

# Gang-gang

Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc

Canberra Birds Newsletter

**JUNE 2026**



**Brown Falcon**, Wandiyali Environa Wildlife Reserve,  
NSW, 12 April 2026 **Photo: Marcus Hellyer**

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## JUNE MEETING

Wednesday 10 June 2026

7.30 pm

**Bugang Room, Denman Village Community Centre, 5 Felstead Vista, Denman Prospect**

As detailed below there has been a change in venue for the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG)/Canberra Birds monthly meetings for the first half of 2026.

Speakers for the 10 June meeting will be:

**James Klarevas-Irby - Long distance migratory and nomadic movements of large honeyeaters**

**Daniel Gowland - Beyond Survival: Recovery Breeding, Rewilding and Threatened Species Conservation**

### Temporary change of meeting venue for Canberra Birds

The Canberra Birds committee has decided to change the venue for our monthly members' meetings, at least until renovations of the Canberra Girls Grammar School's Multi-media Theatre are complete, expected in August/September 2026.

The new venue is the Bugang Room at the Denman Village Community Centre, located at 5 Felstead Vista, adjacent to the Denman Prospect shops (see Google Maps link <https://maps.app.goo.gl/NqW3XrN5jJf8dzRe9>)

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Meeting - 10 June  
*Everyone Welcome*

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This is a light, spacious, modern event venue with a kitchen. There is plentiful parking, under lights, close to the door and with several disabled parking spots outside the door. The room is on the first floor, accessed by two flights of stairs or by a lift.

To help guide you once there the Canberra Birds Sandwich Boards will be outside the front door and at the top of the stairs/lift.

For people attending the meeting by public transport, the R10 bus provides a very good service around every 15 minutes from the ANU through Civic to the Denman Prospect shops with the bus stop opposite the venue. For example, a bus runs to there from 6:57 to 7:23 pm and return buses at 9:05 or 9:35 pm arriving at the ANU at 9:31 and 10:01 pm, respectively.

The short presentation will be by **James Klarevas-Irby**, a Post-doctoral Fellow at the Research School of Biology at the ANU, on "**Long distance migratory and nomadic movements of large honeyeaters**"

James will present some of the first tracking data they have been getting from a few dozen **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds** that the Farine Group has tracked out of the ACT.

The main presentation will be by **Daniel Gowland** on "**Beyond Survival: Recovery Breeding, Rewilding and Threatened Species Conservation**".

Daniel will give a presentation exploring the work of the Priam Psittaculture Centre and the National Threatened Species Institute in the

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conservation breeding and recovery of some of Australia's rarest and most elusive fauna. The talk focuses on the **Eastern Ground Parrot**, **Orange-bellied Parrot**, Smoky Mouse, and other threatened species, examining the development of insurance populations, behavioural and reproductive research, and the practical realities of managing species on the brink.

The presentation examines how advanced aviculture, field ecology, genetics, behavioural research, and private-government collaboration are being integrated to support species persistence, ecosystem recovery, and future rewilding efforts.

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## News from the Committee

The Committee met for lunch and business on Sunday the 17th of May.

Since Covid, the Committee meets by Zoom—making this face-to-face meeting the first for some time. The lunch was great (and our committee business went off well too). Matters of interest we discussed in May:

- We are taking the first steps in updating some of our web content. This work follows on from the March update of the site's underlying software and the refresh of the site's look-and-feel. People from inside and outside the Committee will be involved in these updates.
- The 2026 Honeyeater Migration Survey finished on the 16th of May. Chris Davies says it was a good survey, supported by keen and committed volunteers who saw some interesting birds (as well as honeyeaters). See Chris's report on the survey on page 12 of this newsletter.

**Kim Farley. President, Canberra Birds**  
[president@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:president@canberrabirds.org.au)

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## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Membership payments become due from 1 July 2026 for the 2026/27 financial year. Please do not pay your membership until then.

New or renewing members should complete the online membership form which can found on our website and transfer payment to the Canberra Birds bank account.

The information from the membership form will be transferred to a database which will provide an ongoing up-to-date record of our members.

If you have any queries, please contact [prue.watters@gmail.com](mailto:prue.watters@gmail.com).

**Prue Watters**  
**Membership Officer**  
**April 2026**

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

In the close to 5 weeks from 24 April to 26 May covered by this column, the much drier and gradually cooling April weather, but with still only some light frosts, changed mid first week of May with a moderate rain event. Since then, the weather has continued to be often cloudy, with much higher overnight temperatures and two further moderate rain events. Possibly due to the excitement caused by 2 special “unusual” species my feeling was that bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) had picked up, which my analysis below partly supports. The spring/summer migrants mainly seem to have left at their usual time, though some of the altitudinal migrants have been slow to move in. Apart from 3 special species, reports of “unusual” species were similar to the low April levels.

### Highlights

There were three “unusual” species that drew much of the attention during the period.

The first and most significant was the **Spangled Drongo** first observed and photographed by Andrew Roberts at the Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve on 3 May. This was followed by many, many birders, up to 19 May, observing and photographing a medium size glossy black bird with distinctive forked “fish tail”, likely an immature bird with a still dullish red eye and speckled breast. In my experience this is a remarkably long period for this species to be recorded in the COG Aoi.

COG’s 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists this as a rare non-breeding vagrant, a coastal species regularly albeit sparsely recorded in the ACT since 2000. However, the only record on eBird since the start of 2019 was one bird in the ANBG from 2-4 May 2023, remarkably exactly 3 years before this one was first reported. However, I am aware of a likely but unconfirmed observation of one from near Gundaroo on 13 April, possibly the same bird.

It does raise the old question of how this bird managed to get here and from where it has come, with the nearest most recent report of a **Spangled Drongo** on eBird being from Long Nose Point to the south of Bateman’s Bay about 100 km away on 25 April 2025, over a year ago.



**Spangled Drongo**, Nadjung Mada NR, ACT, 2 June 2026,  
*James Churches*



**Brown Gerygone**, Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, ACT,  
13 May 2026, *John Hurrell*

The second species was the much more difficult to identify and less easily photographed **Brown Gerygone**, first reported (with photographs and a sound recording) from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve (JWNR) on 12 May by Zebedee Muller. He heard it first calling then saw it feeding very low in a mixed feeding flock (MFF) along the woodlands loop. This tiny busy bird is similar to a Brown Thornbill but with a white supercilium, grey face and brown back was often observed in a MFF since by other observers up to at least 24 May.

COG’s 2018-2019 ABR lists this as a rare winter visitor, a bird of the coastal forest, occasionally seen in the COG Aoi. Since then, this unique “reverse migrant” has only been reported from its favoured location, the rainforest

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gully in the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) in early May 2023 and late July-August 2024, with a couple of rare summer records from there in December 2023. There are also reports from the Bendora Rd that same month, as well as the Tallaganda State Forest in January 2023, but these are the first from the JWNR, at least since the start of 2019.

The third species was the **Spotted Harrier** first reported from the JWNR on 18 April in the previous period. However, it is often an elusive and unpredictable species, so many birders have taken advantage of the reasonably reliable observing of it often flying low and slow around the JWNR/Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant (FSTP) area to at least 23 May. Particularly in recent years it has been more commonly present, reported from over 20 locations since the start of 2023, including the West Belconnen Pond from where it was reported on 24 April, with a report from Macarthur on 12 May being a new location.



**Spotted Harrier**, CB's Photo Gallery 9 February 2014, *David Cook*

### Spring/summer migrants

Of the earlier leaving spring/summer migrant species still reported in the previous period, there have been no further reports of the **Satin Flycatcher** (last reported on 24 March), **Rainbow Bee-eater** (last reported on 26 March), **Australian Rufous Fantail** (last reported on 5 April), **Sacred Kingfisher** (last reported on 6 April), **White-winged Triller** (last reported on 10 April), **Leaden Flycatcher** (last reported 13 April) or **White-browed Woodswallow** (last reported on 18 April).

There have also been no further reports of the **Shining** and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos** (last reported on 19 and 22 April, respectively). The May Gang-gang report of the Wandiyali Environa outing on 12 April has clarified that the dark morph **Pallid Cuckoo** was in fact an immature **Sahul Brush Cuckoo**, making the most recent reports of these two species 14 March and 12 April, respectively. On the other hand, the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory of our local cuckoos, was still reported from 12 locations, the same number as the previous period.

The **Latham's Snipe** was last reported on 30 March, but the **Australian Reed-Warbler** was still reported from 8 locations (14 in the previous period), most recently on 15 May at the JWNR. Two **Fairy Martins** were still reported from the Upper Stranger Pond on 26 April (3 in the previous period), whereas **Tree Martins**, which usually stay longer, were still reported from 4 locations (8 in previous period), most recently from 3 of these on 25 April.

The spring/summer migrants which usually leave during April include the **Western Gerygone** which was still reported from the Callum Brae Nature Reserve on 2 May (7 locations in previous period), and the **White-throated Gerygone** from the Paddy's River TSR on 1 May (still at 18 locations in the previous period). The **Noisy Friarbird** was still reported from 5 locations (20 in the previous period) and was last one reported (heard) from the big dam at Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve on 24 May.

**Rufous Whistlers** were still recorded from around 18 locations (85 in previous period), **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes** from over 40 locations (over 100 in previous period) and **Grey Fantails** still from close to 100 locations. The **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Olive-backed Oriole**, were still reported from 24 and 10 locations (over 60 and 16 in previous period), respectively. Numbers of these five species will reduce greatly in June, though some will overwinter, as will some of the **Mistletoebirds** recorded from 20 locations (14 in the previous period) and **Superb Parrots** which were still recorded from over 75 locations (28 south of the lake) compared to close to 90 locations in the previous period.

So, during June please keep an eye out for the above spring/summer migrants which are still being reported but most usually leave during this month.

### Autumn/winter altitudinal migrants

Of the species that spend spring/summer the mountains and higher country but return to Canberra and its surrounds in autumn, **Scarlet Robins** were reported from over 50 urban/peri-urban locations (similar to the previous period). The

**Flame Robin** has moved in more slowly, reported from 17 such locations compared with 7 in the previous period. The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 6 urban/peri urban locations only (as for previous period), but again, there have been no confirmed **Pink Robin** sightings during the period, with the closest locations again being to the northeast of Melbourne.

The **Crescent Honeyeater** has not yet moved in, being reported from 8 locations (2 in the previous period) west of the Murrumbidgee River. **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** were reported from 5 locations (2 in previous period), one of which was urban/peri-urban (Rob Roy Nature Reserve on 23 May). Again, there was a report of an **Olive Whistler** only to the west of the Murrumbidgee River. There were reports from 2 such locations (4 in previous period) for the **Bassian Thrush**, with up to 2 birds observed at the ANBG from 24 April to 12 May.

See above for the reports of the **Brown Gerygone** at the JWNR. However, there have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** so far anywhere in the COG Aol, with the closest being around Sydney or across the border at Chiltern.

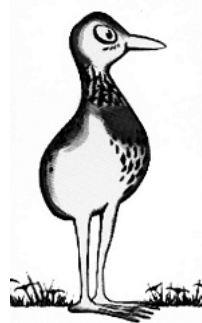
### Unusual species

Apart from the **Spangled Drongo** and **Spotted Harrier** described above, there were no “unusual” species reported from the COG Aol during the period that deserve special attention except that the high numbers of **Blue-billed Ducks** and **Doubled Banded Plovers** (see below) should be noted. There was a Lake Bathurst survey in May, so the results for waterbirds there have been compared with the March survey.

Again, there were no **Magpie Geese** or **Plumed Whistling Duck** reported during the period. **Freckled Duck** were reported from 4 locations during the period (1 in previous), with up to 6 ducks present at the JWNR throughout the period, as well as 6 at the adjacent FSTP on 3 May. There was also up to 44 ducks recorded on northwest Lake George but only 2 on the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (compared with 87 there as well as 6 on The Morass on 7 March).

**Australian Shelducks** were reported from 2 locations within the ACT (as for previous period) with 2 ducks on the big dam at the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve on 27 April, with 2 also reported from the Tidbinbilla Rd at Point Hut Rd on 19 May. Outside of the ACT this species was reported from 8 locations (7 in previous period) stretching from the northeast round to the southeast of the ACT, with the highest numbers easily being the 104 ducks on the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (plus 8 on the Morass, which compares well with the 59 and 62, respectively, on 7 March). The next highest was the 40 ducks at northwest Lake George on 10 May, with all other numbers being single figures.

**Blue-billed Ducks** were reported from 5 locations during the past month (3 in previous period), with up to 4 ducks reported from the Upper Stranger Pond where they were present to 15 May. Up to 3 ducks were reported from the JWNR on 23-24 May as well as up to 2 at the adjacent FSTP from 19-24 May, with 4 at the Greenwood Rd Murrumbateman on 23 May. However, easily the highest were the 507 (a significant percentage of the national flock) on the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (compared with just 4 on 7 March).



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*Good birding, good food*

**South West Western Australia**  
26 September to 5 October 2026

#### Plains-wanderer Weekends

17/18 October 2026

7/8 November 2026

21/22 November 2026  
limited to 6 participants

#### Wet Season birding, mammals, reptiles & butterflies

**Kutini – Payamu**

**Iron Range NP**

13 to 19 January 2027

**Small personal tours in the Deniliquin district, Victorian mallee, NE Victoria, Gippsland and the Melbourne area or anywhere you need to go to bolster your Australia list.**

Please contact Patricia Maher for information, itineraries and costing.

[enquiries@philipmaher.com](mailto:enquiries@philipmaher.com)

**Musk Ducks** were reported from 4 locations in the past month (2 in previous period), with a female duck again regularly reported from the Upper Stranger Pond. There was also a single duck on Rows Lagoon on 22 May, but again the highest numbers were the 29 from the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May, plus one duck at the Morass (this compares with exactly the same numbers on 7 March).

**Stubble Quail** were reported from 2 locations during the period (0 in previous) with 1 quail at the Acton Peninsula on 11 May and 3 well-described birds seen on the Majura Rd on 21 May. **Brown Quail** were reported from 9 locations (7 in previous period), with the maximum being 9 quail reported from the Tidbinbilla Rd Paddy's River on 4 May followed by 9 from the big dam at the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve on 16 May. A **Painted Button-quail** was reported from the Illoura Horse Paddocks (not recorded in the previous period) on 25 April but again no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

A **White-headed Pigeon** was photographed in Mawson on 21 May and Griffith on 25 May, but again no **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Brush Bronzings**, **Peaceful** or **Diamond Doves** were reported during the period. There were also no **White-throated Nightjars** reported.

No **Baillon's Crakes** were reported during the period (as for previous), and **Spotless Crakes** were reported from 2 locations (as for previous period), with up to 3 birds at the JWNR from 10 May and a bird heard at the Aprasia Park (Queanbeyan) on 12 May. However, there were no **Australian Spotted Crakes** reported during the period (2 locations in the previous).

**Buff-banded Rails** were reported from 3 locations (2 in previous period), with single birds from the JWNR from 9 May and the nearby Eyre St wetlands on 12-13 May. The other location was a rail photographed at the Aranda Snow Gums Nature Reserve on 25 April. A **Lewin's Rail** was heard only from the Yankee Hut car park and track on 25 April during the period (0 in the previous). The **Black-tailed Nativehen** was not reported during the period.

A remarkable report was the 36 **Double-Banded Plovers** recorded on the Lake Bathurst surveys on 17 May. The 2018-2019 ABR notes this as a rare non-breeding vagrant which migrates from New Zealand in the first half of the year, with nearly all sightings from Lake Bathurst. The eBird maps from the start of 2019 indicates that this number rivals the 52 and 33 birds seen by Michael Lenz and Frank Antrim, respectively, at the adjacent The Morass in July 2020 and the 32 by Michael Lenz at Lake Bathurst in May 2021. It has been reported from only one other location (2 birds on the Wologorang Rd in April 2022) during this period.

**Pied Stilts** were reported only from 3 spots on mid-west Lake George (2 locations in previous period) where a maximum of 100 birds were reported from the Badcoe VC Rest Area in May (about double the numbers in April). 29 **Red-capped Plovers** were only reported from the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (compared with 4 on 7 March).

No **Pacific Golden Plovers**, **Red-necked Avocets**, **Banded Lapwing**, **Australian Painted-snipe**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Sharp-tailed**, **Pectoral** or **Common Sandpipers** reported during the period. A **Caspian Tern** was reported from the JWNR on 27 April, but no **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Terns** were reported.

Seven **Great-crested Grebes** were reported only from the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (2 locations in previous period).. This compares with 20 there on 7 March, as well as 3 at the adjacent The Morass. No **Australian Little Bittern** or **Australasian Bittern** were reported during the period.

No **Little Egrets** were again reported during the period, but a **Plumed Egret** was reported from the Ginninderra Creek wetlands on 20 May (as for previous period). Again, in contrast **Great Egrets** were reported from 16 locations during the period (11 in previous), all but four within the ACT/Queanbeyan area.

Single **White-necked Herons** were reported from 7 locations (compared with 6 in the previous period). Up to

## Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 9 June

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



Come along any time between 9:30 and 11:00 on the second Tuesday of the month.

All welcome – experienced birders, new and would-be birders, locals and visitors.

Look for the table with the binoculars on it.

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8 **Royal Spoonbills** were reported from 8 locations during the period (7 in previous), and **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 7 locations (one in previous), with the 10 birds at the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May easily the highest (12 there as well as 9 on The Morass on 7 March). No **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.

Single **Eastern Barn Owls** were reported from 3 locations during the period (4 in previous), again all heard at night; 1 in Symonston on 17 May and the others south (also on 9 May) and west of Gundaroo on 30 April. A **Powerful Owl** was heard at the Bendora dam on 10 May. **Black-shouldered Kites** were reported from over 20 locations in the period, a slight rise from the 16 in the previous period.

A **Grey Goshawk** was reported from Casuarina Sands on 9 May. **Black Kites** were reported from 2 locations during the period (as for previous), 2 each at Commonwealth Park and at the JWNR, both on 10 May. A **Black Falcon** was reported only from Breadalbane on 16 May (1 location in previous period). The increased number of **Spotted Harrier** sightings is discussed above but **Pacific Baza** were not reported from anywhere in the COG Aol during the period.

**Azure Kingfishers** were reported from 4 locations (up from 2 in the previous period) during the period with 2 birds at the Cotter Reserve on 30 April and 1 May, and a single bird at the nearby Casuarina Sands on 2 May. There was also a single bird at Point Hut on 25 April, and at the Bendora dam (a new location) on 10 May. No **Red-backed** or **Forest Kingfishers** were reported during the period.

No **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** or **Cockatiel** were reported during the period. **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 3 locations (4 in previous period), 6 birds were photographed foraging on flowering gums in the very early morning of 26 April near the Kingsford Smith School in Holt, as well as 1 bird in Garran on 27 April, and 1 in the Callam Brae Nature Reserve of 8 and 13 May. However, no **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted**, **Little** or **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were reported over the period.

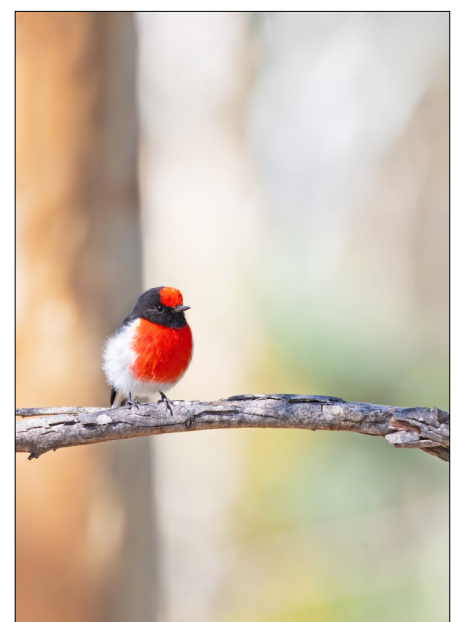
Two **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were again reported from the known location at the Rock Valley homestead in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on 10 May. **White-fronted Chats** were reported from 3 locations in the period (1 in previous), with 21 and 11 birds at the Holborow Ave Ponds on 26 and 27 April, respectively. There was also a single bird seen feeding on the ground with **Diamond Firetails** near the northern boundary fence of the Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve on 11 May as well as 6 birds on the Lake Bathurst survey on 17 May (compares with 13 on 7 March).

**Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from 5 locations (as for previous period) within the previous boundaries, with the 4 birds in Higgins on 3 May and in Garran on 12 May being the maximum numbers. However, no **Singing**, **Scarlet**, **Lewin's**, **Brown**, **Striped** or **Painted Honeyeaters**, **Little Wattlebirds** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period.

A very elusive **Australasian Figbird** was again reported from Symonston on 2 and 24 May. See above for reports of the **Spangled Drongo** at the Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve. **Red-capped Robins** were reported from 4 locations (3 in previous) with up to 2 birds regularly reported from the Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve. A single bird was reported from Bracks Hole Fire Trail over the period, with the other known locations being one bird at the Vanitys Crossing Rd on 3 May and the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve on 21 May.

No **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren**, **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Apostlebird**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finches** were reported during the period.

**Jacky Winters** were reported from 8 locations over the period (double the previous) with 2 birds at the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve on 1 May (and 1 on 25 May), and a single bird at the Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve on 22 May. Other known sites were a single bird from the Smiths Rd near Nass Rd on 11 May, a remarkable 6 birds at the Top Naas Rd on 24 April (and 1 on 20 May), 2 birds at the Glendale Depot on 23 May and a single bird on the Yankee Hut carpark and track on 28 April. New locations were 2 birds at Karool (south of Michelago) on 26 April and 4 birds at the Strike-a-Light TSR on 29 April with 2 there on 2 May.



**Red-capped Robin**, Bracks Hole, ACT, 3 April 2026, *Julian Robinson*

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**Hooded Robins** were reported from 6 locations (4 in previous), all to the south of Canberra, with up to 4 birds at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd throughout the period, up to 3 birds at the nearby Top Naas Rd from 24-27 April, 3 birds, including an immature male, at the Yankee Hut carpark and track on 25 April, and 2 birds at the Strike-a-Light TSR on 29 April. New sites were single bird at the Murrumbidgee River at Colinton on 24 April and an unknown number at Lyons Creek in the southeast corner of the Tinderry Nature Reserve on 17 May.

**Restless Flycatchers** were reported from 5 locations over the period (well up from 1 in the previous). From known locations there was 1 bird at the Top Naas Rd on 26 April, 1 at the Yankee Hut carpark and track from 23-28 April and one at the Nelanglo TSR on 29 April. Of the new locations one was heard on the Bicentennial National Trail on the northwest ACT border on 27 April (the only bird close to Canberra) and up to 2 birds were photographed at the Strike-a-Light TSR from 29 April to 15 May.

The **Brown Treecreeper** was reported from 7 locations during the period (well up from 2 in the previous), with most interesting being the bird reported from The Pinnacle Nature Reserve on 24 April and 22 May, extending the recent sightings from there and the nearby Kama Nature Reserve. Known sites include 3 birds were reported from the Nelanglo TSR on 27 April and 2 May, up to 3 birds at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd throughout the period, a single bird at the nearby Top Naas Rd on 26 April and up to 3 birds at the Strike-a-Light TSR on between 27 April and 15 May. New locations were 2 birds at Karool (south of Michelago) on 26 April and 4 birds at the Murrumbidgee River at Colinton on 24 April.

Apart from the three special birds, reports of “unusual” species remained low over the period with again very few reports of pigeons/doves, parrots and honeyeaters and other passerines. However, the uptick in reporting of the 4 formerly “special” species is very encouraging, though they do seem to be easier to find out of the breeding season.

## Breeding

Apart from the **Sahul Brush Cuckoo** and **Hooded Robin** above no special late autumn breeding has come to my attention.

## Flocks, including of migrating birds

Mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) have continued to be observed. Two of mine were ground MFFs containing both **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**, with one at Narrabundah Hill on 12 May containing 9 (3 males) of the former and a male of the latter together with 8 **Superb Fairy-wrens**, 5 **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and 5 **Red-browed Finches**. The one on Cooleman Ridge on 15 May also had 9 **Flame Robins** (6 males) and a pair of **Scarlet Robins**, with 4 **European Goldfinches** the surprise species.

So, in June please keep an eye out for the last MFFs which will start to break up as breeding commences. Watch out also for pure flocks such as of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** of which there have been very few in my local patch of Chapman, Rivett, Narrabundah Hill and Cooleman Ridge.

By now the honeyeater migrating season will be over and I expect a report on the 2 months of surveys for them will be elsewhere in this issue.

During the first month of winter please watch out for the last of the departing spring/summer migrants mentioned above, and for more of the returning autumn/winter altitudinal migrants, MFFs and single species flocks, as well as roosts and roost flights. 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*

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## Summary of the 13 May meeting

The short and very interesting presentation was by Esha Shekar on “Intensity of Nest Defence of **White-Winged Choughs** in Urban Versus Natural Habitats”. Esha delivered this very well with clear slides that included the use of small videos to illustrate points, and particularly with good humour.

She began by noting that theory suggests that defending of the nest depends on the value of the offspring, and that while urban nests may take less effort to build due to the higher availability of materials, this may leave more energy for their defence as more predators might be expected.



**White-winged Chough**, CB's Photo Gallery,  
*Geoffrey Dabb*

However, this paradox has not been resolved, so Esha tested it on the well-studied population of **White-winged Choughs** in the inner north of Canberra using 9 urban nests in the suburbs and 12 “natural” nests in the adjacent nature reserves. The main predators selected were the **Pied Currawong**, **Australian Magpie**, **Australian Raven** and **Laughing Kookaburra** with the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** also added for its nuisance value.

Defence was recorded within a 50 m radius of a nest and divided into 3 methods; chase, fight or on guard with a display threat (Esha clearly illustrated these by short videos) at 4 stages of the breeding cycle; pre-laying, incubation, and feeding of small in, and then large chicks nearly out of, the nest. This allowed checking of how and when most defence occurred.

The results from the 13 nests (7 urban, 6 natural) completed to fledging supported the theory that urban nests are more highly defended, including due to a higher presence of predators, and thus required the investment of more energy to do so.

The **Pied Currawong** was by far the main predator, followed by the **Australian Magpie**, but with no raven or kookaburra predation found. Defence increased during the incubation phase, and then further with small young (with one bird often staying on guard at the nest), but decreased 30% when the chicks were close to fledgling.

Once again, on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Esha for giving her very interesting presentation on the nest defence of a species with which we are very familiar. Please accept our very best wishes for the successful completion of her PhD studies on Australian Honeyeaters and we look forward to a presentation on these when they are further advanced.

The main and also very interesting presentation was by Rainer Rehwinkel on “The Birds of the Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs) in the Bungendore and Braidwood Districts”. The interest in this topic was very clear from the large audience.

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At the start Rainer noted how TSRs are very important for conservation purposes. Many contain critically endangered ecological communities, and they provide reference sites for these communities due to retained habitat because of prior management.

They also provide habitat for the typical birds of those communities, and the aim of his surveys, part funded by the Molonglo Conservation Group and the NSW Environment Trust, was to explore the bird communities in the TSRs, including their structure and diversity and why these differ.

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The TSRs chosen were Sweeneys, Gidleigh Lane, Brooks Hill, Doughboy, Reedy Creek and Duck Flat, all to the east of Queanbeyan. Rainer outlined that they contain a range of different vegetation compositions and structure and with differing adjacent habitats and connectivity. This allowed the possible analysis of why species were rich in some TSRs but not in others.

He surveyed each on foot at least once (often multiple times) each season over 4 consecutive years (spring 2019 - winter 2023) using the eBird Travelling “complete checklist” protocol including all seen and heard species at any distance. This method also measures the distance travelled and time taken and thus would allow some simple statistics. Rainer also rotated the time surveys were done, thus removing any time-of-day bias.

This method allowed the measurement of Frequency - how often a species is reported on complete checklists within a site; as well as Abundance - the average number of birds reported on all checklists; both over a specified date-range and over the region as a whole.

A total of 89 species were observed over this period with interestingly only 1 **Scarlet Robin** (and no Flames) ever recorded, as well as only a few **Red-browed Finches** and no other finch species.

In terms of Frequency the **Australian Raven** followed by the **Striated Pardalote** topped the list for the first year, but this changed to the **Australian Magpie** and the former over the 4-year period, over which the **Noisy Miner** and the **Australian Magpie** were the most Abundant. Rainer also highlighted the effect of the **Noisy Miner** on bird species.

Some further analyses raised the following questions:

Why do some reserves have higher populations of miners and/or aggressive and predatory species relative to other reserves?

Why do some reserves have higher species richness and population sizes of small birds relative to other reserves?

What are the environmental factors that influence the relative species richness and population sizes of the sets of species that occur in each reserve? and;

What management interventions can be put into place to enhance the habitats for “desirable” bird species?

Once again, on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members, many thanks to Rainer for giving this very interesting presentation on his bird surveys in TSRs within the COG Area of Influence, many of which were not well known to attendees. We look forward to the publication of the results in a future edition of Canberra Bird Notes which will allow us to examine his species lists and statistics more closely.

We would also like to thank Rainer for all the help and work he has done over many years assisting COG/Canberra Birds, in particular with flora surveys.

**Jack Holland**



**Striated Thornbill**, Nursery Swamp,  
Namadgi NP, ACT, 10 May 2026,  
*Tee Tong Teo*

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## Honeyeater Survey 2026—Thanks, and Summary

The 2026 survey covered 9 sites on the 11, 18 and 25 April with four of the sites also covered on 14, 21 28 March, 4 April and 2, 9 and 16 May, resulting in 51 surveys.

This was a great effort and many thanks to all those involved.

A brief summary of the results is as follows:

There were many less migrating honeyeaters in 2025 and 2026 compared with 1997.

Comparing 2025 with 2026, there were more Yellow-faced honeyeater and less White-naped honeyeaters and Red wattlebirds in 2026 than in 2025 but the total number of all species was slightly higher in 2026.

The migration at virtually all sites started after April 4 and had decreased considerably by May 2 with Gigerline A (Tharwa Sandwash) being an exception in the number of bird passing and the extent of the migration period

For 2026 the peak of migration was during the 18 April count which was similar to previous surveys and could suggest that there has been no extension of the migration period.

I am planning to present a summary of results at a Members Night at a date to be arranged, with a full report of both the 2025 and 2026 surveys to be published in Canberra Bird Notes.

**Chris Davey**  
(Project coordinator)



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Image credit: Alan Landford

## Field Trip Reports

### Sunday 10 May - Nursery Swamp, Namadgi NP

The group of fifteen who joined the walk to Nursery Swamp couldn't have asked for a better morning on which to set forth – it was sunny, warm and still. It seems that nobody informed the birds though, as they were for the most part unobtrusive, heard rather than seen. So this was an opportunity for us to test our hearing and call recognition.

An area with *Banksia marginata* and Black Salleees (*Eucalyptus stellulata*) at the start of the trail offered a promising start to the day. A male **Satin Bowerbird** in glossy black plumage was active in the canopy and a group of **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** flew in and landed in the bare branches of a dead eucalypt. The calls of **White-eared Honeyeaters** accompanied us as we ascended the steep incline at the start of the walk; this was the most numerous species seen or heard all day. Other species viewed on this early stage were a pair of **Eastern Yellow Robins** showing nicely as they flew about, and a **Grey Currawong**, which was seen by several in the group.

Morning tea was taken amidst a group of Narrow-leafed Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*) and Ribbon Gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). This area was burnt by fire in 2020 and is now characterised by dense regrowth. While walking along a path framed by Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) we heard **Grey Shrike-thrush**, a couple of **Golden Whistlers**, **Superb Fairy-wrens** and **White-browed Scrubwrens**, and paused to admire a fine **Candlebark** (*Eucalyptus rubida*) with its red bark. As we approached the swamp, a couple of **Crescent Honeyeaters** were heard calling from the opposite side of the trail. Lunch was enjoyed in the shade of a grove of Black Salleees affording fine views of the landscape over Nursery Swamp, a fen at 1100 metres, framed by granite rocky outcrops.

The return walk was quiet; few birds were heard, the most notable being a **Superb Lyrebird** calling. A second and final burst of activity was observed near the end of the walk with a very active female **Golden Whistler** and two **White-eared Honeyeaters**, one of which was disgruntled at the presence of a trio of **White-naped Honeyeaters** and chased them out of the area. A total of 22 species was seen or (mostly) heard.

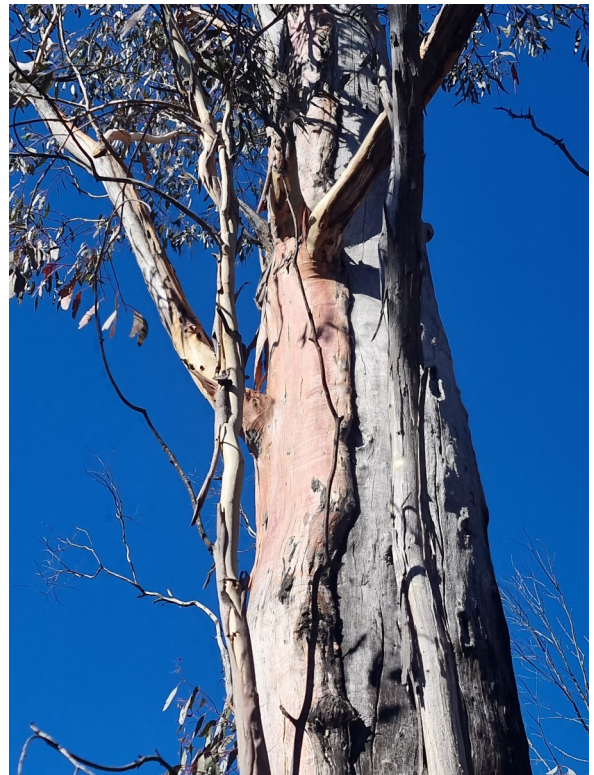
David Dedenszuk ably led the group, pointing out many things of interest along the way, such as the Jumping Jack ants - with a warning about their fearsome and painful bites. Our trip leader (or in this instance follower!) Michael Robbins brought up the rear, from where he pointed out plants of interest, including native raspberry, Woolly Grevillea, themeda and more.

Our thanks to Michael for organising the outing, David for leading the way and to Elliot Overs for recording the eBird list (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S336012959>).

Julie Hotchin



David Dedenszuk showing Jumping Jack Ants, Nursery Swamp, Namadgi NP, ACT, 10 May 2026  
Julie Hotchin



Candlebark Eucalyptus, Nursery Swamp, Namadgi NP, ACT, 10 May 2026  
Julie Hotchin



Members at Nursery Swamp, Namadgi NP, ACT, 10 May 2026, *Tee Tong Teo*



**Double-barred Finch**, Gossan Hill, ACT, 20 May 2026, *Sandra Henderson*



**Grey Currawong**, Kama NR, ACT, 24 May 2026, *Sandra Henderson*

### Wednesday 20 May – Bruce Ridge and Gossan Hill

Fourteen new and not-so-new Canberra birders met at CIT Bruce on a warm, sunny morning after a couple of days of drizzly rain.

We crossed the road into Bruce Ridge and immediately noticed several **Australian Wood Ducks** in the trees, along with **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** and **Galahs**. The search for hollows seems to be in full swing, with both rosella species and **Rainbow Lorikeets** also surveying the available real estate ahead of the nesting season. Most of us heard **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**, but few managed to see them through the trees.

We crossed to Gossan Hill on the other side of Haydon Drive, and almost immediately came upon a group of **Double-barred Finches**. We watched these birds for some time, as they gradually moved along the edge of the reserve. **Red-browed Finches** were much more elusive, but we eventually managed to see four of them. A single **Scarlet Robin** drew my attention back in the bushes, but it flew immediately. A couple of **Golden Whistlers** showed nicely, as did **White-throated Treecreepers** next to the track. Our route was cut short to avoid some large groups of school students, and it was surprising to see very few parrots on Gossan Hill.

**Sandra Henderson**

### Sunday 24 May – Kama NR

The outing was run on a warm, cloudy, still morning - perfect for bird watching. Meeting at 8:00am, over 3 hours we slowly ambled through the upper wooded section of the Reserve. A small group of 9 members and friends recorded 40 species of which the highlights were **Scarlet** and **Flame Robin** seen from the carpark, a pair of **Superb Parrots** in the buffer zone with the suburb of Whitlam, and a pair of **Grey Currawong**. Unusual for the Reserve was a single **Satin Bowerbird** flying over with a

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pair of **Magpie-larks** ensuring it did not settle. Mobs of Grey Kangaroo were evident within the Reserve which was due to close the next day as part of the ACT kangaroo culling program.



The buffer zone between the Reserve and the ever-expanding suburb of Whitlam is undergoing a major revegetation program of tree planting, with a large area scraped and about to be sown with native grasses and forbs. This area will be worth keeping an eye on as the vegetation matures.

Many thanks to the participants for a most enjoyable morning, to Sue Lashko for taking a new member under her wing, and to Lia Battisson for compiling the eBird checklist.

**Chris Davey**

**White-eared Honeyeater**, Kama NR, ACT, 24 May 2026,  
*Sandra Henderson*



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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 June - Mt Taylor NR

**Meet** at 9am at the Mt Taylor Reserve bitumen carpark near traffic lights and roughly opposite Mannheim Street on Sulwood Drive, Kambah. This is a one-way carpark - if coming from the south you'll need to drive up the northern end of the carpark to enter it (where the traffic signs say 20 km/hr). It is also possible to park in Gouger St, Torrens and walk for 10 minutes directly west to meet us on Sulwood Drive.

We will walk all the way around the Mt Taylor Base Loop starting on the Sulwood Fire Trail. There is no need to climb to the summit. Our loop mostly follows fire trails with quite a few ups and downs and some narrower tracks on rockier ground, over a distance of about 5.5km. We aim to finish before 12 noon.

Recent e-bird listings show thornbills, whistlers and honeyeaters.

**Please register** with Judi on [JudithPaulM@gmail.com](mailto:JudithPaulM@gmail.com) and include your name, phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

### Saturday 13 June – Superb Lyrebird survey – Tidbinbilla NR

Since the January 2003 bushfires we have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. We wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members to join us for a morning's survey. We are calling for expressions of interest to join us at 8.00am at the Reserve car park to walk the trails and to record the location of calling birds. Depending on the trails walked the survey should take about three hours.

This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted at this time of the year since 2004. For previous survey results see *Gang-gang* p11, July 2023.

Note that both outing leaders will be overseas between 9 May and 8 June. If interested and for further details please contact Sue Lashko by email [smlashko@gmail.com](mailto:smlashko@gmail.com)

**Chris Davey and Peter Fullagar**

### Wednesday 17 June - Diddams Close, Lake Ginninderra

**Meet at 9am** in the parking area (turn right after turning into Diddams Close from Ginninderra Drive). Much of this walk follows the lake shoreline. It usually produces a variety of waterbirds, and the bush on the other side of the path will have some bush birds. Please register with Sandra ([shirmax2931@gmail.com](mailto:shirmax2931@gmail.com)) and please include name and number of an emergency contact.

**Sandra Henderson**

### Sunday 21 June - Murrumbidgee Discovery Track Section: Point Hut Crossing to Pine Island

My reason for putting on this outing was to draw to birders' attention not only the importance of "The Western Edge", but it's also

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important to remember planning 26 or so years ago when “West Murrumbidgee” was considered as a possible “new town’ for the ACT. Fortunately, “Molonglo” was chosen as the next new town.

I’d thought to show members the paddocks south and west of Point Hut Crossing, and birds which use these and that part of river. However, although the style I’d remembered from early 1980’s is still there, the paddock nearest Point Hut has been ploughed, and I assume sown, and the paddock to the south of the style has cattle in it, making the route inappropriate.

As a result, this outing will follow the track **north** of Point Hut to Pine Island, as there are ‘good’ birds along that part of river, and I can still point out to attendees what was planned as “West Murrumbidgee”.

**Meet at 9.00am** in the Point Hutt Crossing carpark for an easy walk of 2.4 km between carparks or 3.3 km to the middle of Pine Island. **Register** at [mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au](mailto:mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au) with your name, mobile number and the name and number of an emergency contact.

**Michael Robbins**

### Sunday 5 July – Strathnairn to Shepherds Lookout

The track passes through the Ginninderry Conservation corridor and will cover various vegetation types including grasslands, Yellow Box/Red Gum/Scribbly Gum woodlands and Black Callitris Forest, so a good variety of birds should be on offer. For those seeking further details about the walk see <https://www.ginninderry.org/corridor-walking-tracks> For those in need of a cuppa after the walk, coffee and cake should be available at the Stepping Stone Café located next to the carpark.

**Meeting time and place:** the outing will start at 8:00am at the carpark located behind The Link (-35.232682 148.995186). Do not park at The Link for that is reserved for Ginninderry Trust employees.

Walk details: the walk will take approximately 2 ½ hours and will follow a purpose-built track linking The Link at Strathnairn to Shepherds Lookout. The grade 3 track will involve steps and some steep sections so appropriate walking shoes will be required.

**Please register** with Chris ([daveychris12@gmail.com](mailto:daveychris12@gmail.com)) and include your name, phone number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

**Chris Davey**

### Sunday 19 July – Nanima TSR

Check website for details

**Bill Graham**

**Advance notice of a longer trip to the NSW Central West/Northern Slopes, where early registration is advised.**

### Macquarie Marshes and Binnaway – a trip in two parts

#### Part 1: Monday 28 September to Friday 2 October – Macquarie Marshes

#### Part 2: Friday 2 October to Wednesday 7 October – Binnaway area

On this trip we will be exploring the area around the little town of Binnaway in central NSW on the Castlereagh River. We’ll be based in a private property that is a native plant nursery a few minutes out of town.

The trip will take place over the October Labour Day weekend, which hopefully will give working people an opportunity to participate.

Binnaway is around six hours drive from Canberra. We’ll aim to arrive on the afternoon of Friday 2 October and leave early on Wednesday 7 October. People are of course welcome to arrive later or leave earlier.

The itinerary is loose at the moment but will likely include:

A day exploring the property, which is a haven for honeyeaters.

A day exploring the Binnaway region.

Day trips potentially to Coonabarabran, the Warrumbungles and/or the Pilliga.

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There is space to camp on the property. There is a small number of bedrooms in an unoccupied second house on the property which can be claimed by whoever gets back to me first. There is also affordable accommodation in Binnaway at the Railway Heritage Barracks: <https://www.facebook.com/binnawayrailwaybarracks2395/>

Binnaway sits near the boundary of the Great Dividing Range and the western plains and is on the Castlereagh River so there should be a good variety of birds. It will be spring so there should also be a good selection of returning migrants. It's also wildflower season and our hosts are wildflower experts so we should get good tips on the best sites to visit. The number of participants will be capped at 16.

But wait, there's more! Before Binnaway I'll be visiting the Macquarie Marshes, which are a huge Ramsar wetland in northern NSW. I'll be camping at Willie Retreat, a cattle station on the edge of the marshes that offers powered (\$40) and unpowered campsites (\$30) and bathroom facilities: <https://willieretreat2824.wixsite.com/willie-retreat>

There's meant to be good birdwatching at Willie Retreat itself, with **Brolgas** and **Glossy Ibis** and even sightings of **Australasian Bittern** and **Australian Painted Snipe**. However, staying there provides access to several other great activities in the marshes:

It's about 20 minutes' drive from Burrima Boardwalk. Built by local landowners and conservationists, the 2km long boardwalk allows you to walk out into the marshes. It's a great spot. I visited about four years ago and have been wanting to go back ever since. The cost per car is \$25 but I think you can get multiple visits for that: <https://burrimamacquariemarshes.com/>

Macquarie Marshes kayak tours. These guided paddling tours get you out into the middle of the marshes, which are normally inaccessible. The price for a 2 ½ hour paddle is \$150: <https://www.macquariemarsheskayaktours.com.au/>

NSW NPS Macquarie Marshes wading and walking tour. As the name suggests, this is a walk through the marshes themselves where you get wet... This activity costs \$30: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/guided-tours/macquarie-marshes-wading-and-nature-walk>

The kayak and wading tours are only held in spring. The wading tour is not offered every day and it looks like Tuesday 29 October is the only date that will work for us. It's up to you to book accommodation and activities for yourselves but I'm planning on the following itinerary:

Monday 28 Sept: drive to Willie Retreat, probably via Parkes (around 7 hours).

Tuesday 29 Sept: wading/walking tour in morning, Burrima boardwalk in afternoon/evening and spotlighting.

Wednesday 30 Sept: morning kayak tour. There is also an afternoon/evening one which I might do as well. There are only four participants in each session (six if we go as a group) so don't leave booking until the last minute!

Thursday 1 October: general birding including Burrima boardwalk.

Friday 2 October: relocate to Binnaway via Gilgandra, which has some birding opportunities (around 3 hour drive).

You are very welcome to just do the Macquarie Marshes or the Binnaway half of the trip.

Of course, everything will depend on the fuel situation. We had to cancel the planned Easter camping trip to western NSW earlier this year due to fuel shortages and uncertainty. Hopefully we'll have better luck this time. It probably makes sense to carpool if possible. I can fit one or two people and their gear in my ute, but you would need to work with my itinerary. I can also put people looking to carpool in touch with each other.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me on 0418 264 868 or at [pickelbarrel@gmail.com](mailto:pickelbarrel@gmail.com)

**Marcus Hellyer**



- The eight card designs:
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  - **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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## 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:

Amanda Gurnett & Tony Pinkerton

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for JULY 2026 edition:

**Wednesday 24 June 2026**

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

[gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto: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.

## COG information

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### COG library

### Membership Enquiries & Updates:

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### Gang-gang Newsletter

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## COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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