



Gang-gang

FEBRUARY 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday 12 February 2020

7.30 pm

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

The Bird of the Month presentation will be by **Jack Holland** covering **"Leaden and Satin Flycatchers."**

The main presentation will be by **Professor David Lindenmayer**, from the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society, on **"Changing landscapes change birds – new insights into how softwood plantations reshape temperate woodland bird communities"**.

Large areas of south-eastern Australia have been targeted for softwood plantation establishment. In 1997, the Nanangroe grazing and cropping property near Burrumbidgee in southern NSW was purchased and much of the land was converted to pine plantation. Patches of endangered temperate woodland were preserved as the surrounding landscape was converted to plantations. ANU, with support from members of COG, have documented changes in bird populations within the woodland patches over the past two decades. This talk will describe these changes, including the development of novel assemblages of bird species, as well as the regional impacts of the plantation that extend well beyond the boundary of areas where pine stands have been established.

Everyone welcome

Summary/analysis of the past two months and what to watch out for this month

The weather continued very hot and very dry with temperatures well above average, and very limited, if any, rainfall during the 9 weeks from 27 November covered by this column. Until the last week of this period, the COG Area of Interest (AoI) largely escaped the fires so prevalent elsewhere in SE Australia, but for much of the time it has been very smoky. While we did get some rain in the final 10 days of this time, falls were very localised and often fell rapidly in storm events, with the water running off rather than soaking in. As a result, it had limited effect on the well-set pattern of birds trying to cope with a severe drought. In addition, a severe storm with very large hail stones cutting through the centre of Canberra heavily impacted birds in its path, as it is expected the Pialligo fire did shortly after.

The very hot, dry, smoky weather seemed to lead to a very quiet reporting period either side of New Year, particularly after, perhaps due to birders not wanting to go out under these conditions, not helped by the closure of the

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Regent Honeyeater at Watson, January 2020

David Cook

mountain areas and reserves. However, for unclear reasons, activity then seemed to pick up significantly, and largely remained so until the end of the 9-week period.

A single (probably male) **Regent Honeyeater**, first found by Sue Beatty on 13 January at Justice Robert Hope Park in Watson, caused by far the most excitement, with many, many observers able to find it until 21 January. It certainly was the most obliging stay-put bird of this species I can recall for quite some time, possibly due to the flowering Yellowbox there. It was not banded (and thus a wild bird), with Mark Clayton remarking how close it was to the spot where he banded 7 birds of this species in 1997. COG's 2017-2018 Annual Bird Report (ABR) lists it as a rare summer visitor to the region.

As outlined below, the presence of other summer visitors has been a bit unpredictable. In particular, **Brown Songlarks**, which were not reported during November, were observed from several locations during December, and from 6 locations throughout January, the most recent being 2 birds at the Pipeline Track at Coppins Crossing on 24 January. **Horsfield's Bushlarks** were reported from at least 3 locations in December, but only 2 in January, the most recent one being 6 birds at the same location as above on 24 January. It has continued to be a poor summer to observe the **Rufous Songlark** which has been reported from only 5 locations this month, the most recent being a single bird at Solong St in Lawson on 25 January.

In complete contrast, **White-winged Trillers** have remained very numerous and have been reported from around 30 locations on the eBird Australia map during January. **White-browed Woodswallows** also still seemed to find conditions acceptable and were reported throughout the period, including from at least 16 locations in January, the most recent being 3 birds at Stromlo Forest Park on 17 January. However, there was limited reporting of the **Masked Woodswallow**, in only 2 of the 4 weeks in December and from only 3 locations in January, the most recent being a single bird on Hoskinstown Rd in Bungendore on 12 January.

A single **Painted Honeyeater** was last reported (heard only) from the Namadgi Visitors Centre on 1 January. Interestingly the previous report from here was on 1 December. Despite its presence there from late October, there seems to have been no report of its breeding. This contrasts with the only other place (near Gundaroo, see further below) from which it was reported during December, last on 19 December. The female/immature **Crimson Chat** was last reported from Parkwood on 17 December, the only location from which this species has been reported during the period. However, there have been no reports of the **Red-backed Kingfisher** in the period.

It has been a very poor year for local cuckoos, with amazingly no reports of the **Pallid** or of the **Brush Cuckoo** since mid-December. Also surprising is that the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was reported only from the third week of December and from only 2 locations this month, last on 20 January from the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. The **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** has been reported from 4 locations only, last on 22 January from Aranda Bushland and Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, though it was reported during all 4 weeks of December. In contrast the **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was reported from Aranda Bushland and Flynn on 11 and 13 December, respectively, as well as from Macarthur on 12 January. There have also been several reports of a **Black-eared Cuckoo**, from Girilang on 11 December, and Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR between 11-16 January.

A group of 4 **Cockatiels** was first reported by Richard Allen in the horse paddocks in Curtin, in the willows and poplars just north of Yarralumla Ck on 16 December. He noted there were a male and a female with two begging dependent juveniles being fed. These birds were subsequently reported by a number of observers up to 24 December, suggesting they were wild birds. Interestingly the 2017-2018 ABR notes it as a rare non-breeding visitor/escapee. A single bird was also reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 22 December, from where, on 15 December, Mark Clayton relayed a report from one of his former work colleagues who had just seen 4, and possibly 6, birds.

There have been no reports of the **Cicadabird** so far in January compared with reports from 3 of the 4 weeks in December, possibly due to a continuation of a special emphasis on this species. On 4 December Ryu Callaway alerted me to a Canberra Nature Map (CNM) record on 24 November, with 5 photos, of a probably juvenile male **Cicadabird**, which was making its way down the hill through the canopies of gum trees at Red Hill NR. This is a rare record, at least these days, of this species on its way to breed in the mountains. The eBird Australia map also contains a record of one at Gungahlin Pond on 16 December.

In January there have been reports of the **White-throated Needletail** from around 11 locations, all in the second half of the month when there were some storms around, the maximum being 30 around Mt Ainslie on 20 January. This follows reports only for the first 3 weeks in December. In contrast there seems to have been only the single report of two of the related and usually less numerous **Spine-tailed Swift** at West Belconnen Pond on 30 December, though Nicki Taws couldn't be sure there

weren't some amongst the 50+ "swifts" she saw over the Federal Golf Course on 17 January. Alison Mackerras also possibly saw 2 over Weston on 2 January.

So please keep an eye out for the above two species and other spring/summer migrant species, particularly those species such as the cuckoos and the **Rufous Songlark** whose numbers have been fewer than may be expected. The last of the latter may be expected still to be present in early to mid-February, as will be the **Brown Songlark**, **Horsfield's Bushlark** and **White-winged Triller**.

Apart for those mentioned above, a number of "unusual" species have been reported over the 9-week period. The most interesting of these were the 2 **Little Lorikeets** reported by Helen Cross from Khull Crescent Kambah, before flying off to the south, on 12 January. Based on 3 photos, they were accepted on CNM. The 2017-2018 ABR lists this as a rare non-breeding visitor, a nomadic species feeding mainly on flowering eucalypts for which there were 2 records that year, with earlier records from 2012-2013 and in most years before then. On 13 January Sandra Henderson reported 2 small green parrots with very short tails which flew very fast past her from behind at the nearby McQuoids Hill NR. These have been confirmed as **Little Lorikeets** by eBird Australia.

Also of interest was the **Australian Little Bittern** reported from the reed beds near the outlet from Nerang Pool to LBG in Commonwealth Park by Ned Johnston and Matt Fox on 15 December. Two **Australian Shelducks**, unusual in Canberra as opposed to the COG Aol, were reported from West Belconnen Pond by a number of observers on 27 December, as was a female on 16 January. In the interim there were reports of up to 3 birds from East Basin and Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 6-7 January. Interestingly, there has been only a single report of 2 birds at Trucking Yard Lane on 12 January. The dam there has since been reported as having had a complete clean-out with high banks now covering about 3/4 of the dam's perimeter. The spots where they and the **Plumed Whistling Ducks** used to congregate are said to be no more.



Little Lorikeets

Julian Robinson



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Good birding, good food

Top End birding tour

10 to 24 May 2020

Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau.

Atherton Tablelands 1 to 5 June

& Iron Range NP 5 to 14 June 2020

Gulf of Carpentaria birding tour

19 June to 6 July 2020

Cairns to Mt Isa via Karumba. The tour
now includes Winton for rusty
grasswren.

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

13 to 22 July 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price,
Newman

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

24 July to 2 August 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price,
Newman

Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

7 to 17 August 2020

Adelaide to Nullarbor Plain

5 to 20 September 2020

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2020

24 & 25 October 2020

14 & 15 November 2020

28 & 29 November 2020

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website

www.philipmaher.com

Great-crested Grebes have been particularly “common”, reported from 7 different locations so far in January, with up to 4 reported from LBG, after being reported from all 4 weeks in December. The **Whiskered Tern** was last reported from Commonwealth Avenue Bridge on 28 November, but a **Caspian Tern** was reported from Lake Ginninderra on 16 January. Up to 5 **Banded Lapwings** were still observed in Namadgi NR, with the last report on 26 December. A **Black Kite** was reported from Majura Parkway on 28 December, and from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 17 January. A **Barn Owl** was reported from Mulligans Flat NR on 22 January.

After a gap from 3 December, the **Common Sandpiper** was reported again from 1 January from Isabella Pond, as recently as on 29 January, despite Sandra Henderson reporting that on 17 January it had filled, with lots of water still flowing in and no big mud flats left. A single bird on rocks in the shallow river on Sunshine Road at the Gudgenby River was also reported on 25 January, but has yet to be confirmed by eBird Australia. A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was also reported from West Belconnen Pond from 12-16 January. Earlier up to 3 birds were reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR up to 15 December, the same day as the **Pectoral Sandpiper** was last reported from there.

A **Turquoise Parrot** was reported from the Hospice Ponds near LBG on 6 January, while **Musk Lorikeets** have been reported from at least 7 locations in January. Finally, a **Little Friarbird** was reported from the Fadden Hills Pond on 11-12 December, with another in Fraser on 19 January and two at the nearby Umbagog District Park (Latham) on 26 January.



Turquoise Parrot *Geoffrey Dabb*



Restless Flycatcher

Lindsay Hansch

Despite the dry conditions, there has been breeding activity, though the reports brought to my attention largely stop at the end of the first week of January, suggesting an early end to the breeding season, likely due to the very adverse conditions. Apart from the Cockatiel reports above some highlights follow:

- On 8 December I followed up Kym Bradley’s post of 1 December with the photos of **Little Pied Cormorant** nests with young or birds on them in dead stags poking out of seemingly deep water. I counted 15 birds altogether, including the 3 advanced chicks on/above one of the nests as shown in one of Kym’s photos. There were 9 nests in total, 6 with birds sitting on them and 2 that did not seem to be occupied. To me the location was an unexpected one, immediately south of Greenway Oval Tuggeranong, with the surprising depth likely due to the runoff from the oval, as well as possibly from the Tuggeranong Shopping Centre complex. On 3 January Sandra Henderson followed this up and counted 8 nests, most with large youngsters.
- On 3 December Michael Lenz informed me that the **Restless Flycatchers** had fledged 2 young (there were 3 while in the nest) from their nest near Gundaroo. This is a rare breeding record, with the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 ABRs not listing any breeding. However, the Bird Info on the COG website shows a single breeding record for 2017 (dependent young in November), and breeding records from only 19 sites for the 35 years covered.
- On 4 December Michael reported that he had seen 2 adult **Painted Honeyeaters** and their fledgling at the same site. He noted the young was briefly in the open, afterwards (especially with the wind) inside mistletoes, begging loudly and being fed by the adults. He had visited the area regularly, but noted that only once did he suspect 2

adults there some time ago, but in the end could not confirm it. However, on several occasions he had seen an adult going into a group of medium sized eucalypts with dense foliage. No doubt, that was where the nest was - he did look there, but clearly not hard enough. He remembered from the one brood he followed at Mt Ainslie many years ago, that the pair swapped over nest duties rather frequently, but there were just a couple of brief calls to announce the arriving adult. The young they had was extremely quiet and always hiding in mistletoes, and frequently changing the mistletoe. The female (the male left relatively early after the fledging) had no idea where the young was from one feeding to the next. It had to call and wait until the young would answer. This may explain the lack of breeding observed at Namadgi Visitors Centre. This is an even rarer breeding record than the above, with the Bird Info map showing breeding from only 4 locations over the 35 years covered.

- On 11 January Renée Ferster Levy followed up a repeated rough sound at Campbell Park and found a **Dollarbird** fledgling in a tree with some hollows. This is a relatively unusual record for Canberra, with most generally seen as juveniles/immatures once they move away from the nest area into the suburbs before migrating north.
- Despite their widespread presence (see above) I can find only limited breeding for the **White-browed Woodswallow**. On 5 December Chris Davey suspected them of breeding at Kama NR but was unable to confirm this. On 8 December Geoffrey Dabb noted a displaying male at Campbell Park. He indicated the pair had a nest in a briar about 1 m above the ground, with one egg, so probably mid-laying. He also noted a pair at Fairbairn Golf Course was probably nesting in a radiata pine. Julie McGuinness noted they were seen on nests during her Naas woodland survey on 1 December. On 15 December Danny McCreadie posted a photo of one at the nest, with young reaching up to be fed, at Namadgi NP the day before. On 30 December Geoffrey Dabb posted a photo of one angrily swooping a **Little Eagle** at Campbell Park. He noted two pairs had raised young about 100 m from the eagle nest.
- Last, but certainly not least, despite the very dry and smoky conditions, the **Eastern Koel** has had a very good breeding season, with at least 46 fledglings coming to my attention so far. The first was reported on 15 December, a little later than I predicted in my December column. All confirmed hosts so far have been **Red Wattlebirds** (RWB). Interestingly 4 (compared with the total of 9 that I was aware of previously) were first discovered as chicks in the nest, 2 for around a week before fledging. Also interesting is that in several cases fledgling were seen being fed plums by the RWB hosts, or mince including taking it from feeding tables itself. Another feature has been that fledglings have often seemed very bold, including coming out into the open to drink at water baths.

A possible indication of an early finish to the breeding season has been the reporting of mixed feeding flocks (MFFs). The first of these were from the COG woodland surveys, Kathy Walter/John Goldie from Mt Majura on 5 December, and Nicki Taws from Gooroo North on 8 December. On 29 December Christine D posted that after weeks of seeing very few small birds in her garden, that morning a delightful MFF visited for 20+ minutes. She had just moved the sprinkler, and many of the birds enjoyed a shower or a bath in the leaves of a tree which was still dripping but no longer under the sprinkler. There were at least 40 birds, including a **Grey Fantail**, **Striated**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Brown Thornbills**, **Weebills**, **Silvereyes**, and **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**. There were a number of very young birds in the group too.

I have also had MFFs in my garden since my return on 8 January. On 12 January Sandra Henderson posted that in a 3-hour wander at Callum Brae that morning she encountered 3 very widely separated MFFs. All had **Speckled Warbler**, **Weebills**, **Striated Pardalotes**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and **Superb Fairy-wrens**. Two had **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** and **Rufous Whistler**. The final group she saw had well over 50 birds in it. Finally, on 18 January Jean Casburn posted seeing a MFF of **Brown**, **Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbill**, **Grey Fantail**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **White-throated Treecreeper** and **Sacred Kingfisher** at Bluett's Block.

To my mind there's no doubt that the lack of food availability has caused them to come together much earlier than usual – it's normally not until late January at the earliest. So please keep an eye out for these MFFs; as I've mentioned many times there's no greater thrill than watching these and finding unexpected species quietly lurking in amongst them.

Another sign of a poor breeding season is that my monthly **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** roost counts at the 3 sites in Chapman/Holder were 400 birds in December and just under 500 birds in January. Numbers were well down at the Chapman horse paddocks roost in December, but conditions were extremely smoky with a strong NE wind blowing, and it seemed they may have used an alternative roost site that evening.

So please watch out for the above-mentioned species, including the soon to depart spring/summer migrants, as well as for any breeding activity. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, posting on the COG email Discussion List ("COG chatline") 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

Volunteer needed!

Are you looking for a way to volunteer with COG? The publications desk is looking for a part time volunteer to look after the publications sales desk at meetings on an ad hoc basis. Kathy and John normally administer the publication sales, but are sometimes away travelling when COG meetings are on.

What would be required:

We are looking for someone willing to bring the publications to meetings and manage any cash sales on the night. Anyone interested wouldn't need to commit to doing it every meeting, just be available a few times a year when needed.

Advantages of getting involved:

- Often the sales desk is a bit of a focus for members, so it's a great way to meet and chat to people at the meeting.
- Learn about new birding books and get first dibs on sale items.
- Help COG through volunteering.

Contact Kathy Walter for further information:

sales@canberrabirds.org.au or phone 0421 708 603.



Sacred Kingfisher

Leo Berzins



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Field Trip Report

Wednesday 15 January – AIS and Bruce Ridge

Eleven members gathered in the AIS car park and were consistently entertained by a modest number of **Superb Parrots** in the usual trees. As we moved off towards Ginninderra Drive others flew past in both directions. We concluded that there were 20 birds present.

Possibly the most exciting sighting occurred as we walked through a degraded carpark covered with 20 cm high grass. A **Latham's Snipe** flushed - a long way from any water - and took off flying fast and high. It was joined by a second snipe and both headed towards Kaleen.

The water features provided a fair range of the usual suspects including very young **Dusky Moorhen** and **Eurasian Coots**. Our other breeding record was **Magpie-lark** feeding young. A good range of suburban and bush birds were seen as we looped around the AIS and back through Bruce Ridge below the rumble of Gungahlin Drive. Our final tally was 46 species.

Martin Butterfield

COG's Bird Blitz 2019

At the January COG meeting I gave a brief outline of last year's bird blitz results to date and awarded prizes. The 2019 blitz was one of our best ever, with a minimum of 95 named participants handing in 427 datasheets, 152 of which were hard-copy, and the remainder on eBird. We covered 102 grid cells and located 181 bird species.

There were two "firsts" for the blitz – a **Common Sandpiper** at Isabella Pond and a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** at West Belconnen Ponds. Other highlights included a **Brush Bronzewing** (the first recorded in the blitz since 2009), a **Powerful Owl**, **Painted Honeyeaters**, **Hooded Robin** and **Brown Treecreeper**. But we missed quite a few species, including **Emu**, **Stubble Quail**, **Australian Owlet-nightjar**, **Spotted Harrier**, **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, **Spotless Crake** and **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**.

The first prize awarded was for participation in all 15 bird blitzes. Six stalwarts were in the running: Matt Frawley, Stuart Harris, Shirley Kral, Bruce Lindenmayer, Gail Neumann and Philip Veerman. "The First Naturalists", donated by author Penny Olsen, went to Bruce Lindenmayer.

The "special effort" prizes, for birders who blitzed in remote parts or behind locked gates, or who put in >10 hours or >10 datasheets, were won by Alison Mackerras and Steve Holliday. They won bottles of wine donated by Trevor and Joan Lipscombe, and Wendy Whitham and Lloyd Hooper.

The best bird prize, a copy of "Night Parrot" donated by Penny Olsen, was won by Noel Luff for his **Spotted Quail-thrush** at Booroomba Rocks. Duncan McCaskill won a bottle of wine donated by John Brannan for the best breeding record, a dependent young **Scarlet Robin**. A final prize, for birding off the beaten track, was won by Harvey Perkins for his forays to Grassy Creek in the depths of Namadgi NP. Harvey won a bottle of wine donated by Stuart Harris. And there was the usual array of books and plants for each blitz participant.

Acknowledgements go to all blitzers, for their support of this COG project; to the Parks and Conservation Service for permission to go behind locked gates; to all prize-givers, for their generosity; to Jaron Bailey, for massaging the data; and to Geoffrey Dabb, for photographs.

Blitz no. 16 will be held on 24-25 October 2020 – make sure you put these dates in your diary now!

Barbara Allan, Blitz coordinator



Latham's Snipe

Geoffrey Dabb



Spotted Quail-thrush

Tobias Hayashi



Julatten, 1½hrs. North of Cairns

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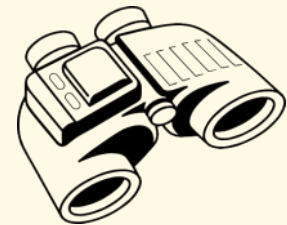
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Nature Lodge Optics, a family owned business based in Huskisson, Jervis Bay, has been supplying quality binoculars to customers in the Canberra region since 2007.

Originally established in the UK in 1946, the owners established a branch in Australia several years ago and have become the region's leading independent binocular store.

Open 7 Days, the store always has over 100 pairs of binoculars in stock with a particular emphasis on Birdwatching products.

Major brands such as Steiner, Zeiss,



Bushnell, Nikon & Pentax are represented together with smaller hi-tech brands like Weaver, Vortex, Forest Optics, Visionary and Vanguard.

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As a family business and NOT a franchise the owners Daniel and Joanna Payne will always be happy to source the specialist or unusual products that individual customers require having established a global network of suppliers.

The store also specialises in polarised eyewear with brands such as Maui Jim, RayBan & Oakley to name just a few.

The helpful and informative website www.binoculars4u.com.au is regularly updated but is no substitute for personal service and recommendation which is always on hand.

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old to call us on
02 4441 7770**

New Places: December 2019 to January 2020

Sandra Henderson

Urana, NSW

Although I pass through Urana several times a year, and have visited the Urana Nature Reserve, I had not done a bird list in the town. I started at the Showground, which is a well-maintained free camp. The town sewage works appear to be just over the fence (although ponds not visible), with **Australian White Ibis**, a **White-faced Heron** and a **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** in a dead tree next to the fence. That side of the showground also had a group of **Grey-crowned Babblers**. Other birds in town included **Apostlebirds** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**.

Curtin horse paddocks

Like many other COG members, I visited the horse paddocks following Richard Allen's sighting of four **Cockatiels**. I found them on my third visit, but also found that the walk along the creek line from the North Curtin playing fields (many cold Sunday mornings spent there years ago watching junior rugby league) to Yarra Glen was quite pleasant.

Small farm dams on the Urana to Jerilderie Road

There were two dams (one either side of the road) only about 1km apart, not far from the Newell Hwy. I've never noted any birds of note, but on 20 December there were three **Emus** in one of the dams, and at the second I counted 64 **Banded Lapwings**!

Mile Hill Road (Namadgi)

Mile Hill Road is off Brindabella Road close to Bulls Head picnic area. I walked only a couple of hundred metres along the road, chasing a very clear **Common Cicadabird** call. After surprising a **Superb Lyrebird** just a couple of metres off the road edge, the Cicadabird could be seen in a dead tree some distance away. Notable not only because it was bird 200 on my ACT 2019 list, but the first I've ever seen in the ACT.

Tuggeranong Marsh

Rowland Rees Cr, Greenway. This pond seems to be filled by runoff from the Greenway Oval. Access can be tricky. I walked straight over from the road, but some recent rain has cut off that access, so walking through the adjacent weedy paddock to a gateway further up appears to be the best way to get there. Parking is limited by construction workers' cars. The marsh has a number of dead trees, almost every one of which had Little Pied Cormorant nests when I first visited (all are now fledged). There were also **Hardheads**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Grey Teal**, **Australian Wood Ducks** and a family of **Australasian Grebes**. On one visit I've seen a **Spotted Crake**. The grassy edges are also very popular with a number of large male Eastern Grey Kangaroos, who seem to be permanent fixtures.

Sunshine Road at Gudgenby River

Prompted by a report of a Common Sandpiper (which I could not find there) I wandered along the river in both directions from the bridge. The river is little more than a series of pools, although there must be some underground flow. A small flock of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** was quite obliging, perching in roadside bushes, and I will probably explore further when I can find time (and when the area is not closed because of the bushfires).

Gibraltar Falls to Woods Reserve

There is a walking track between these two well-known locations, but I'd not walked it previously. Two **Superb Lyrebirds** strolled across the track in front of me, then walked back again, and there were a variety of bush birds. It is a very pleasant walk, although if I did it again I'd start at Woods Reserve, which would mean a largely downhill return walk.

Future Field Trips

COG Trips

Each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form at the start of each trip and before proceeding on the trip which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An Emergency Contact Name and 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."

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.

You may have noticed on the field trips section of the website that there are a number of dates marked "venue required" and "leader required". For the first half of the year, those dates are: 8 March, 29 March and the June long weekend (6-8 June). If you would be prepared to lead a trip on any of those dates, please contact Sue Lashko at smlashko@gmail.com

Also, in response to feedback from the COG members' survey last year, I have asked leaders to add a little more information to the trip details, such as degree of difficulty and finishing times. I hope you find this useful.

Sunday 2 February – Jerrabomberra Wetlands

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. We should be finished by about 10.30-11.00am. No booking required. NB: this walk is flat and is wheelchair-friendly.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 9 February – Campbell Park

This replaces the Warks Road outing as that area of the national park is closed.

Meet at 7.30 am at the far end of the Campbell Park Offices car park. We will walk through to the famous horse crossing, and then into Campbell Park proper. The plan is to then walk the 5km classic circuit in an anticlockwise fashion. We will visit such iconic destinations as the NE corner, 'the easement' and Barbara's Tree. Expect to see a variety of woodland birds, with different species to be seen in the adjoining pastures. Back before lunchtime, but do bring a snack, water, sunglasses, hat and sunscreen.

David Dedenczuk

Monday 10 to Friday 14 February – accommodated trip to Guthega, Snowy Mountains

This trip will probably include Pallaibo walk from Sawpit Creek (about 6 km) down to the Snowy River, and the Cascades walk at Sawpit Creek (6 km). Apart from beautiful scenery, mountain flowers and cool weather, we should find lyrebird,

honeyeaters, robins, thornbills, parrots and flycatchers, to name a few. Please note also that this trip requires a reasonable level of fitness.

We will be staying at Kyilla Lodge in Guthega (Brindabella Ski Club). You will need to take all your food for 4 days as no shops are available in Guthega. We will have a shared dinner each night and happy hour. With three others you will cater for dinner and nibbles on one of the four nights. Brindabella is a co-operative club, so a tidy up will be required. Carpooling is recommended as park fees apply.

There are 3 places remaining, so please contact Jean Casburn asap by email at casburnj@bigpond.com. When your booking is received payment will be required shortly after. The cost for an adult over 4 nights is \$86.00. Final details will be provided on acceptance and payment.

Sunday 16 February – Molonglo Reach boat trip

This outing/cruise will be on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin (East Basin) and the adjacent Molonglo River Reach, where late summer/early autumn is historically the peak time for breeding of darters as well as three species of cormorant. The area also has a variety of waterbirds, and a range of land birds can be seen on the banks.

The boat trip will last about 2 hours from 8 am and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. We will again be travelling in the electric boat “MV Gull” which can carry around 22 people. The boat allows both a quiet approach as well as access to areas difficult to get to from the land.

Please note that due to the current low (0.5 m below usual) water levels the point of departure has had to be changed and will now be from Wharf 6 in Kingston Harbour. Participants will need to leave their cars in Eastlake Parade, where there is free all day weekend street parking, or in the Glass Works/Bus Depot Markets car park and walk across Eastlake Parade and down Trevillian Quay. Once you have crossed the canal keep going straight ahead for around 50 m till you reach a gap between the buildings. Turn right and Wharf 6 and the boat should be visible once when you reach the harbour after 20 m.

Registration for this field trip is essential. Please book your place on the boat with Jack Holland (on 6288 7840 or by email on jandaholland@bigpond.com).

Sunday 23 February – Cotter Reserve

Meet 8.30am in the Cotter Avenue carpark area at base of the dam (NOT Cotter campground or Cotter Bend). We'll have a look at the discovery trail, then walk up past the dam, where **Great Crested Grebes** can usually be found. **Emus** are also likely, and there's usually a good range of bush birds. The outing will be about 3km on tracks, and will take about 3 hours.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 29 February - Googong South

Description: We will carpool from Calwell and start with a loop to London Bridge Homestead, mostly open with scattered trees and fringing woodland. The area around the Homestead can be good for declining woodland species such as **Hooded Robin**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Diamond Firetail**, **Brown Treecreeper** and **Southern Whiteface**. We will then visit Tin Hut Dam for lunch where **Yellow Thornbill**, **Musk Duck** and **Australian Shelduck** are possibilities. Wombats are almost guaranteed. If there is a Total Fire Ban the reserve will be closed and the walk will be cancelled.

ebird hotspots: [London Bridge](#); [Tin Hut Dam](#)

Meeting time and place: 7:40am at Calwell Playing Fields Car Park ([-35.439122, 149.121231](#))

Suggested contribution to drivers: \$5 per passenger

Walking distance: 5km

Degree of difficulty: medium

End time (approx.): We should be back in Calwell early to mid-afternoon.

What to bring: Bring water, sunscreen hat, walking shoes, and morning tea to have on the go if you wish. There are toilets at London Bridge carpark. Bring lunch to have at Tin Hut Dam; undercover picnic tables available.

Need to register: No

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Ryu Callaway, [ryu_is_gr8](#)(at [yahoo.co.jp](#)

Tuesday 10 to Thursday 12 March - Ulladulla

This mid-week trip will be over 3 days and 2 nights. Many of the reserves have been burnt including the Little Forest Plateau and may be closed. We will visit those reserves in Ulladulla and district that are open. We will stay at Ulladulla Headland Tourist Park (ph 02 4429 8982; email ulladulla@holidayhaven.com.au) which has cabins and campsites. Please book your own accommodation.

We hope to find a variety of heathland birds, including **Southern Emu-wrens** and **Beautiful Firetails** at the Dolphin Point Track south of Burrill Lake, as well as spending time at the lighthouse looking for seabirds, and visits to Garrad Reserve and Lake Conjola. The walks will be easy/moderate.

Please book a place on this outing with Bill Graham on graham.br63@grapevine.com.au. The trip will be restricted to 16 participants and filled on a first reply basis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the day.

Sunday 15 March - Molonglo River Walk from Weston

Meet in the carpark near the RSPCA, next to North Weston Ponds at 9.00am.

We will walk along the river to look at the nesting cormorants (the **Great Cormorants** should be on nests). This is an easy walk, about 5km in total, mostly on tracks. It will take 2-3 hours, as we walk towards Scrivener Dam on one side of the river, cross at a causeway, and return on the other side.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 March, and Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 October

COG will be running two weekends of pelagics in mid-March and in mid-October. There will be a Saturday and a Sunday trip each weekend. The idea behind both trips is to hit migration time for the seabirds. March trips tend to have a more summer flavour with fewer winter albatrosses but with one memorable trip in 2015 getting both Herald Petrel (very rare) and Kermadec Petrel. The October trips are timed to try and see the passage of Cook's and Mottled Petrel (both rare) but also offer a great selection of winter albatrosses and petrels.

Cost is not finalised but is likely to be around \$130 per person per day. You need to be in Eden ready to board the boat by 7am (we are usually back in Eden around 3pm). If you are interested, please email me at tobiashayashi@hotmail.com, stating the date you wish to go; you may choose any or all days. Please note that these trips are advertised to COG members first, and financial members are given priority. I have recently advertised the March trip to non-members and, in late June, will advertise the October trips to non-members, so if you are keen to come, please make sure you contact me soon.

Tobias Hayashi

Sunday 5 April - K2C surveys near Bredbo

COG will continue with the K2C surveys that have been running since April 2010. The surveyed properties have healthy populations of many of the rarer woodland birds such as **Diamond Firetail**, **Hooded Robin** and **Speckled Warbler**. We will be visiting the same sites to continue the monitoring and see if we can add to the property lists with spring-summer migrants. The surveys will be undertaken in 'blitz' fashion; that is, observers in small groups will visit a number of sites on one or more properties before regrouping for lunch and a sharing of the survey's findings. Less experienced observers are welcome to join in the survey as each team will have at least one experienced observer. Anyone interested in participating is asked to contact Nicki Taws **before Wednesday 1 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210 736.

Saturday 11 April - Narrabundah Hill

Those members who will be staying at home this Easter and/or who will have visiting birder friends are welcome to join this outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve. It has been timed for the honeyeater migration season, with the northern and western boundaries of the reserve having some of the few currently known local migration routes. We will walk along the northern boundary and, depending on conditions and the species seen, possibly along most of the western one, and we'll either return by the same or a different path. This will be around 4 km on relatively flat ground. We will also look for other autumn birds such as **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as the gerygones.

This walk will start at 8:30 am to maximise the opportunity to see the honeyeaters which generally come through late in the morning in early April (we saw over 2500 birds there at a similar time last year). Meet Jack Holland (6288 7840 or

jandaholland@bigpond.com) at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. **Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care.**

While it is a relatively shaded area, please take water as well as morning tea to have on the track.

Jack Holland

Saturday 18 April - Wandiyali-Environs Conservation Area (Private Property)

Description: This will be a repeat of last year's successful visit to this restoration property that is privately owned and usually inaccessible to the public. Their work and eventual aims are comparable to Mulligans Flat.

eBird hotspot: <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L7467465>

Meeting time and place: 7:45am at Jerrabomberra Village (shops) car park near the big roundabout.

Walking distance: 3km

Degree of difficulty: Medium/Hard - Note it is mostly cross-country with some steep slopes.

End time (approx.): We should be back by lunch time.

What to bring: Bring water, sunscreen hat, walking shoes, and morning tea to have on the go if you wish. No toilets.

Need to register: No

Numbers limited: No

Name of leader and contact details: Ryu Callaway, [ryu_is_gr8\(at\) yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ryu_is_gr8@yahoo.co.jp)

Sunday 26 April - The Settlers Track, Namadgi National Park

Description: On this trip we will visit one of the most historically significant parts of Namadgi National Park: the Settlers Track/Grassy Creek area. It will be a comfortable 6 km walk. This area is highly recommended both for its natural history properties and its European cultural heritage. It helps the visitor to gain some understanding of how the pioneers lived from the time of settlement of that area in the mid-1830s until the 1980s when the land was incorporated into the National Park, and sheep and cattle grazing ceased. An excellent brochure covering the Track is available from the Namadgi NP Headquarters, or online at https://www.environment.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/404591/The-Settlers-Track.pdf.

Meeting time and place: Meet in the Kambah Village car park, corner of Drakeford Drive and Marconi Crescent, Kambah at 8.30 am for carpooling. Suggested contribution from each passenger to drivers: \$10.

Walking distance: 6 km

Degree of difficulty: easy to medium

End time (approx.): mid-afternoon

What to bring: water, morning tea, and lunch. Be prepared for changeable weather conditions.

Need to register: Yes

Numbers limited: yes, maximum 15

Name of leader and contact details: David McDonald, telephone (02) 6238 3706 or 0416 231 890, email settlers2020@canberrabirds.org.au.

Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 October – Green Cape

For some time now, COG has visited Green Cape every second year to stay in the former lighthouse keepers' cottages and enjoy the wonderful wildlife watching (birds and whales, in particular) in Ben Boyd National Park and in the surrounding seas. With the likely privatisation of the cottages from 2021, we have booked the cottages in October 2020 for a final visit. There are only 14 places available for this trip. The commitment is for a 4-night stay – no concession for shorter stays. Accommodation costs are \$326. There is also an \$8 fee per car per day to enter Ben Boyd National Park. This can be paid at a self-registration booth on arrival. An alternative is a single park pass which costs \$22 and is available online.

To register, email smlashko@gmail.com. **This trip is now full but there are likely to be cancellations between now and October so if you would like your name added to the waiting list, please contact me.** More detailed information will be sent to participants closer to the date.

Peter Fullagar and Sue Lashko

Woodland Surveys—late spring/early summer 2019 survey round

compiled by Jenny Bounds

Mulligans Flat NR

Jenny Bounds and the team surveyed on Sunday 1 December, in good conditions to start, with a little bushfire smoke haze early, but a rising wind by 9am. The reserve was very dry and dams were drying, with the large dam having no water at all. Small birds were not in abundance, but they did record a few **Gerygones** (only one **Western**), **Weebills**, **Buff-rumped** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, and **Grey Fantails**. There seemed to be more medium- and larger- bodied birds around, but no smaller honeyeaters. Surprisingly, there were some interesting species recorded, a **Dollarbird** around the Woolshed, a female **Koel** being chased by a **Red Wattlebird** near the Woolshed, and a group of three **Bush Stone-curlews** (pair with young), also near the Woolshed. Other species of interest were a **Varied Sittella** and five **Superb Parrots** on the western ridge, 5 **White-winged Trillers** on the eastern side of the reserve, and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**. There were a couple of pairs of **Sacred Kingfishers**, several **Leaden Flycatchers** and a few **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Red Wattlebirds** and **Olive-backed Orioles**. Noticeably absent were waterbird species, with only two **Pacific Black Ducks** seen. The total species count was 43, the lowest on a survey for ten years (excluding winter surveys), but this obviously reflected the lack of water-based birds around the large dam particularly.

Gooroo NR (north)

The December survey was held on a mild and mercifully windless morning on Sunday 8 December. The reserve was no exception in being incredibly dry, with no water in any of the dams. A few Yellow Box were flowering but did not have any more birds in them than non-flowering trees. Nicki Taws did not have high expectations in terms of species or abundance of birds, but in the end it was better than expected with 39 species in total. At one site there was a substantial mixed feeding flock, much more reminiscent of a winter survey than breeding season surveys. It is possible that the birds have given up on breeding and adopted non-breeding behaviour in relinquishing territories and roaming in packs to find food. In the flock were **Striated**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, **Weebills**, both **Pardalotes**, **Grey Fantails** and **Brown-headed Honeyeater**. Also at the site were **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Sacred Kingfisher** and **White-winged Triller** but being summer migrants they didn't seem to get the mixed feeding flock idea. **Varied Sittella** with dependent young were also at this site, and a lone **King Parrot** – unusual for Gooroo. A couple of the sites were very quiet but others had a few thornbills, weebills and pardalotes. Other summer migrants present were **Rufous Whistler**, **Noisy Friarbird**, both gerygones, **Superb Parrot** (2 sites), and a late-calling **Pallid Cuckoo**. It was particularly pleasing to record **Mistletoebird** at several sites although it was not clear what the food source was, as there were no ripe fruits evident and even the mistletoes were looking stressed.

Gooroo NR (south)

The summer survey in the southern half of Goorooyarroo was done by Steve Holliday, Prue Buckley, and David and Kathy Cook on Sunday 8 December. It was a mild morning but with a thick blanket of smoke. Like just about everywhere else, the reserve looked like it has been roasted. Some Yellow Box were in flower but only a few **Noisy Miners** were seen in them. A total of 45 species was recorded for the morning with 40 of these being during point counts, not too bad given the conditions, although 56 species was the total on the equivalent survey in 2018. The highlight was an incidental **Diamond Firetail** seen twice, a species that has never been particularly common in the reserve but was recorded more regularly in the past. A **Dollarbird** at site 1 was another species not recorded often, and a passing flock of **Varied Sittellas**, also at site 1. There was a smattering of thornbills, gerygones and other small birds, but no Speckled Warblers. Both pardalotes were recorded but in lower numbers than usual. Other migrants recorded besides gerygones included **Noisy Friarbirds**, **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Rufous Whistler**, **White-winged Triller** and **Leaden Flycatcher**. **Superb Parrots** were active in site 3 and may still have had young in the nest. **White-browed/Masked Woodswallows** were heard at one point but were invisible in the murky sky. Breeding records were of nest building **Grey Fantail** and **Rufous Whistler**.

Majura Training Area (formerly Majura Field Firing Range)

Given that the forecast was for wind and rain, Paul Fennell and Barbara Allan set out on 2 December with some expectation that the morning might turn out alright, which it did, but not brilliant. However, it was still cool, overcast and variably windy throughout the morning, less than ideal conditions for bird watching. The grass was generally severely

overgrazed. Only 26 bird species were seen at the 7 sites, and 6 between sites – **White-winged Cough**, **Galah**, **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Willie Wagtail**, **Crested Pigeon** and **Laughing Kookaburra**. Little brown birds were few and far between with only **Weebill**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Striated** and **Buff-rumped Thornbills**. An exception was a lone **Mistletoebird**, a bit of a rarity on the range, despite the huge numbers of mistletoes all over the place. Some summer migrants were about, notably **Noisy Friarbird** and **Rufous Whistler** at several sites, and a single **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** plus one **Olive-backed Oriole**. There were very few honeyeaters apart from **Noisy Miners**; notably absent were Red Wattlebird and Yellow-faced Honeyeater. Dam levels were very low, with a pair of **Grey Teal** the only waterbirds seen. **Common Bronzewing** were seen at 2 sites, a species not often observed here. **Nankeen Kestrel** was the only raptor. At one site **Welcome Swallow** and **Tree Martin** were recorded.

Mt Majura NR

The nine sites on Mt Majura Nature Reserve were surveyed by Kathy Walter and John Goldie over 3 days, 3-5 December. Conditions were mostly windy and cool. The bush was looking very dry and overgrazed in most areas although a few Yellowbox and Kurrajong trees were flowering. They saw plenty of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Swamp Wallabies, a few rabbits and a single fox using the habitat. There was a marked lack of small birds in the survey sites, although larger birds such as **Noisy Friarbirds** and **Red Wattlebirds** were quite active. Unfortunately, no **Speckled Warblers** were recorded, yet they are normally recorded in a couple of sites, and not a single pardalote was seen, although one or two were heard further afield. In between sites, there was a small mixed flock with **Buff-rumped** and **Brown Thornbill**, **Grey Fantail** and 4 **White-winged Trillers**. The only small birds recorded in the sites were **Weebill**, a single **Grey Fantail** and 2 **Superb Fairy-wrens**. A total of 26 species was recorded.

Mt Ainslie NR/Campbell Park

Michael Lenz conducted the survey of the lower eastern slopes of Mt Ainslie on 3 Dec. Conditions were not ideal with variable winds, mostly strong, but also with periods of light to moderate wind. The area was very dry, overgrazed and with many patches of bare soil. Small numbers of rabbits were present at most sites. Some Yellowboxes were flowering, but surprisingly, bird activity was much higher than during the spring survey. A total of 43 species was recorded (30 at the 9 sites, 15 additional ones between sites). The most widespread species were **Noisy Miner** (7 sites), **Crimson Rosella**, **Noisy Friarbird** (6 sites) and **Rufous Whistler** (4 sites).

Of note were: **Common Bronzewing** (4, incl. 2 displaying); **Speckled Warbler** (2); **Brown-headed Honeyeater** (2; 1 adult without tail feathers); **Dusky Woodswallow** (2 pairs, one of those with 4 fledglings); 4 to 6 pairs of **White-browed Woodswallow**, and, apart from 2 males displaying, no other obvious indications of possible breeding, (birds also seemed to move around far more than breeding birds would do, hence uncertainty about total numbers); **Mistletoebird** (3), **Western** (2) and **White-throated Gerygone** (6); **White-winged Triller** (4); 5 **Tree Martins**; 1 brown, male **Red-capped Robin**; **White-winged Choughs** with 1 young in nest; 1 **Australian Raven** with recent fledgling.

Newline

Sue Lashko surveyed on Saturday 30 November, under very smoky skies on a still, cool morning with a brief shower towards the end. The paddocks were extremely dry with water in just one dam. The most prominent birds were **Rainbow Lorikeets** (including one breeding record) and **White-winged Trillers**. Other summer migrants were **Dollarbird**, **White-throated Gerygone**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Dusky Woodswallow**. It was a good morning for raptors with two **Little Eagles**, a **Nankeen Kestrel** and a **Brown Goshawk**, the latter being harassed by a **Dollarbird**. The number of species recorded at 43 was lower than usual, but not surprising given the conditions.

Jerrabomberra West NR

Jenny Bounds and Alison Russell-French did the survey in the woodland patch on 28 November, in fine and mild to warm conditions. As expected, the reserve was extremely dry with little forbs/wildflower growth and very short native grasses. Some Saffron Thistle had come up in places, particularly bare patches where rabbit control work was done in the winter, but this weed was also sparse compared to a good spring season. Birds were on the low side overall, both in species and numbers, especially rosellas which are usually numerous there, with a total of 38 species. There were some highlights though, at sites 1 and 2 in the Blakely's Red Gum woodland adjacent to the grasslands, with about 4-5 pairs of **White-browed Woodswallows** (probably nesting there), as well as **Dusky Woodswallows** (a regular spring migrant there). The former have been recorded in those sites in three previous spring seasons (Dec 2014, Sept 2017 and Dec 2018). At site 1 in the same woodland patch were one **Varied Sittella**, four **Tree Martins**, a pair of **White-winged Trillers** and a **Common Bronzewing** (occasionally recorded there). **Little Ravens** were heard near site 1. Deeper into the

woodland, a pair of **Sacred Kingfishers**, a couple of pairs of **Leaden Flycatchers**, a **Mistletoebird**, a few **Grey Fantails**, one **Rufous Whistler**, one small group of **Buff-rumped Thornbills**, quite a few **Weebills**, a couple of **Noisy Friarbirds** and one **Red Wattlebird** were recorded. Only one distant **White-throated Gerygone** was heard. Another highlight was a **Whistling Kite** circling over the site (a first for Jerra West survey), and two **Brown Falcons** feeding on what looked like grasshoppers on the edge of the grasslands. There were no robins, no **Speckled Warbler** and no **Southern Whiteface** on this survey. **Common Starlings** were hard to find.

Kama NR

After attempts on Monday and Tuesday and aborting due to the wind, Chris Davey was able to survey on 4 and 5 December. Due to a COG contract with the ACT Parks and Conservation, the number of sites to be surveyed at Kama has increased from 9 to 17. The extra sites are associated with looking at the effects of the proposed buffer zone between Kama and the new suburb of Whitlam. The extra sites are mainly outside Kama and to the east and west of the Reserve. In addition to the summer survey, the extra sites will be surveyed for the next three seasons and then possibly in five years' time. The Reserve and surrounds were all very dry with none of the dams now holding water, for the first time since the first survey in 2005. There was quite a few Yellowbox in flower and the occasional Blakely's Red Gum, which the **Noisy Friarbirds** were making the most of. The usual **Pied Butcherbird** and three **Superb Parrots** inspecting hollows in the far south-west corner of the woodland section of the Reserve were nice to record. Surprisingly, there was a lack of **Striated Pardalotes**, but the notable birds of the survey were **White-winger Trillers** and **White-browed Woodswallows** that must be breeding there, but this was not able to be confirmed. As others have reported this survey, the lack of little birds was very noticeable, and Chris wondered why **Rufous Songlarks** would be absent.

Rural leasehold near Tharwa

David McDonald conducted the summer survey on 8 December in a heavy smoke haze from the North Black Range bushfire. As others reported, the woodland landscape was desiccated. The shrub layer at this woodland site has largely gone, or is dead, apart from the sweet briar rose which is thriving. The ground cover has largely disappeared. Centuries-old eucalypts have died or are close to death. No cattle or sheep were using the area, and there were very few kangaroos present. Bird abundance was low, but species diversity was greater than expected, with 29 species observed. Highlights included a single **Diamond Firetail** and **Speckled Warbler**, both declared vulnerable across the border in NSW. It was good to see **Red-rumped Parrots** and **Tree Martins** back, after many years' absence. Just one cuckoo was recorded, a single **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo**. Other summer migrants present were **White-browed Woodswallow** (no Dusky Woodswallows), **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Rufous Songlark** (just 2), **White-throated Gerygone** (no Westerns), and **Noisy Friarbird**. **Rufous Whistlers** made their presence felt. Sadly, no **Brown Treecreepers** were observed, nor any honeyeaters apart from **Noisy Friarbirds**. Most of the usual small insectivorous passerines (thornbills, weebills, spotted pardalotes, etc.) were absent.

Naas Valley leasehold

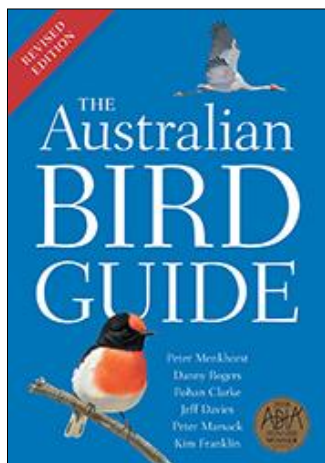
The survey was done on Sunday 1 December by Julie McGuinness, on a reasonably calm, mild and clearish day. Like other woodland locations, the sites and surroundings were very hammered by the drought, with the understorey eaten down to the soil in some sites, trees looking very stressed, and little in the way of insect activity seen. Surprisingly, there was a reasonable diversity of birds, including small birds - a total of 41 species were detected inside and between subsites. **White-browed** and **Dusky Woodswallows** were present, the former in reasonable numbers, and both species were seen on nests. In addition various **White-browed Woodswallows** were seen displaying, copulating, carrying nesting material and carrying food. **Tree Martins** were also seen on a nest outside the survey site; and a **Noisy Friarbird** and a **Common Starling** were seen carrying food. Other species of note were a few **White-winged Trillers**, **Rufous Whistlers**, **White-throated Gerygones** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**; a couple of **Mistletoebirds**; and one each **Dollarbird**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Jacky Winter**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Olive-backed Oriole** and **Western Gerygone**. The only species in any numbers when totalled inside and outside of sites were **Striated Pardalotes**, **White-browed Woodswallows**, **Grey Fantails** and **Common Starlings**. Expected species usually either resident or visiting over summer that were absent completely were **Superb Fairy-wren**, **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Rufous Songlark** and **Leaden Flycatcher**.

Publications for sale

COG provides a range of bird watching related publications for sale to members at discounted prices (around 10-30% off RRP).

Below are highlighted a sample of popular publications available from the sales desk at COG meetings. We get new books in all the time and sometimes popular books sell out, but they can easily be re-ordered. If you are looking for a particular book, talk to the sales desk team at the meeting, as they can look at ordering it for you or contact Kathy on

sales@canberrabirds.org.au

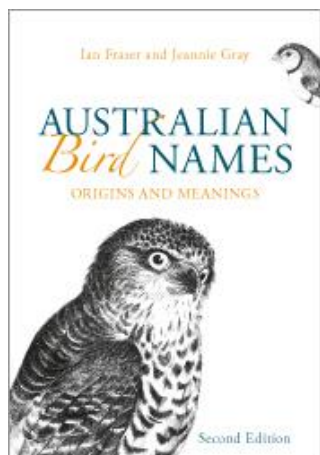


The Australian Bird Guide_ Revised Edition

Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, Kim Franklin

This Revised Edition includes updated maps, artwork and species accounts, reflecting current knowledge of the biology and distribution of Australia's birds. It features around 4700 specially commissioned colour illustrations of over 900 species, with particular emphasis on providing the fine detail required to identify difficult groups and distinctive plumages. Comprehensive species accounts have been written by a dedicated team of ornithologists to ensure identification details, distribution and status are current and accurate. A new easier-to-use index is also included.

Members' price: \$38. RRP 49.99



Australian Bird Names

Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray

An entertaining account of the stories behind the names of Australian birds. This second edition is a completely updated checklist of Australian birds and the meanings behind their common and scientific names, which may be useful, useless or downright misleading!

Members' Price: \$42. RRP \$54.99



Plains Wanderer Pin

Julian Teh

This hard enamel pin is a durable piece with a smooth finish, perfect for adorning shirts, coats, bags, hats or even binocular straps.

The Plains-wanderer is Australia's most unique bird.

Members' Price: \$11

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

2019-2020 memberships:

- Singles: \$40
- Family: \$45
- Institution: \$40
- School student (under 18) \$20

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

T Ward
S Simpson
P Starr
A Allnutt
J Golding
J Stokes
T Maling
C Naess

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for March 2020 edition:

Wednesday 26 February 2020

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

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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