin, Superb Parrot, White-throated Gerygone, Spotted Pardalote, Noisy Friarbird, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Leaden Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler.

WHERE: access from Amy Ackman St or Eric Wright St, Forde, 12 km from the CBD. The former is the main carpark, while the latter is closer to the main sanctuary entrance but involves a step-through gate. Also access from Wildbark, the Visitors Centre in Rosenberg St, Throsby.

Spotted Pardalote Deb Ralph

8 Callum Brae Nature Reserve

A large area of box-gum grassy woodland with small dams. There are walking tracks throughout. At the south-east corner a narrow strip of land connects to Jerrabomberra West Nature Reserve.

BIRDS: Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, White-throated Gerygone, Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Dusky Woodswallow, Speckled Warbler.

Shining Bronze-cuckoo Brian Grinter

WHERE: access off Narrabundah Lane, Symonston, or from Mugga Lane.

9 Namadgi National Park

This park contains the most remote parts of the ACT and some of its wildest habitats, from broad grassy valleys to wooded slopes, mountain swamps, granite tors and the forested Brindabella Ranges. It is a popular area for bushwalking, camping and day visits. Woodland behind the Visitors Centre is easily accessed and often has interesting bush birds. Deeper into the park, Orroral Valley and Honeysuckle Campground are popular.

BIRDS: Flame Robin, Fuscous Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Swamp Harrier, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Spotted Quail-thrush. Wet forest specialists are listed under the Brindabellas.

Fuscous Honeyeater Shorty Westlin

WHERE: The Visitor Centre is 30 km south of the city via Tharwa, on Naas Road. Boboyan Road (unsealed in part) provides access to the southern part of the park. Some roads need 4WD.

Rivers and lakes

Conservation reserves

Urban area

Main roads

N

0 5 10 km