

Gang-gang

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc

Canberra Birds Newsletter

DECEMBER 2025



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Photo: **Weebill** - Jerrabomberra Wetlands, ACT -
October 2025 - *Marcus Hellyer.*

Canberra Birds Christmas Barbeque
Black Mountain Peninsula (John Cardiff Close)

Wednesday 10 December

6.00 pm

Sausages, bread, onions, beer, wine and non-alcoholic drinks provided.

If you would like a vegetarian option, could you please contact Bill Graham on bsgraham1948@gmail.com

Please bring either a salad or a dessert plus serving spoons, to share.

You will also need to bring your own table, chairs, plates, cutlery and glasses.

COG meeting 14 January 2026, 7:30 pm

QUIZ NIGHT

VENUE – Woden Valley Uniting Church Hall, off Gillies St, Curtin

Instead of our usual COG Members' Night the 14 January 2026 COG meeting will be another Quiz Night:

QUIZ MASTER – MARK CLAYTON

There will be Range of Questions to encourage participation from all levels of bird knowledge.

At the door there will a Draw for Seats at the Tables.

Prior registration is not required but it would be helpful if you could let Mark know on chollop7@bigpond.com if you intend to come.

As usual he will have 50 questions covering a selection of weird and whacky topics.

If participants want to do some homework Mark suggests that they have a **GOOD** look at both the **2nd** edition of the Australian Bird Guide and the Abridged version for some of the questions. If he can get some photos sorted, then there will be a section (or two) included.

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.

There is parking for at least 30 cars in the car park off Gillies Street, and further parking in Gillies St itself, or across the road at the Curtin shops.

Please use the entrance on the E side next to the Good Shepherd Anglican Church.

Please bring your own supper and drinks, including alcohol.

A good-sized kitchen with a fridge is available for our use.

News from the Committee

Canberra Birds' **Annual General Meeting** (AGM) was held on November 12th. A new committee was appointed, though we were unable to appoint a Secretary. This is of great concern, for both legal and practical reasons. To meet both those requirements, Interim arrangements have been put into place, but it is necessary that we have a Secretary as soon as possible. I ask members to think again about nominating for the role. Being on the Committee brings with it a close involvement with the activities and people of Canberra Birds and is very rewarding.

Following the AGM we are welcoming two new faces to the **2026 Committee**. Peter Miller is stepping into the role of Treasurer and Chris Davey is returning to the Committee after a break of some years. Welcome Peter and welcome back Chris. Kim Farley and Julie Hotchin continue as President and Vice-President respectively, Peter Milker as Treasurer, and Jenny Bounds, Chris Davey, Bill Graham and Prue Watters as general members of the Committee.

And for a sum-up of the year's activity in Canberra Birds - I invite you to read the [President's Report](#) on the website. While written by the President and Committee, it covers (briefly, I assure you), the very wide range of activities undertaken for Canberra Birds by our members - from conservation advocacy, to bird surveying, field trips, the monthly meetings with their speakers and presentations, and not least our communications with members and the wider world through the website, email Chatline, Facebook and our publications, Gang-gang and Canberra Bird Notes.

Kim Farley, President
President@canberrabirds.org.au

Canberra Birds in our Region

Canberra Birds recently received a request from Yass Library for resources for a display to promote the Aussie Bird Count (20 to 26 October) and birding in the region.

The display we contributed to features our new Canberra Birds brochures together with the Birds in Backyards poster designed with Birdlife Australia.

If you have any ideas for similar locations to promote Canberra Birds in this way, do get in touch with the Committee by emailing cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au.



Display - Yass Library

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

Conditions have rapidly become very dry for the just over 4 weeks from 27 October to 25 November covered by this column with the continuing westerly winds very quickly drying out any scattered rainfall. A moderate fall in the final weekend was followed by some hot and very windy weather and might only temporarily delay this trend. My analysis below indicates that the boost in bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) shown in October has dropped significantly. While most of the later expected spring/summer migrants have arrived, reports of “unusual” species have dropped again and remain much lower than in previous years.

Highlights

There were no sightings over the period which captured the attention in a similar way that the 3 species did in the previous month. After being last reported from the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant (FSTP) and the adjacent Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (JWNR) on 25 October, there were further sightings of 1-2 **Whiskered Terns** there on 17-20 November. However, there were also 21 birds counted on the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October, these were missed in my previous column, as well as 7 birds from the Morass on 5 November.

Likewise, after the last report on 25 October at the JWNR, the **Australian Little Bittern** was photographed there on 10 November, the only confirmed sighting for the period. The only report of the **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was 3 birds on the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October.

Spring and Summer Migrants

Of the expected spring/summer migrants which had reported only from a few locations in October, there have been reports of the **Horsfield’s Bushlark** from just three locations, with 1 bird on both the Macgregor and Wallaroo sides of Parkwood Rd on 9 November, and with 2 at the latter on 18 November, and well as 2 on Back Creek Rd Gundaroo on 8 November. There have been reports of the **Brown Songlark** from 5 locations, with single birds on the ACT side of the Parkwood Rd from 7-13 November, and on the NSW side on 18 November. There were also single birds at the West Belconnen Pond on 6 and 10 November, as well as 1 and 2 birds at different spots on the Dog Trap Rd, Jeir on 8 November, and a single bird at Gundaroo on 1 November.

It is interesting that all but one of these sightings were in the first half of November, rather than the second as you might expect with conditions warming up and drying out. The **Rufous Songlark** is also not as widespread as in some dry summers, with reports from 24 locations compared with 17 in October.

The inland Woodswallows also show a very interesting pattern, with reports of the **White-browed Woodswallow** from 5 locations (compared 2 in October), with 50 (the flock landed briefly in trees, then moved on) and 4 birds at the Nelanglo TSR on 25 October and 4 November, respectively, and 2 birds at Whiskers Creek Rd Carwoola on 3 November. There were between 10-40 birds typically moving over in mixed flocks at the Scottsdale Reserve between 1-4 November, and there was also a small party at altitude (heard first then spotted with bins, all had the warm rufous belly of the White-browed) at Stromlo Forest West Block on 15 November.

However, by far the most sightings have been at the Yankee Hut car park and track where between 10-60 birds have been reported since 9 November. They were often in the air but also on the ground and in the trees. My experience when they stay around like this is that they are likely to be breeding, but the only information I can find is of courtship, display, or copulation on 16 November. As is expected, **Masked Woodswallows** were accompanying them with up to 4 birds reported there from 14 November. The only other location this species was reported was from the Scottsdale Reserve, where there were 20 (the maximum number reported during the period) and 2 birds on 3 and 4 November, respectively.

There have been reports of the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** from 1 location only, single birds heard in Ngunnawal on 17 and 27 October. The 2 inland cuckoo species, the **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Pallid Cuckoo**, seem to be present in reasonable numbers, though reports of the latter are down to 18 locations compared with the 30 in October.

Of the passage migrants, the **Satin Flycatcher** was reported from 7 locations (compared with 2 in October), all to the W of the Murrumbidgee River. However, of the 8 locations for the **Australian Rufous Fantail** four were still on passage

through Canberra, including a late one at Campbell Park on 22 November. There have also been 3 such reports (including late ones at Lake Ginninderra and the Stony Creek Nature Reserve on 23 November) of the **Sahul Cicadabird**, with the five other locations including one at the Tallaganda SF on 3 November.

So, during December and January please keep an eye out for those species mentioned above, especially the inland ones (as well as the **Black-eared Cuckoo** and **Red-backed Kingfisher**) should it dry out further. Watch out also for the **White-throated Needle-tail** and the related **Spine-tailed Swift** both of which have not been reported so far and which usually first appear in the COG Aol in the New Year.

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 in particular the **Golden Whistler** have been slow to leave as they were still reported from 7 and 13 urban/peri-urban locations, respectively (compared with 20 and close to 30 for October).

In contrast most **Scarlet Robins** have moved away, with reports from 5 urban/peri-urban locations, compared with around 7 in October. The complete move away from these areas of the **Flame Robin** in September has been confirmed, as it was again not reported from such locations, as has the **Rose Robin**, also not reported from such locations (compared with 1 in October). Again, there have been no confirmed **Pink Robin** sightings during the period, with the closest location being from the NE of Melbourne.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** has also moved away from such locations, with the last, a single bird reported from the Kambah Pool NR on 25 October. The only report of the **Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** anywhere within in the COG Aol during the period was of an unknown number of birds on the Calabash Firetrail high in the Tinderry NR about 10 km SE of Michelago on 6 November.

Up to 2 **Bassian Thrush** were still reported from the ANBG during the period, but the **Olive Whistler** was not reported from such locations, and the **Brown Gerygones** was not reported from anywhere within the COG Aol during the period.

Unusual species

There were no “unusual” species reported from the COG Aol during the period that captured the attention. Note that in my discussion below many waterbird locations and numbers have been affected by there not having been a Lake Bathurst survey during the period.

A big concern is that activity has significantly gone down compared with October, and in particular there were very few reports of pigeons/doves, raptors, parrots and passerines, including honeyeaters (with no reports of any of the special species recorded earlier this year) and the 4 special species discussed at the end.

Again, there were no Magpie Geese or Plumed Whistling Duck reported during the period. **Freckled Duck** were reported from 1 location only (3 in October), with up to 12 ducks continuing to be present at the JWNR throughout. With no Lake

Bathurst survey during the period, the **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 6 locations (compared with 12 in October), with 9 photographed flying over the JWNR on 2 November, and the maximum being the 20 Ducks at the Bungendore Meadows Dam on 4 November.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 5 locations during the period (compared with 4 in October), with 4 and 3 ducks reported from the Upper Stranger Pond on 1 and 3 November, respectively. Up to 2 ducks were regularly reported from the JWNR, and up to 10 ducks were reported from Rowes Lagoon. Other locations were 4 ducks on the Dickson Wetlands on 26 October and 1 duck at the West Belconnen Pond on 6 November. **Musk Ducks** were reported from 3 locations (down from 6 in October), with up to 4 ducks reported from Rowes Lagoon. The other

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 9 December

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.

reports were 1 duck at the Tin Hut Dam on 7 November and one at the London Bridge on 21 November, both at the southern end of the Googong dam.

In the absence of a Lake Bathurst survey, the **Great-crested Grebe** was reported from one location only, Bracks Hole Rd on the upper Cotter Dam, with up 10 grebes reported from there from 24 October.

Despite the dry conditions with the expected limited grass growth for this spring, **Stubble Quail** were reported from 11 locations (compared with 2 in October) during the period. These were all well N of LBG with 5 of them in the Parkwood Rd/West Belconnen area where the maximum of 6 birds were reported on 9 November. Up to 3 **Brown Quail** were reported from 7 locations (compared with 6 in October), 4 of these being S of Canberra. The **Painted Button-quail** was reported only from 1 location (as for October) with 1 bird at heard at the Uriarra Reserve west on 31 October, and again no Little Button-quail were reported during the period.

A **White-headed Pigeon** was reported flying low over Symonston on 2 November and single **Peaceful Doves** were reported from 2 locations, 1 heard at the JWNR on 31 October and another heard at the Yankee Hut car park and track on 24 November. Again, no Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Brush Bronzewing or Diamond Doves, or White-throated Nightjars were reported during the period.

Baillon's Crakes were reported from 2 locations (compared with 1 in October), up to 2 birds regularly at the JWNR, and at the South Jerrabomberra Pond between 8-21 November. **Spotless Crakes** were reported from 3 locations (also up from 1 in October), up to 2 crakes at the JWNR throughout the period, 1 crake heard at the Eyre St wetlands on 30 October, as well as 2 birds at the Dunlop Grasslands on 7 November. Up to 2 **Australian Spotted Crakes** were also regularly reported from the JWNR, with the only other location being 1 crake from the South Jerrabomberra Pond on 21 November (the same number of locations as for October).

Buff-banded Rails were reported from 5 locations (as for October), with up to 2 birds regularly from the JWNR. There were also single birds at the Eyre St wetlands on 19 November, at the McKellar wetlands on 26 October and the Goulburn Wetlands on 29 October, as well as 2 birds on Ginninderra Creek at Latham on 20 November. Single **Lewin's Rails** were reported from 3 locations (up from 2 in October) with up to 2 birds at the Franklin Ponds system between 31 October and 19 November, and with single birds at the Yankee Hut car park and track on 15 and 18 November, as well as one from the Queanbeyan River Trail on 12 November. However, no Black-tailed Nativehen were reported during the period.

A **Pacific Golden Plover** was reported from the Lake Bathurst survey on 25 October (again missed in my previous column). **Pied Stilts** were reported 7 locations (similar to October, but with no Lake Bathurst survey), with 4 of these along the W side of Lake George where a maximum of 26 birds were reported from the VC Badcoe Rest Area on 2 November. Up to 2 birds were also reported from the JWNR and the adjacent FSTP to 5 November. Seven birds were also recorded at the Morass on 5 November.

However, no Red-capped Plovers, Red-necked Avocets, Banded Lapwing, Australian Painted-snipe, Comb-crested Jacana, Red-necked Stint, Pectoral or Common Sandpipers (the latter still does not seem to have returned to its favoured spot on Lake Tuggeranong this season) were reported during the period. No Caspian or White-winged Black Terns (for **Whiskered** see above) or Australasian Bitterns (for **Australian Little** also see above) were reported during the period.



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No Little Egrets were again reported during the period, and a **Plumed Egret** was reported only from the Rowes Lagoon on 9 November (down from the 4 locations in October). In contrast single **Great Egrets** were reported from 18 locations (over double that in October) during the past month, including regularly at the JWNR.

Up to 4 (but mostly singles) **White-necked Herons** were reported from 20 locations (up from 16 in October) and **Royal Spoonbills** were reported 8 locations (down from 10 in October) during the period but only regularly from the JWNR from where up to 6 were reported (otherwise single birds). A single **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** was reported only from E of the Morass on 5 November (compared with from 6 locations in October), but again no Glossy Ibis were reported during the period.

An **Eastern Barn Owl** was reported only from Symonston on 10 November (compared with 2 locations in October), but no **Powerful Owls** were reported during the period. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from around 12 locations (compared with 20 in October, numbers of this species have dropped significantly over the past year or so) in the period. A **Spotted Harrier** was reported gliding low and slow over grasslands at Mcnamara Fields (W of Belconnen) only on 17 November, but no **Black Kites, Pacific Baza, Grey Goshawks** or **Black Falcons** were reported from anywhere in the COG Aol during the period.

Single **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from 5 locations (well up from 1 in October), the Cotter Bend between 30 October and 12 November, the Casuarina Sands NR on 16 November and the JWNR on 22 November, with new locations being 2 birds at Murrumbateman on 30 October and one at Bombay (WNW of Braidwood) on 16 November, but no **Red-backed** or **Forest Kingfishers** were reported during the period.

Three **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** were reported from the Scotts NR on 26 October, and 3 **Little Lorikeets** flew very low over Symonston on 9 November, but no **Cockatiel, Turquoise Parrot, Scaly-breasted, Musk** or **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were reported over the period.

Up to 2 **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were reported from the known location at the Rock Valley in the Tidbinbilla NR from 26 October to 9 November. Surprisingly no **White-fronted Chats** were reported from anywhere in the COG Aol, and no **Singing, Striped, Scarlet, Brown, Blue-faced** or **Painted Honeyeaters, Little Wattlebirds** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period.

Chestnut-rumped Heathwren were reported from 2 locations (as for October), with up to 3 at Frith Rd in the Black Mountain NR from 16-21 November, the first time they have been reported from there for some years. Up to 4 birds were also reported from Whiskers Creek in Carwoola, where they seem to be regulars. **Red-capped Robins** were reported from 3 locations (up from 2 in October) including the Bracks Hole Fire Trail from where up to 3 birds were observed, including a still streaked juvenile/immature bird without a frontal spot on 16 November. Interestingly a similarly streaked bird was regularly seen/photographed at the University of Canberra from 8-20 November, but without an adult bird present. An adult male was photographed at the Aranda Bushland NR on 8 and 17 November, but at around 3 km away would seem to be too far away for it to have been one of the parents.

A **Black-faced Monarch** was reported from the Tallaganda SF on 3 November, but no **White-browed Babbler, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, Apostlebird, Spangled Drongo, Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finches** were reported during the period.

Jacky Winters were reported from 1 location only (compared with 5 for October) with 2 birds at the Naas Rd and Apollo Rd (a very well-known location) on 18 November. In contrast **Hooded Robins** were reported from 5 known locations (down from 6 in October), with a male reported from the Bracks Hole Rd on 31 October and 21 November and near the Visitors Centre at the Tidbinbilla NR on 1 November. A pair was reported from the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 18 November there on 15 October and up to 5 birds from the Scottsdale Reserve from 28 October to 4 November. A photograph of a still streaked immature male was taken at Rendevous Creek on 18 November. It is unclear whether it is this season's young with the BIRD INFO on the web site indicating only one dependent young record before October.

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 2 locations (well down from the 7 in October), with 1-2 birds at the known location the Nelanglo TSR to 14 November, and 1 at the Black Mountain on 31 October (confirming the earlier sighting there that month). The **Brown Treecreeper** was reported from 1 location (well down from the 5 in October), a single bird at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 5 and 11 November.

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).

Apart from the **White-browed Woodswallow** and the **Red-capped** and **Hooded Robins** above, the following are some other late spring breeding observations:

Around 6 pm on 9 November I heard a begging call in my garden and soon found a pair of **Australian King-Parrots** with the bird in female plumage begging very similarly to the familiar call that their young do. I thought it was too early for dependent young, and this was confirmed when the male mounted her and over several minutes tried rather clumsily to mate. The begging bird and male were still around the next morning but not since.

Checking the BIRD INFO on the COG chat line I was surprised that there are no records of copulation, though plenty of inspecting hollows. Importantly there are many of dependent young though only 7 from September to December before the 23 records in January. This supports my understanding that **Australian King-Parrots** breed in the mountains and then bring their young into the suburbs and lead me to question how much urban/peri-urban breeding there may be.

In this respect Philip Veerman told me that while he was doing the blitz survey, a lady came to talk to him and said she knew of an **Australian-King Parrot** nest in the parking area on the Colquhoun street entrance to Mount Taylor. She said she had seen the pair arrive together a few times over at least several days to a week or more, and the male would perch and display and the female would climb down to the tree hollow backwards, as in an upright, tail first backing into the hole from above.

The spout entrance was about 4 metres above the ground, and not easy to see from standing below. They stood near the tree for a few minutes and suddenly the female **Australian King-Parrot** burst out of a hole at the base of the tree, barely 20 cm from the ground. It flew out past them very fast with no doubt that the species identity was correct. The lady had not previously seen the bird come out like that, only go in. To do that, the tree must have been hollow from at least the top spout down to ground level. Philip had no idea at what height the presumed nest would be or why she chose to go in at the top and out at the bottom.

In the last week of the period, I observed several local Rivett/Chapman **Pied Currawong** fledglings begging and being fed. Unusually there doesn't seem to be a nest in my GBS site, though also in the last week a pair has been hanging around the house without any sign of nest building/feeding young etc (however, it should be noted they are particularly surreptitious breeders). What has been clear over the past month or so is very noisy flocks giving their winter whining calls, most recently around the small park in Rivett.

In the interim the second **Australian Magpie** nest in my GBS site was abandoned and the single fledgling from the first nest became increasingly demanding. However, the pair of **Superb Fairy-wrens** are still regularly coming to and attacking my study windows, and don't yet seem to be breeding.

Since their arrival in mid-October **Eastern Koels** have been very active in my local area, with in particular females being prominent in giving their *kek kek* calls including while seen flying through when they have often then been perched on wires or fences. One way I know when females are around in trees etc is when they make a very "scratchy" sound which turns into a rapid "cackle" once they are flushed. I heard it quite a bit around my back fence where a female was often confronted by a couple of **Red Wattlebirds** which had a nest near there, from which a couple of chicks fledged mid-month. Since then, as alerted by her scratchy call, a female has continued to hang around the fledglings and also been harassed by their parent with on 16 November an adult clearly dive bombed one in the outer branches of a ti-tree.



Australian Raven, fledgling - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - Trevor Costa

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 to start of December, so listen out for their very characteristic, monotonous single note begging call which usually first alerts you to their presence.

Finally following a discussion on the COG chat line on what blue objects the **Satin Bowerbird** may have collected to decorate its bower before European settlement; on 19 November Rob Gerathy checked his nearby the bower which seemed to have been destroyed and abandoned. He was curious whether some bowers are only maintained during the breeding season, noting the Bowerbirds only seem to be resident in his part of Kambah at certain times of the year. Exploring in eBird suggested that they're only present nearby between April and September (so Winter and Spring).

This is consistent with my experience in Chapman/Rivett (many fewer around these days than when I wrote my articles about them in CBN in the early 2000s), However, Rosalind Walcott posted that two bowers in their prize Red Hill garden are maintained year-round and have been for at least three years. One **Satin Bowerbird** was particularly ambitious and had three bowers under a prickly acacia for at least two years. She noticed that now he had relaxed into only one bower. She and her husband Ben also have two or three newly established bowers popping up under bushes now and then. Often newly established bowers are trashed and the blue items stolen. Amazingly they have at least a dozen bowerbirds in residence year-round.

Flocks, including of migrating birds

As may be expected during the breeding season very few, if any, mixed feeding flocks or large flocks of single species have been reported.

During December and January please watch out for the inland spring/summer migrants mentioned above, as well as for the first for the **White-throated Needle-tails** and **Spine-tailed Swifts** to appear, and for any early summer 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



COG Members at Mt Mugga Mugga - November 2025 -
Hugh Sweatmann

COG Members taking a break - Yankee Hat - November 2024 -
Julie Hotchin



Summary of the 12 November meeting presentations

After the AGM **Dr Lucy Aplin**, Associate Professor at the Research School of Biology at the ANU gave a fascinating presentation on “**Clever Cockies: Innovation and urban adaptation in Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**”.

Using excellent slides with videos etc, Lucy’s presentation gave the audience a very interesting and broad introduction to her team’s Clever Cockies Program investigating the social behaviour, cognition and culture in urban **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**. We were very impressed by the vast scale of this program, including the amount of collaboration with other researchers as well as the extensive use of citizen science to obtain so much information in order to allow the studying of their behaviour as well as tracking their daily movements.

Lucy began by noting that the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** is one bird that has adapted and benefited from the highly modified urban environment. However, her tracking studies in Sydney using different markers including paint daubs, GPS and Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) tags, which can be attached by a simple touch on their back rather than capturing the bird, show that even in a highly urban environment they prefer to use the more natural part of the landscape.

Very interestingly, these studies showed that they visited the built part of these environments more often during the week than on the weekends, which clearly seems to be related to the amount of food they can obtain from city workers. The monitoring studies of individual birds also showed there is a very complex, hierarchical, very much male dominated, social structure/network.

Lucy also illustrated some results of her Canberra tracking studies using video to show their surprisingly limited (in scale) daily movement, as well as their loyalty to roost sites including how four different clusters use four different spots within the ANU roost to sleep overnight.

She then spent much time illustrating how in the urban environment Cockies have learnt to innovate, which is due to their very large brain compared with their body size, which they share with the **Australian Raven** but not the **Australian Brush Turkey** or the **Australian White Ibis**.

This allows them to solve quite complex problems. Lucy showed many examples of these to which her group was initially alerted by citizen scientists, for both foraging such as drinking from discarded cans and non-foraging purposes such as opening streetlights.

The most notable and widespread of these is Cockies learning to open rubbish bins to steal food (the audience really enjoyed her video showing the steps involved), which was initially discovered in Stanwell Park but has become widespread in the southern Sydney/Wollongong area. The spread of this behaviour has led to an ‘innovation arms race’ with local residents, with the Cockies learning to defeat quite a few of the many methods meant to deter them (again we loved the video of the Cocky pushing the heavy brick off the top of a bin).

The other very notable example is Cockies learning how to use bubblers for their morning and evening drink in Sydney’s western suburbs. This is quite a complicated procedure, again clearly illustrated by video, where they hold onto the stem and twist it with their foot, but then also have to lean with their whole-body weight to keep it open. Lucy noted this innovation is unlikely to spread as widely as the above as other parts of Sydney have very different water fountains.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members, many thanks to Lucy for giving up her very valuable time so soon after returning to Canberra to deliver this fascinating presentation on the Clever Cockies Program. Our very best wishes for its further success and we look forward to hearing more about the many exciting discoveries in the future, especially further results from tracking studies in Canberra.

Jack Holland



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Volunteers 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.

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.



White-naped Honeyeater - John Hurrell



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 2025 RECIPIENT OF THE STEVE WILSON MEDAL – *PHILIP VEERMAN*

At the Annual General Meeting on 12 November 2025 Philip Veerman was awarded the Steve Wilson Medal, following assessment by the Steve Wilson Medal Committee (Sue Lashko, Nicki Taws and Kim Farley).



PHILIP VEERMAN

Philip arrived in Canberra in August 1983 and quickly joined COG, already with a background in bird research and publication through his involvement with several bird organisations in Victoria and Queensland. Philip has a BSc (Hons) in zoology (1978) and in 1990 was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Resource Management, in part using the Garden Bird Survey (GBS) as subject material.

Philip served on the COG Committee between 1984 to 1989 and contributed regularly as conservation officer and GBS Coordinator from 1992 to 2002. He edited *Canberra Bird Notes* from 1986 to 1988, to which he has contributed many articles (and illustrations).

In 1988 Philip became involved with COG's Garden Bird Survey. He coordinated the project for many years, including building the GBS database, redesigning the chart, managing the data, and providing analysis. Philip has contributed 47 GBS charts (from home and workplaces). The publication of three editions of his reports on the GBS has gone around Australia and worldwide, along with many presentations, with broad acclaim. He was a major contributor to the *Birds of Canberra Gardens* book.



Philip's long contribution also includes participating in most of COG's surveys over the years (through ideas and field work). He contributed to the COG Atlas, from initial planning stages, to conducting many surveys, and involvement in the writing. He helped with many COG stalls, promoted and designed the winning "Capital birding" COG car window sticker, and he has participated in every annual Canberra Birds Blitz, featuring Castle Hill near Tharwa. Philip has led some COG outings and attended most COG meetings for 42 years, and shares expertise by giving talks and as a regular contributor to the Canberra Birds email Chatline.

Top: Philip at Lamington National Park, August 1997 - Maria Lukacs

Bottom: Philip at the 2025 AGM - Steve Read.

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 12 October – K2C surveys, Bredbo area

The spring K2C surveys were held on one of the ferociously windy days we suffered through in October. For any of the sites that were west-facing, the bird tallies were very low. The overall total was 79 species which was quite reasonable considering the conditions. Most of the spring migrants had returned with 4 cuckoo species, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Noisy Friarbird**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **White-winged Triller** all recorded at a number of sites. Of the threatened species, the number of sightings was on the low side with **Dusky Woodswallow** at 6 properties, **Brown Treecreeper** at 3, **Speckled Warbler** (3), **Scarlet Robin** (2), **Flame Robin** (2), **Hooded Robin** (2) and **Diamond Firetail** (2). No **Southern Whiteface** were recorded, a species which seems increasingly scarce, both in the ACT and wider region. Thank you once again to the volunteers who come time and time again, and those who have joined recently. Thanks also to the landholders for their continuing interest, and Bush Heritage for hosting us for lunch at Scottsdale.

Nicki Taws

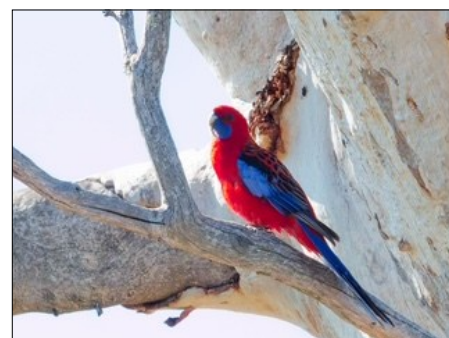
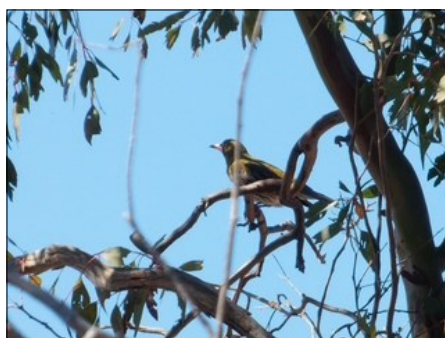
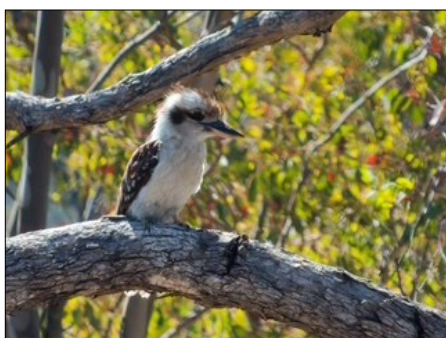
Sunday 2 November – Mt Mugga Mugga

Michael Robbins led a group of 16 from the lower car park on Mugga Lane to the top of Mt Mugga Mugga in humid conditions of 17 to 21 degrees. Immediately before commencing our relatively steep ascent, we saw two **Gang-gang Cockatoos** and an **Australian White Ibis** flying overhead. The ascent through the dry woodlands enabled sightings of many species, including **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Satin Bowerbird**, **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosella**, and many **Noisy Friarbird** and **Pied Currawong**; all were spooked when a menacing **Collared Sparrowhawk** spoiled the peaceful calm of the still morning. Silence at the summit was broken by two **Leaden Flycatcher** singing their playful tunes before we descended back down along the spur. **Olive-backed Oriole** could be heard around the lower sections of the hill, with one finally sighted after some persistent tracking, just prior to returning to the car park at around 10:30am. Smaller woodland birds included several **Superb Fairywren**, **Brown Thornbill** and several **Weebill**. There were 28 species in total.

Mark Tindale



COG members - Mt Mugga Mugga, ACT - November 2025 - *Hugh Sweatman*



Laughing Kookaburra, Olive-back Oriole, Crimson Rosella - Mt Mugga Mugga, ACT - November 2025 - *Tracey Oliver*

Sunday 9 November – Namadgi NP – Old Boboyan Road and Yankee Hat

On an initially cool, overcast and breezy morning, 22 members – some ‘brand’ new and many more experienced – set out on the newly constructed track to the Indigenous rock art site at Yankee Hat. We were greeted by hundreds of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, and later saw a Red-necked Wallaby and two pairs of Cunningham’s Skinks soaking up the sun on the rocks.

We started by walking a short way down Old Boboyan Road, where it was fairly quiet, apart from the calls of **Fuscous Honeyeaters** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**. We turned our attention to the open grassland to the right where **Diamond**



Firetails had been seen during the week, and after ten minutes or so we were treated to good views of a group of four foraging and moving about. We also had fine views of an active group of **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Dusky Woodswallows**, two **Fan-tailed Cuckoos**, and two male and a female **White-winged Triller** foraging on the ground.



While walking across the valley we observed a pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** performing display flights about the ridge line of the mountains, a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** hunting, and some were fortunate to catch sight of a **Swamp Harrier** as it flew over the swamp. Part of the group enjoyed fine views of the **Swamp Harrier** gliding over the swamp on the walk back. The wooded knolls and rocky outcrops in the valley held a variety of species. Highlights included **Scarlet Robins** in two locations, a pair of **Flame Robins**, and **Australasian Pipits**, while **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Striated Pardalotes** and **European Goldfinches** were all active.



Along the final section of the approach to the rock art site **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** were calling and two people in the group caught a glimpse of a pair of **Eastern Shrike Tits**. Despite the group waiting in the hope that they would return, it was not to be. A section of the new raised metal walkway provided just enough room for us to sit for a late morning tea or early lunch before walking back to the carpark. Here some heard an **Eastern Yellow Robin** calling or watched a **Willie Wagtail**.



In total 42 species were recorded, a good diversity for the location and conditions. Breeding records included a **Scarlet Robin** pair feeding a fledgling, a nesting **Willie Wagtail**, **Noisy Miners** feeding young and, while several occupied raven nests with young were seen, whether they were **Australian** or **Little Ravens** (both species were seen or heard) could not be identified. Our thanks to Evan Bitmead who did a fine job shepherding the group as leader for his first Canberra Birds outing and to Lia Battisson for recording the eBird list.

Julie Hotchin



COG members on new walkway - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - *Julie Hotchin*

Dusky Woodswallow - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - *Marcus Hellyer*
White-browed Woodswallow - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - *Trevor Costa*
Fuscous Honeyeater - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - *Marcus Hellyer*
Fan-tail Cuckoo - Yankee Hat, ACT - November 2025 - *Trevor Costa*



COG members & guests - Campbell Park, ACT - November 2025 - *Irene Lorbergs*

Sunday 16 November – Campbell Park nest workshop

Twenty-five members and guests, including two younger people as well as a visitor from Sweden, joined me for the twenty-third running of this annual event. It was a fine day and though a strong wind picked up it didn't detract too much as most of the far side of the park is relatively sheltered. Again, the emailing of the notes beforehand allowed me to largely dispense with the short spiel at the start, and we soon headed off towards the horse gate, where the main activity had been noted during the reccie a couple of days before. Sandra Henderson had kindly offered to help lead, but with the slightly smaller group we were able to stay together and share the duties.

As for the previous two years there was clearly reduced bird activity. While the Noisy Miner was very active around the car park and on the walk to the horse gate, unusually for this species no actual breeding activity was observed. Only the larger birds are able survive in this area and we first saw a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** pop its head out of a hollow, but then duck back in and not reappear, so we decided it was probably on eggs. A little further on, two were examining a nest hollow, and then an **Australian King Parrot** was first heard and then seen, but only the rear end of the group saw it appearing to be examining a nest hollow. This would be a rare breeding record for this species, with only two similar previous observations of this kind for this workshop, both fairly recently.

Luckily there were no more miners once we reached the horse gate, and where we saw our first other species breeding. A calling pair of **White-throated Gerygones** were soon followed to a well-hidden dome-shaped nest very close by and the birds were observed feeding young through the side-entrance, with most participants managing to get a reasonable look. Nearby was a **Noisy Friarbird's** deep cup-shaped nest (see photo) in which young were being fed, including a rather large cicada that one of the adults first bashed against a log. One, possibly two, **Grey Shrikethrushes**, also rare for this workshop, were calling nearby, and while they sometimes returned to a possible nest site it could not be found.



Noisy Friarbird's nest - Campbell Park, ACT - November 2025 - *Julian Robinson*

We walked further on to view the "kestrel" tree near the dry dam, and soon a pair of **Little Corellas** arrived, and though there was some low interaction with other species (not to mention allowing a good photo opportunity), no confirmed breeding could be observed, despite the tree's many hollows. On return to the horse gate a family of **Weebills** was spotted quite high in a gum, with dependent young seen being fed. Walking about another 150 m along the eastern fence, most participants finally saw a male **Rufous Whistler**, after hearing quite a few of them calling beforehand. Nearby a **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** appeared to be examining a possible nest site in a horizontal fork.



Black-faced Cuckooshrike at nest- Campbell Park, ACT - November 2025 - *Julian Robinson*

After morning tea at the horse gate, we headed west along the fence to inspect Sandra's mystery nest which turned out to be another **Noisy Friarbird** with an adult sitting. Nearby another **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** appeared to be examining a possible nest site. Also nearby was an old, very large **White-winged Chough's** mud nest, as well as a very rough small unoccupied stick nest which was possibly a **Red Wattlebird's**, though we didn't record this species during the morning.

No confirmed breeding activity was observed for other birds that usually nest there. **White-winged Trillers** were occasionally heard but the only one seen was a male briefly at the top of a dead tree. **Sacred Kingfishers** were also heard, but again only seen when one stayed briefly in a dead tree at morning tea. A **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was also heard, including near some possible hosts, **Buff-rumped Thornbill**. A quiet **Dollarbird** flew over a couple of times towards the end of the morning. Surprisingly only two **Grey Fantails** were observed, and only a few of the group saw the **Western Gerygone**.



Again, a number of species for which breeding activity has been observed in most or some years were not present. These include **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Leaden Flycatchers**, **Willie Wagtails**, **Olive-backed Orioles**, **Mistletoebird** or **Varied Sittellas**. A total of 33 species was seen on the morning, well down from previous years. Only 7 species were confirmed to be breeding at some level, equal with 2024 as the lowest ever and nearly 50% down on the previous low in 2023.

Participants continue to enjoy this very popular outing, and my thanks again to Sandra Henderson for helping lead the large group. In particular my sincere thanks go to Lia Battisson for keeping the eBird list, always very tricky with such a large number of participants. However, with the consistent decline in breeding activity at this spot over the past few years (for the second time there wasn't the usual hum of activity), the viability of this as a Nest Workshop continues to be questioned, though it remains a very good spot for a late spring outing.



Varied Sittella, Noisy Miner - Campbell Park, ACT - November 2025 - *Julian Robinson*

One positive aspect is that, after the mystery nest, Julian Robinson kept heading west along the fence to what he describes as a “quite birdy” spot where, being patient over time, he found some **Varied Sittellas** and a few of the other species we'd expected to see. He noted the area up the hill, and from there down to the back of the office block, seemed to be much more productive than our traditional area. Among the nests Julian found were a third **Noisy Friarbird** sitting, a pair of **Leaden Flycatchers** building a nest in the same tree as the friarbird, a **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** on the nest in a typical spot (see photo), and **Weebills** nearly finished building a nest down near the “kestrel” tree. Also, **Noisy**

Miners were non-stop feeding while he was there; he noted the attached photo shows why they are so successful if we compare what they were feeding their babies compared to other species!

So, this might allow an alternative spot, probably as part of a circuit, for future Nest Workshops.

Jack Holland

Wednesday 19 November – Denman Prospect Ponds

Fourteen of us set off around Holborow Avenue Ponds in Denham Prospect on a beautiful spring morning. It was lovely to welcome Claes from Sweden who had returned for another stint at the ANU. At first sight I did wonder if we would see any birds as there was a lot of building going on and not that many trees in sight. But we saw 35 species and 269 birds in all.

Parking is available in front of the smaller pond and from there we wandered across the dam and onto the larger pond. All in all, this is about 3 kilometres. The highlight was a **Black-fronted Dotterel** which was “muddling” around in some shallow water near the last pond. It was very obliging so we had good viewing.

A **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** and an **Australian Raven** were nesting and, surprisingly, a **Magpie-Lark** was spotted nesting on an apartment block balcony over the road. **Superb Fairywrens** were feeding their young and **Welcome Swallows** were carrying nesting material.

There were also the usual suspects including **Australasian** and **Hoary-headed Grebes**, **Australian Wood** and **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Superb Parrots**, **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas**, **European Goldfinches** and one **White-Faced Heron**.

Penny Moyes

Sunday 23 November – West Belconnen

After steady rain on Saturday night, the weather cleared for a pleasant and successful outing led by Lachlan Duncan. The small group met at Fassifern Pond in Dunlop, where the birdwatching got off to a great start. With **Australian Reed Warblers** and a **Little Grassbird** (not sighted) calling incessantly, 29 species were identified without taking a step.

Tree Martins and **Welcome Swallows** were flying overhead, while **White-faced Herons**, **Straw-necked Ibis**, **Galaha**s and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** were also seen further away. On the water, there was a small number of **Hardheads**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Eurasian Coots** and **Dusky Moorhen**, while **Australian Magpies** and a **Purple Swamphen** patrolled the bank. Both a **Little Black** and a **Little Pied Cormorant** were spotted. **Double-barred Finches** were seen at close quarters, with one making repeated trips over the water trailing nesting material. Other small birds included **Superb Fairywrens**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Red-browed Finches**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters**, **Red Wattlebirds**, **Magpie-larks** and a female **Rufous Whistler**.

A short walk along Dunlop Grasslands-Jarramlee Homestead Road yielded 18 species. The soundtrack was now provided by **Eurasian Skylarks** and **Rufous Songlarks** with occasional contributions by **Stubble Quails**, **Western Gerygone** and a distant **Pacific Koel**. **Australian Pipits** kept popping up while **Black-faced Cuckooshrikes**, **Pied Currawongs** and a **White-winged Triller** were also seen.

On reaching the gate which marked the ACT-NSW boundary, we turned left and started a longer walk through the Jarramlee-West MacGregor Grassland Reserve, with **Rufous Songlarks** still singing *a-twitchy-weedle* all the way. A pair of **White-winged Trillers** that was probably nesting was seen skirmishing with another male. **Dusky Woodswallows** were observed tending 2 recently fledged young, while another Dusky Woodswallow was found on its nest in a crevice of the bark of a dead tree. Several pairs of **Red-rumped Parrots** were seen along with **Crimson Rosellas** and **Eastern Rosellas**, with a pair of **Superb Parrots** providing a highlight. **Crested Pigeons**, **Willie Wagtails**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **Noisy Miners** were also seen. **Straw-necked Ibis** flew over in characteristic V-formation, and an **Australian Pelican** was sighted rising on a thermal in slow circles. A pair of **Brown Falcons** were spotted perched on a power pole in the distance, while a pair of **Nankeen Kestrels** were seen more closely.

Given that we were on the edge of Canberra, it was not surprising to see **Common Starlings**, **Common Mynas**, **House Sparrows** and **European Goldfinches** during the morning or to hear a **Common Blackbird** singing as we got back to our cars. But it was a pleasant surprise to have seen so many birds in the grasslands on our doorstep in West Belconnen. Thanks to Lachlan for organising!

Evan Bitmead



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Future Field Trips

COG Trips

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

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

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

Changes to trips are notified on:

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

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

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

Sunday 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 fence line 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 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

Wednesday 17 December – Cotter Bend and Cotter Avenue

Meet at 8.00am at Cotter Bend, parking at the campground end of Cotter Bend (drive into Cotter Bend, and make a sharp lefthand turn).

After a wander around the Cotter Bend area we'll walk up to Cotter Avenue and walk the Discovery Trail. Possible species include **Azure Kingfisher**, **Emu** and **Leaden Flycatcher**.

It's very easy walking at Cotter Bend, and just a few steps at the Discovery Trail. Wear sensible shoes, bring a hat, water, sunscreen. **Register** with Sandra (shirmax2931@gmail.com) with your name, mobile number and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

2026 field trips

Sunday 18 January 2026 - Warks Rd/Blundells Creek Rd

The plan for this outing is to walk down Blundells Creek Road and then along Warks Road, in particular to search for wet forest birds. This will involve a car shuffle so that we do not have to walk back up Blundells Creek Road. However, road closures, as have happened in recent years, may change these arrangements closer to the time.

We hope to see **Satin Flycatcher**, **Eastern Shrike-tit**, **Rose Robin**, **Rufous Fantail**, **Red-browed Treecreeper**, and at least hear **Pilotbird**, **Wonga Pigeon** and **Superb Lyrebird**, as well as see a variety of honeyeaters, whistlers and parrots.

Bring morning tea, lunch, plenty of water, a hat and wear suitable footwear for a downhill gravel road.

Departure time is 7.30am from Stromlo Forest Park Memorial carpark, off Swallowtail Road, Wright; the entry to the carpark is at the roundabout where Peter Cullen Way meets Swallowtail Road. Return time by about 2.30pm. Suggested contribution to drivers is \$10 per person; please bring the correct money.

Maximum group size is 16, so **please register** early at shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Wednesday 21 January – Mulligans Flat NR – night walk

Meet at 7pm on Eric Wright St in Forde. Our targets will be the night birds – including **Tawny Frogmouth, Bush Stone-Curlew** and **Southern Boobook** - as well as various mammals such as the bettongs and quolls. Bring a torch and wear sturdy shoes. Register with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 25 January – Gungahlin Cemetery and Norwood Park Crematorium

Both sites benefit from connectivity with Gungahler Grasslands Nature Reserve to the west and Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve to the south. They have ponds, extensive shrubberies, ground covers and mature trees which attract a wide variety of birds. Highlights recorded include **Grey Currawong, Sacred Kingfisher, Common Bronzewing, Dusky Woodswallow, Gang-gang Cockatoo, White-faced Heron** (breeding), **Superb Parrot** and **Red-browed Finch**.

Meeting time and place: 7.30 am at Norwood Park Crematorium off Sandford St, Mitchell. Take the first turn on the left as you go in and park there. We will spend about an hour here, then **carpool** to visit Gungahlin Cemetery. The trip should finish by about 10.30.

Bring a hat, water, sunscreen, morning tea and appropriate footwear.

Register with bsgraham1948@gmail.com with your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Bill Graham

Sunday 1 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR – World Wetlands Day

To celebrate World Wetlands Day, during this morning outing we will visit Kelly Swamp and Jerrabomberra Creek. Depending on numbers, the group may be divided into two, so a volunteer to lead a possible second group would be appreciated. Bring hat, sunscreen, water and, if you have one, a telescope. **Meet** at 7.30am in the carpark at the end of Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

NB: this walk is flat and is wheelchair-friendly.

Register at smlashko@gmail.com with your name, mobile number and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 8 February – Lake Tuggeranong: Town Centre & Isabella Pond Circuit

Description: This will be a relaxing amble around the Town Centre section of Lake Tuggeranong, before a very pleasant circular route along quiet paved paths to Monash Grassland and Isabella Pond - then back to Lake Tuggeranong. Isabella Pond often has a surprising range of wetland species (including **Pink-eared** and **Blue-billed Ducks** and the potential for rails and crakes). We'll also check progress on some re-vegetated storm channels along the route.

Meeting time and place: In front of Tuggeranong Library at 8:00am - plenty of parking opposite. The meeting point/time is also easy for people arriving by R4 bus at the Tuggeranong Terminus.

Walk details: A very easy flat walk of approximately 5 kms that may take 2-3 hours at birding pace. We'll follow marked paths with some short grass in urban parklands.

What to bring: Sun protection (very important as the majority of the route is exposed), water, morning tea and binoculars.

Registration: Please register with Mark Tindale by email (markjtindale@yahoo.com.au), no later than Friday 6 Feb. Participants should provide their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Mark Tindale

Sunday 15 February – Stromlo West Woodland

This is the first of four field trips to sites on Canberra’s Western Edge. For more information see: <https://conservationcouncil.org.au/western-edge/>

This woodland shares a long boundary with the old Uriarra Travelling Stock Reserve and together the two blocks form a corridor between the south western corner of Bluetts Block and the Deep Creek drainage line down to the Murrumbidgee. The woodland is part of Stromlo Forest Park, and while open to the public, is also fenced off from the Park by old pastoral fence lines. It has a rich flora of large trees, areas with a shrubby understorey and many wildflowers in spring and summer. The bird list of 104 species includes several ACT Threatened Species. Birds regularly recorded on the block in summer are **Leaden Flycatcher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous Whistler, Speckled Warbler** and honeyeaters and thornbills of multiple species. Sometimes we see **Grey Currawong, Common Bronzewing** and **Scarlet Robin**.

We will **meet at 8:00 am** at a carpark by Uriarra Rd. Wear sturdy shoes as there are no footpaths, and bring a hat and a drink as the weather may be warm.

Register with kimlouisefarley@gmail.com with your name, mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Once you register, Kim will send you information about the meeting point and a Google Maps link to get you there.

Kim Farley

Sunday 22 February 2026 – National Arboretum

The walk will start at 08:00 from the parking area for the Cork Oak Plantation. Soon after entering the National Arboretum, just starting up Forest Drive, turn right onto Cork Oak Rd, drive to the end and park. We will first explore ‘scrubby’ land before the Cork Oak Plantation, then the Plantation. Following this we’ll retrace our steps, then climb the (small) hill through the Himalayan Cedars to the “Wide Brown Land” sculpture. From there we’ll head to the STEP block (Forest 20), after which those who are interested can visit the cafe for appropriate refreshments and a chat, and others can return to their cars at Cork Oak Plantation.



The eight card designs:

- **Australian magpie** at the National Arboretum Canberra
- **Australian white ibis** at the National Carillon, Canberra
- **Bush-stone curlews** at Mulligans Flat Woolshed
- **Crimson rosellas** at the National Gallery of Australia Skyspace
- **Galahs** at the Balloon Spectacular
- **Gang-gang cockatoos** at City Hill
- **Rainbow-crested cockatoo** at Black Mountain Tower
- **Tawny frogmouths** at Shine Dome

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stuartmcmillen.com/shop

The outing will take about 2-3 hours. Water, sun hat and good walking shoes will be required.

Please register with Michael (mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au) and include your name, phone number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Michael Robbins

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.

Please register with Kathy Walter or John Goldie via email walter.goldie@gmail.com with your name, mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Kathy Walter and John Goldie



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Image credit: Alan Landford

Woodland Surveys – Spring 2025 survey round – compiled by Jenny Bounds

After a cold winter with temperatures dropping as low as minus 8, the spring survey period still had mostly cool mornings, varying from sunny to partly overcast, with some days rather windy.

Note: not all sites are reported.

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team did the quarterly survey on Sunday 28 September.

After several windy days in the week before, it was nice to have a calm and mild morning for the survey, with only patchy cloud. There was much bird activity at most sites, both species number and number of birds. Total species came to 62, an increase on recent years spring surveys (57, 54, 52 species for the previous 3 years).

As they gathered at the carpark entrance, several **Superb Parrots** flew over, 9 were later recorded on the west ridge during the survey. Most of the spring migrants were back, including **Rufous Whistler**, and both **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones** were calling. A few **Golden Whistlers**, locally migratory, were around. There was good movement of the migratory **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** from the north/north-east, numerous small groups passing through, including a group of 25 over the Woolshed; the honeyeaters were mostly moving on the western side of the reserve including the ridge abutting Forde. Also a few small groups of migratory **White-naped Honeyeaters** moving though on the way to the mountains. Highlights included a **Brown Goshawk** flying over, an **Owlet Nightjar** at site 21 on the eastern side of the reserve, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and **Pallid Cuckoo** calling, and **Scarlet Robins** at several sites, including a pair. Both **Aust. White Ibis** and **Straw-necked Ibis** groups were in the area. **Grey Currawong** and **Olive backed Orioles** also called. Eight **Pink-eared Ducks** were recorded on the large dam, these ducks now a regular sighting there.



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An interesting observation after the survey, as a few of the group waited at the Woolshed, a call which at first seemed like a Scarlet Robin song, but not the full song and not quite right. After investigation and chasing the bird down, it turned out to be a **Brown Thornbill** imitating a **Scarlet Robin**.

Goorooyaroo NR (southern area)

The spring survey in the southern half of Goorooyaroo was done by Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley on 25 September, in mostly sunny conditions although a strong cold north-westerly wind sprang up and continued all morning. The reserve was looking green after the recent rain, with dams mostly full and some creeks running. Wildflowers were reasonably plentiful, with Early Nancy particularly dense in some places, and two species of orchid in small numbers (Dusky Fingers and Golden Moths). They recorded a total of 54 bird species for the morning with 41 of those during the 10 minute counts at sites, quite similar to last year's totals of 51 and 39 respectively.

Amongst species recorded were three raptors, **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Nankeen Kestrel** and **Brown Goshawk**. Spring/summer migrants present were **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Tree Martin** and **Olive-backed Oriole**. Surprisingly, no friarbirds were recorded. Small birds were in fairly small numbers with **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**, **Brown-headed Honeyeater**, **Weebill**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Buff-rumped Thornbill** and **Grey Fantail** the most prominent. **Golden Whistler** and **White-eared Honeyeater** were both still present. **Speckled Warblers** were at site 8.

Mt Majura NR

The survey was conducted by Kathy Walter and John Goldie over 21 and 23 September. Weather was variable with clouds on the 21st and frosty, sunny weather on 23rd. 28 species were recorded over the course of the survey

with another 5 species between sites. Highlights included a **Brown Goshawk** at one of the sites, **Tawny Frogmouth** on a nest, a single **Superb Parrot**, **Grey Butcherbird** nests with young at two separate sites, and a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**. Cuckoos were prominent, with a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** also heard between sites.

Majura Defence Training Area

Kim Farley and Sue Beatty surveyed the sites at the Defence Training Area on the morning of the 24 September. Promisingly, **Rufous Whistlers**, a **White-winged Triller**, **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and **Dusky Woodswallows** were all heard and seen on the drive through to the main entry to the Training Area. However, only 30 species were recorded at the survey sites. Of interest were the multiple and vigorously singing **White-throated Gerygones** at all sites, **Rufous Whistlers** at all sites, **Buff-rumped Thornbills** at most sites (one bird seen carrying nesting material), and **Spotted** and **Striated Pardalotes** at most sites. There were very few **Weebills**, fewer than expected **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** and very few **Noisy Miners** anywhere. Just one **Common Bronzewing** was recorded. No cuckoos were heard or seen.

Between sites and as well as the species on the drive into the Training Area, a **Grey Currawong**, pairs and small parties of **Aust. Wood Ducks** in many places, and half a dozen **Little Ravens** were seen and heard. In an exotic pine shelterbelt near one of the sites what must have been a large flock of **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** was heard. Of particular interest between sites was a **Superb Parrot**, which flew across the vehicle track and perched in a tree. This is the first report of the species at the Training Area since Kim joined the survey in 2022.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

The spring survey at the lower slopes of Mt Ainslie was conducted on 28 September by Michael Lenz. The morning was mild with still to light wind conditions. Despite these good conditions song activity was still subdued. The area was quite dry, dams were either empty or contained only a small amount of water. The most widespread species across the 9 survey sites were **Crimson Rosella** and **Noisy Miner** (7 sites), followed by **Grey Fantail** (4). Spring arrivals included **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Shining** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Noisy Friarbird**, both species widespread, **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **White-winged Triller** and **Mistletoebird**. Other species of note, a **Brown Goshawk** calling from a known nesting area, 1 **Wedge-tailed Eagle** landing in the woodland, and a dark morph of the **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, feeding quietly in a large wattle. No indications of migrating honeyeaters, although a few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** seemed to be stationary and singing. Many small woodland species were absent (e.g. no **thornbills**) or present in only very small numbers. **Australian Ravens**, usually widespread across the area, were only encountered around the Office area. Several **Australian Wood Ducks** were seen in trees and a pair of **Pacific Black Ducks** circled low several times. A total of 45 species, 29 during the site counts, 16 between sites).

Newline


Sue Lashko did the survey on 20 September, a cool, sunny morning. The African Love Grass in the front paddock to the west of the track had been slashed as a fire control measure, and a brush cutter used to cut the boxthorn and blackberries to ground level, almost exclusively in site 2, leaving them to flourish everywhere else. All paddocks to the east of the track are occasionally grazed by cattle, except for one with clay spoil excavated from the War Memorial expansion.

This was the quietest spring survey with just 32 species recorded, compared to the usual 45 or more. The only migrants recorded were **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, as well as small groups of **Yellow-**

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headed **Honeyeaters** moving through the trees. Breeding activity was restricted to **Nankeen Kestrels** (copulating) and **Common Starlings** (carrying food). The only surprises were a pair of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, an unusual record for Newline and, by contrast, the lack of **Rainbow Lorikeets**, with just one pair recorded. Both **Grey Fantails** and **Superb Fairy-wrens** were abundant.

Tuggeranong Hill NR

Lia Battisson surveyed on Wednesday 1 October. The morning started out still and mild for the most part, but the wind came up towards the end of the morning and it became cooler. The most active sites were 2 and 3, with nine species each. On site 5 several species of small insectivorous birds were feeding frenetically in the shrubbery. The only breeding record was a begging young **Red Wattlebird**. Small numbers of **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were heard in several places, accompanied occasionally by **White-naped Honeyeaters**. Highlights of the morning were a couple of **Olive-backed Orioles** and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. In all, 30 species were observed, 22 during site counts and a further 8 between sites. These numbers are about average for Tuggeranong Hill in spring.

Naas Sites

Julie Hotchin and Steve Read conducted the spring survey on this rural leasehold south of Tharwa on 22 September. It was clear and cool initially, later becoming warm. The property was quite green throughout. In total they recorded 45 species, of which 37 species were in the six sites. The number of species recorded is slightly higher than last year (42) and in 2023 (31).

Highlights included good views of **Jacky Winter** active at two separate locations between sites, and hearing **White-winged Trillers** and a **Scarlet Robin**. Raptors seen were a pair of **Brown Goshawks** flying low and a **Nankeen Kestrel**, both at the first site. Spring-summer migrants present included **Western** and **White-throated Gerygones**, **Dusky Woodswallows**, **Rufous Whistlers** and a **Fan-Tailed Cuckoo**. Both gerygones were very vocal. Small groups of **Yellow-Faced Honeyeaters** were flying over. Other honeyeaters present were two **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, a single **White-eared Honeyeater** and a few **Noisy Miners**. Small flocks of **Little Corellas**, and **Crimson** and **Eastern Rosellas** were also active. Several **Grey Butcherbirds** were also seen, including one immature bird. Smaller birds seen or heard at most sites included numerous **Striated Pardalotes**, **Grey Fantail**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** and **Willie Wagtail**. Breeding activity included **Crimson Rosella**, **Galah** and **Striated Pardalotes** all active at hollows in the same dead tree, and a **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** in a hollow elsewhere. Several **Common Starlings** were also active around a likely nest hollow.



Superb Fairy-wren - October 2025 - Jarrah Joseph-Mcgrath

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:

Tom Searle
Bob Searle
Simon Abernethy & family
Sunny Wang
Rob Wilkinson & family
Rosemary Dupont

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for FEBRUARY 2026 edition:

Wednesday 28 January 2026

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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Gang-gang is published on COG's website in PDF format.

ISSN 2208-018X

