



Gang-gang

APRIL 2021

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

APRIL MEETING

Wednesday 14 April 2021

7.30pm

Normal face to face meeting.

Following the approval of our COVID Safety Plan, COG will again hold our 14 April meeting as a face-to-face one at the usual venue, Canberra Girls Grammar School (CGGS).

Attendees will need to sit so that there is only one person per 2 sq m and with 1.5 m distancing, by maintaining 2 spare seats between people except for members of the same family or group of close contacts.

All attendees must practice good hand and respiratory hygiene and stay home if unwell.

As required by the ACT Government for application of the 2 sq m per person rule, the 'Check in CBR' app will be used to collect participants' contact details, using the QR code displayed at the entrance to the venue.

If attendees do not have or cannot share this app, COG will make a paper record of their names and contact details.

Proposed attendees should make themselves familiar with COG's approved COVID Safety Plan for CGGS, the full details of which are available on COG's web site.

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Everyone welcome

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

Cooler, often cloudy, conditions prevailed over the roughly 4.5 week period from 24 February to 28 March covered by this column. While it was relatively dry for more than the first 3 weeks, it was very wet since, with one very significant rain event dropping 118 mm of rain at my place in Chapman over 5 days. The effect of this, including the major flooding to the north through which many spring/summer migrants will need to pass, is as yet unclear. Based on the many late **Eastern Koel** fledgling reports, my impression was that, despite the cool conditions, we were experiencing a very prolonged "summer" season within the COG Area of Interest (Aoi). However, my closer analysis below shows that only a few other species seem to be staying longer than usual.

Of the early leaving or occasionally present spring/summer migrants, there have been no reports of those species already absent in February. Of those still present then, the **Brown Songlark**, **Rufous Songlark** and **Horsfield's Bushlark** were not recorded in the period covered. The **White-winged Triller** was still reported from 3 locations, the last at Callum Brae NR on 6 March.

Continued Page 2



The work with the feathers is Rosalie Gascoigne's *Feathered Fence* 1978-79 and the yellow work behind it is *Monaro* 1988-89. The works are on display at the National Gallery of Australia as part of its *Know my Name* exhibition. Copyright Rosalie Gascoigne estate and the Copyright Agency. See page 2.

April meeting—continued from Page 1

The short presentation will be by COG member **Martin Gascoigne** on “**Birds in Rosalie Gascoigne’s art**”. Rosalie Gascoigne was a Canberra-based assemblage artist who made works of art from materials she found, natural and manmade. She practised between 1974 and 1999. Birds were the subject of many of her works and feathers were a key component in some of her most memorable creations. By the time she died in 1999 she was represented, many times over, in all major galleries in Australia and New Zealand as well as the Metropolitan Museum in New York and, more recently, the Tate London. Two of her major pieces are currently on display in the NGA. (See the photo by Martin on page 1.)

The main presentation will be by **Dr James Nicholls** from the Australian National Insect Collection CSIRO and is entitled “**DNA-based diet analysis of Blue Tits and the impacts of garden bird feeding**”.

Determining the diet of wild birds can be very difficult, but DNA-based analysis of faecal samples provides a relatively simple and non-destructive means of obtaining diet information at a fine taxonomic scale. James will talk about a study he was involved in that examined how the diet of Blue Tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) in Scotland changed over a 220 km transect and through the breeding season. He will provide a brief beginner’s guide to DNA analysis of faeces, then explore one of the more interesting aspects of the birds’ diet, namely the use of supplementary foods provided at garden bird feeders. The study found that the use of garden feeders was widespread, even in the most remote rural parts of the transect. Feeder usage also impacted breeding behaviour of Blue Tits, and preliminary analyses of long-term datasets of UK woodland birds show those species using feeders have growing population trends. This suggests that the impacts of supplementary feeding are larger and are more spatially extensive than previously appreciated and could be disrupting the natural interactions among species.

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for this month — continued from Page 1

Checking my April 2020 column indicates that the departures of these 4 species was earlier this year, with the last three all still reported in the same period last year.

This contrasts with the **Common Cicadabird** which was still reported from 2 locations, by a number of observers at the Tidbinbilla NR on 8 March, and one was reported as still calling at Warks/Blundells Creek Roads by Christine D on 15 March. These very late records cap off a season when this species has been reported many more times than I can recall over the many years I have been writing this column.

The **Brush Cuckoo**, which also often leaves by the end of February, was also reported from 3 locations during the period, one still from the mountains to the south-west of Canberra at Tidbinbilla NR on 9 March where Julie Clark and Alison Turner captured a very mottled, still dependent, young (host unclear) in a beautiful photo. The other two locations were the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR where Terry Munro and Joan Zealey observed a juvenile/immature on 8 and 13 March, respectively, and at Isaacs Pines on 14 March by David Dedenczuk. The **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was reported from the Percival Hill NR by Jean Casburn, who saw two large white birds with extremely long chunky bills flying high and heading north-east (but not calling) on 6 March. The BIRD INFO data on the COG website confirms that in particular the latter species has been rarely recorded in March (or even in February).

Of the other spring/summer migrant species which usually leave by mid-March, the **Dollarbird** was still reported from 3 locations, most recently from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 5 March. Checking on eBird Australia, for unclear reasons this species seemed to leave *en masse* on 22-23 February, with reports from another 5 locations on those 2 days. In contrast the **Rainbow Bee-eater** was still reported from around 20 locations, and 3 were still recorded on the COG trip to the Murrumbidgee River Track north of Tharwa on 28 March, a quite late sighting for this species. The **Sacred Kingfisher** was still reported from 11 locations, most recently one from Googong Dam Shoreline Walk on 25 March.

Of the species that mostly leave by the end of March/early April, a continuing big surprise is that, despite the very wet conditions at the end of the period, up to 25 March there were only 2 reports of the **White-throated Needletail** in the period; these were actually the first this summer/early autumn. Viv Rolland reported 20 over Cook on 25 February and Christine D 50 birds over the large dam at Uriarra Station on 15 March. There were then reports of 3-4 birds at 3 locations on 27-28 March. Viv Rolland also reported 3 of the related **Fork-tailed Swift** over Cook on 25 February, the only such report during the period.

Of the migratory cuckoos the **Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo** was reported from just 1 location, Sparrow Hill in Kowen Forest by Peter Bijlmakers on 2 March, and the **Shining Bronze-cuckoo** from just 2 locations, the most recent and only one this month being of a juvenile around 18 March by John Goldie and Kathy Walter during their Mt Majura woodland surveys. Likewise, the **Pallid Cuckoo** has been reported from 2 locations, the most recent and only one this month being by Peter Bijlmakers on 8 March at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. So the above cuckoo numbers in early autumn have continued to be low, despite the promising start in spring.

In contrast the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which I have mentioned many times is the least migratory of the local cuckoos, was still reported from 8 locations, the most recent being from ANBG on 28 March. One migrant cuckoo species that has had a bumper season is the **Eastern Koel**, reported from around 40 locations during the period, and with adults still present up to the time of completing this column. While the adults have been mostly quiet, their unprecedented breeding season is described in more detail below.

Of the other such birds, the **Latham's Snipe** was still reported from 6 locations, with the last reports of 4 of these on 13-14 March. The **Satin Flycatcher** has been reported from just 4 locations, two from the mountains to the south-west of Canberra, most recently on Moonlight Hollow Road by Peter Bijlmakers on 3 March. Liam Manderson recorded a male migrating through at Isabella Pond on the same date, and there was a late report of one on the peak of Mt Taylor on 26 March. The **Leaden Flycatcher** was reported from over 20 locations, and was still present at the end of the period. The **Rufous Fantail** was still reported from 12 locations, 6 of these still being from the mountains to the south-west of Canberra, most recently by Christine D at Warks/Blundells Creek Roads on 15 March (see the remarkable breeding record below). The four other records were of single birds moving through Canberra, the most recent report being by Greg Wood in Chapman on 27 March.



Satin Flycatcher

David Cook



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The **Australian Reed-Warbler** has been reported from over 40 locations in the period, up to the time of writing. **Fairy Martins** have been reported from 5 locations, and **Tree Martins** from 12 locations; again both were still present up to the end of the reporting period.

So during April please keep an eye out for the above and other spring/summer migrants which are still being reported, but usually leave during April. These include the **Noisy Friarbird** (many of these were reported flocking and moving through over the period), **Western** and **White-throated Gerygone** (still reported from 10 and 24 locations, respectively, in the period), and most of the **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** (fewer than usual large groups of the latter seem to have been reported moving through from mid-March). A number of these last two species will overwinter, as will the **Mistletoebird** and **Superb Parrot**.

Please also keep a lookout for the annual **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** migration with numbers usually peaking in the first half of April. Though Steve Read reported that on the morning of 28 February many small groups of **Yellow-Faced Honeyeater** were active in and over the forest on the track to Vanities Crossing near the Cotter Dam, the first reports of small groups moving through suburbia (Duffy and Kambah) were on 24 March, nearly a month later. This is a relatively late start for this migration compared with recent seasons; perhaps the significant rain event delayed them as they prefer to migrate on clear still mornings after cold nights. While better conditions were present over the last few days of the period, there was no indication that the major migration had begun. Watch out also for the **White-naped Honeyeater** which joins these flocks in April and is usually the dominant species towards the end of the month. **Dusky Woodswallows** also get together in flocks to migrate in March and April, often calling and drifting slowly northwards high overhead on calm, clear days.

Of the first arriving altitudinal migrants, only 12 of the over 30 locations from which the **Golden Whistler** was reported were urban or peri-urban, and for the **White-eared Honeyeater** just 9 of the around 40 locations. For the **Grey Shrike-thrush**, only 16 of the around 50 locations were urban or peri-urban. There were reports from 25 locations for the **Scarlet Robin** but only 7 of these were in peri-urban areas. The above indicates a relatively late movement to lower altitudes for these species, with the eBird Australia maps indicating more seemed to be moving in closer to Canberra over the final weekend. In contrast the **Flame Robin** has been recorded from 9 locations, but only one of these was urban or peri-urban (a female at Aranda Bushland NR on 19 March), so clearly this species is still to start moving in closer.

So look out for these and the other altitudinal migrants which usually arrive later such as the **Rose Robin** (5 reports, all from the mountains to the south-west of Canberra except for the one recorded on the COG trip to the Murrumbidgee River Track north of Tharwa on 28 March) and **Pink Robin** (no reports from the ACT so far in 2021, or 2020), the **Crescent** and **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** (no urban or peri-urban reports for either so far in 2021), and the **Swift Parrot** migrating from Tasmania (it will be very interesting to see where the bulk of this species will be located this autumn/winter).

Of the “unusual” species, perhaps the most interesting was the **Barn Owl** reported on 26 February by Greg Hosking in Farrer as “calling multiple times throughout the night, and then seen just after 6 am”. Many more may have been expected if the inland mouse plague reached Canberra, which is now in some doubt following reports of many mice drowning in the floods. Interestingly the closest record on eBird Australia this month is from near Wangaratta over 250 km to the south-west, with the closest observations to the west and north-west being at least 300 km away. So, it appears it would be some time before there is an influx of this species, if indeed it happens at all. It also explains just the single ACT record of the **Black-shouldered Kite** at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 13 March. Though the next closest record is from Yass still within the COG Aol, the closest after that is from Grenfell over 150 km distant. The late Jerry Olsen often underlined how much this species was a mouse specialist for its food.



White-eared Honeyeater

Graham Stephinson

Another interesting “unusual” species was Shoshana Rapley mentioning at the 10 March COG meeting that a **Bush Stone-curlew** (warabin) was recently picked up from Wee Jasper and handed in to Wildcare. On release at Mulligans Flat this bird flew to Gundagai in five hops over five nights. It is very interesting that, since 2017, I can find no inland record of this species on eBird closer than Savernake Station just north of the Victorian Border nearly 300 km away (one was observed during a COG outing there on 10 October 2017). Shoshana also indicated that birds present at Mulligans Flat made many

flights away from the sanctuary, including well into NSW. Again, except for some very local ones none of these are recorded on eBird, illustrating how the presence of this cryptic, nocturnal species is easily overlooked. It also once again emphasizes the role of wildlife carers, and again it will be interesting to see if any seabird species are handed in locally, as they were after the February 2020 floods.

As might be expected with the wet inland there has been only the single report of the **Freckled Duck**, 2 birds at Mulligans Flat NR by Jeb Kent on 4 March. **Australian Shelduck** have been reported from their usual spots around Bungendore and to the north of there; again the numbers elsewhere were dwarfed by the 650 ducks Michael Lenz and Julienne Kamprad reported from the eastern shores of Lake George on 25 February. In contrast **Plumed Whistling Ducks** have been reported only from Trucking Yard Lane, with a maximum of just 15 there on 26 March. Apart from records of a single duck at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 27 February, **Blue-billed Ducks** were only reported from Upper Stranger Pond, most recently on 15 March, with a maximum of seven seen there including two small ducklings by Sandra Henderson on 9 March. **Musk Duck** have been more widely observed and reported from 8 locations during the period, though numbers were never more than 2 ducks.

Reports for the **Stubble Quail** dropped to around 10 locations over the period, a further indication of how much we rely on their call for their presence. However, they are still higher than the **Brown Quail** reported from 6 locations. There has been only the single report of a **Painted Button-quail** at Sparrow Hill in Kowen Forest by Kim Farley on 25 February, but no more of the **Little Button-quail** during the period.

Great Crested Grebes have again been reported only from locations around the Cotter Dam. Interestingly the **Common Sandpiper** continued to be reported from the Isabella Pond up to 25 March; last year it left on 10 March, over a fortnight earlier. A single **Intermediate Egret** was also reported from there on 14 March. A maximum of 19 **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** was observed at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR as a single flock flying quite high across the area by Michael Lenz on 3 March. This is a very high number together based on the 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR).

Again, none of the rarer raptors have been reported over the period, except for a **Powerful Owl** photographed on Blundells Creek Road by Nick Thorne on 9 March. Two **Azure Kingfishers** were reported from Cotter Reserve area on 16 March, as well as one from Stony Creek NR on 7 March. The “free flying pet” **Major Mitchell’s Cockatoo** was again reported from Coombs Pond on 13 March, and a **Budgerigar** in natural colours flying with **Red-rumped Parrots** was reported from Hawker on 8 March.

Despite close checking the **Singing Honeyeater** at the Franklin Pond system has not been reported in the period, and may have moved on after the failed breeding attempts. The bird reported by Bron and Daryl King feeding in eucalypts and acacias at Ginninderra Creek, Melba on 26 March (around 5 km away) may be the same one. This was also in a creek corridor compared with it often being present in the driest of habitats inland. A **Blue-faced Honeyeater** was reported from Red Hill NR on 3 March, and another was enjoying the proteas in Cathy Schmidli’s Farrer garden on 14 and 27 March. Interestingly on both occasions it was accompanied by an immature **Grey Butcherbird**, a quite unlikely pairing. Both records extend the recent observations centered on Curtin to the south-east and south respectively.

A pair of **Scarlet Honeyeaters** was reported north of Gundaroo on 3 March (and a male as part of a mixed feeding flock from there the day after), as well as a further male moving about and feeding with **Yellow-faced** and **White-plumed Honeyeaters** in Mistletoe at Namadgi NP Visitors Centre on 8 March. Another pair of **Scarlet Honeyeaters** was then reported feeding in flowering callistemons in a Burra garden on the final few days of the period, with a further female reported from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 28 March.

Of the special birds I have been asking readers to keep a special lookout for continuing into 2021, the **Jacky Winter** was reported only from the known location, Namadgi NP Visitors Centre, with 2 birds there on 28 March. While the **Hooded Robin** was also only reported from Naas Rd at Apollo Rd up to 20 March, the most recent report of 4 birds included a photo of a female carrying food. Finally, **Restless Flycatchers** have been reported from 6 locations, all rural and five of them new for 2021. All were single birds except for two at Mullion on 27 February.

Probably due to the cool and moist conditions, reports of breeding have continued over the period, including the **Blue-billed Duck**, **Brush Cuckoo**, **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** and possible **Hooded Robin** records mentioned above. However, there have been some other remarkable records which are summarised as follows:

- One of these is Christine D’s finding of a pair of **Rufous Fantails** busily feeding a pair of young still in the nest (see photo on page 6) at Blundells Creek/Warks Road on 15 March. My check of the BIRD INFO data on the COG website reveals no entries at all of nests with young up to 2016-2017, just 1 record of a nest with eggs in February, with a few more records of dependent young, including 4 in March, though none in April. So, a very late breeding event indeed, and one wonders how the poor fledglings are likely to be able to find their way north within the next month.

- This also applies to the many late **Eastern Koel** fledglings recorded in the period, with over 110 new fledglings/juveniles reported since 24 February, at least 20 more than for the maximum total in any other year. The over 300 fledglings being able to be identified as different (and more as possibly different), is well over three times as many as in any previous season. This includes a fledgling in Rivett on 18 March which was still in the nest the day before, and at least four (several still being fed by **Red Wattlebirds**) together in my Chapman garden on 26 March, despite the intervening significant rain event. I fear many late fledglings will not be able to make the journey north, and I expect quite a number will be handed into wildlife care.
- The very good food supply is expected to be responsible for the extended breeding season of the major host, the **Red Wattlebird**, with at least 3 local examples of them feeding their own dependent young at the time of writing this column. My local records show the last of these are often observed in mid-February, and it seems clear that the **Eastern Koel** has exploited this opportunity to greatly extend its season as well.
- Another interesting and important breeding record is the **Brown Quail** pair with 8 young (2/3 the size of the adults) reported by Michael Lenz from Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 26 March. My checking of the BIRD INFO data on the COG website indicates this contains only dependent young records (and no other types) from December to February, with none in March or April, but single records in May and June.
- Lastly, a summary of the **dartar/cormorant** breeding at the lower Molonglo River over the period may be found in the separate report elsewhere in this issue of the COG outing there on 17 March. While breeding activity was only slightly reduced from the previous count on 24 February, I am unclear as to how much of this has survived the subsequent flooding during the significant rain event.

Again only a few reports of mixed feeding flocks (MFF) have come to my attention during the period. I expect due to the good food availability this autumn, species are finding it less necessary to band together. So please continue to look out for this autumn phenomenon, especially for the unexpected species often quietly feeding in amongst all the activity. Watch out too for the signs of birds that gather together in single species flocks. On 20 March John Layton posted on the COG chatline that he had counted 38 **Masked Lapwing** mainly grouped on the grass at the southern end of the No 1 Playing Field at Holt. He noted it was obviously a post-breeding autumn flock, but he did not believe he had noticed such a large gathering in the ACT before. While other responders



Rufous Fantail nest

Christine D


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quoted large numbers together from other locations in Australia, Chris Davey noted that a few years ago there were 60+ on the Turf Farm, next to Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR. This record is possibly the one in the 2017-2018 ABR, which shows a maximum of 67 birds at the latter in July 2017.

As a sign of autumn in the last few days of the period **Pied Currawongs** started gathering together in my Chapman GBS site giving their “winter” calls.

In respect of roosts and roosts flights, on the evening of 15 March John Layton noticed frenetic activity around a large gum some 200 m away at the Holt shops. About 20 **Magpie-larks** were speeding around the tree and calling loudly. On a closer look feverish activity still prevailed; with birds flying around the tree, landing on the outer canopy before moving inside, or they left the tree in small groups as still more groups arrived. Just as dusk was setting in the activity was still in full swing and in the end 40 or more **Magpie-larks** moved about inside the canopy. He returned shortly after dark and shone his torch into the tree, but it appeared deserted.

I have observed similar behaviour many times with up to 60 **Magpie-larks** in 2015 and 2016 as written up for CBN. One reason I expect John was not able to find them in the tree after dark may be that in my experience birds often do not roost close together, the main reason why I have always tried to count such birds (**Red-rumped Parrots**, **Common Mynas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** etc) as they are moving into the roost. Even the last-named species can be very difficult to find in the trees once it gets dark. Another possibility is that they roosted in another tree nearby, which I have observed as well.

The higher **Magpie-lark** activity in my GBS site has continued, but only on one occasion have 12 birds been seen to gather together pre-roosting. Meanwhile the **Common Myna** roosting numbers in my GBS site have grown to over 50. Martin Butterfield also reported there have been large numbers of **Galahs** (200-300 at least) roosting in the trees in Bunda and Akuna Streets, and in City Walk.

April is the last of the more than 3 months when there is significant bird movement in the COG AoI. So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above (in particular for the **White-throated Needletail** and **Fork-tailed Swift**), including those that usually leave by the end of April, for the arriving altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any autumn breeding activity. Please also continue to keep a special look out for the **Restless Flycatcher**, **Jacky Winter** and **Hooded Robin**. 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



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Steve Wilson Medal Citation

Bruce Lindenmayer OAM



Bruce Lindenmayer OAM was raised in regional Queensland. He moved to Melbourne and then to Canberra in 1969.

Bruce has been an active member of COG for over 30 years. He names COG as the organisation that has been the most important to him in his 50 years in Canberra.

Bruce was President of COG from 1990 to 1992. At this time Gungahlin was sheep paddocks but destined to be a new town. Community groups including COG were active in a campaign to save Mulligans Flat from future housing development. Bruce, as COG's representative on the Conservation Council Executive, compiled and edited the submission to the ACT Government proposing Mulligans Flat for a reserve, which brought together data, including important data about threatened woodland birds from COG's ACT Bird Atlas.

In December 1992 Bruce wrote an article in CBN on the campaign in which COG played a major role, to preserve the woodlands at Mulligans Flat. With Jenny Bounds, visits were organised to the area with appropriate politicians and ACT government officials including Bill Wood, the ACT Environment Minister, Michael Moore MLA and John Langmore MP (the local Federal Member and member of COG). Jenny took over from Bruce as President of COG and they both then represented COG on the Conservation Council and kept the pressure on for a reserve to be formed. Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve was formed in 1995.

Bruce's other COG interests include woodland management, cat containment and exotic bird control. Bruce has been active in the Common Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG).

Bruce served on the COG Committee again from 2011-12 to 2015-2016 and served on the Steve Wilson Medal Committee for six years from its inception in 2014 until 2021 when he stood down in his 85th year.

Bruce has sometimes been heard to say that after 30 years in many roles in COG, he finally reached his zenith by being appointed "tea person" for COG Meeting Nights, a role he has filled for many years.

Kama Nature Reserve, the suburb of Whitlam and the Molonglo Valley NES Plan

Buffer zones are identified as an important mitigating strategy to absorb or reduce the adverse ecological impacts with urban development and associated edge effects. Appropriate buffer widths are particularly important for small conservation areas with a high percentage of edge habitat such as Kama Nature Reserve

The development of Whitlam threatens to impact key conservation values within the reserve. The ACT Government is committed to the establishment of an urban edge buffer between the eastern edge of the reserve and the planned urban development with a buffer width ranging from 200m in the northern woodland section of the reserve to 70m in the southern grassland section.

The ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) has set up a long-term study to determine whether the ACT Government meets its commitments under the Molonglo Valley National Environmental Significance (NES) Plan (2011) to protect Kama against urban edge effects and inappropriate fire management. The study also aims to determine the effectiveness of the Kama buffer through quantifying the impacts of urban edge effects on woodland bird community composition and abundance. For a link to the Plan see [Microsoft Word - NES Plan 120911.doc \(act.gov.au\)](#)

As part of the long-term ecological monitoring project EPSDD required 15 sites to be monitored quarterly between summer 2019 and spring 2020 and to be repeated in five years' time. Since 2005, nine sites within the reserve have been monitored quarterly as part of the COG woodland bird monitoring project in the same manner as required by EPSDD.

COG was contracted to survey the nine COG woodland sites, as well as an additional six sites that lay outside the Reserve, two outside the western boundary on private land and four within the proposed buffer area between the reserve and the suburb of Whitlam.

The 12 month contract was completed in November 2020. At this stage it is planned that a contract for a repeat survey to resurvey the 15 sites will be issued in or around 2025 by which time the buffer zone will have been established.

Chris Davey

Committee News

The COG committee met on 18 March for its regular monthly meeting.

The committee held its planning day on 27 February and thinks that it made good progress on strategies for tackling several big issues and a handful of smaller ones. There is a lot to do if COG is going to implement the suggestions from the 2019 survey.

COG has accumulated a large amount of data on the birds in its area of interest (see <http://canberrabirds.org.au/observing-birds/frequently-asked-questions/history-of-reporting/> for a definition of the AOI). Analysis of the data could contribute to answering important questions about birds in general or specific species. The committee has approved a new form to streamline preparation and assessment of requests for access to the data. It will be linked from the Maps, Forms and Lists page (<http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/maps-forms-and-lists/>).

The President has been discussing access to the Fyshwick Sewage Treatment Plant with ICON Water. While general access will remain prohibited, there have been preliminary conversations about the possibility of building viewing points that would allow better views from outside the fences than is currently possible.

The Committee has approved a new copyright policy relating to photos, videos and other material provided to COG for use on the website and in its other publications. The text of the policy is available in this issue of Gang-gang (see page 10) and on the website. Anyone whose photos or other material are included on the website is asked to read the policy and contact cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au before 30 June 2021.

Brittany Brockett led a walk at Jerrabomberra Wetlands on 13 March for young birders accompanied by their parents. Although only two were able to come this time, it was good to meet such knowledgeable young people. More walks will be planned and advertised.

Neil Hermes *President*

Alison Mackerras *Minutes Secretary*

COG policy on use of photographs and sound recordings on the COG website

Every so often, COG receives a request from an individual or organisation that would like to use one of the photographs or sound recordings that are on our website at canberrabirds.org.au/our-birds/photo-gallery/ and the individual species pages. Where this request is for a purpose that aligns with COG's purposes, that is, education, research or conservation relating to birds, then COG would like to be able to provide the material directly to the requester without the need to find and then communicate with the original photographer or sound-recordist in each case.

The simple solution agreed by the COG Committee is for each photographer or sound-recordist to grant COG an unlimited non-exclusive licence to use their provided material on the COG website, in COG publications or in COG social media, and to allow COG to permit third parties to use the material non-commercially where COG determines that the third-party use aligns with COG's objectives. Requests for commercial use will be relayed by COG to the creator as on-going copyright holder.

The full wording of COG's policy for photographs and sound recordings will be made available on the COG website. Anyone whose photos or other material are included on the website is asked to read the policy and contact cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au before 30 June 2021. If anyone with photographs or recordings on the COG website is not comfortable with these arrangements, then COG will happily remove their material from the website. The policy will also apply to new material provided by members.

COG Committee

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 28 February - Flea Bog Flats

On a warm and sunny morning, 18 COG members and friends met at the playground just off Jaeger Circuit, Bruce, for a three-stage amble through the local woodlands. Julia Raine, the Convener of the Friends of Flea Bog Flats, gave us a short introduction to the nearby Flats on the Aboriginal and European history of the area and the efforts to ensure the area does not become covered in buildings. After a short walk to the Flats we entered via a well-hidden track and found the small area of forgotten, dense and tangled vegetation which is a haven for birds.

The birds soon started to appear, the most obvious being the **Silvereyes**, all with pale flanks, that appeared to be feeding as they passed through on their northerly journey. Another highlight was some excellent views of a young **Pacific Koel** which managed to keep two **Red Wattlebirds** busy finding food. Other species recorded included **Crested Pigeon** and **Spotted Dove** and **Gang-gang Cockatoos** flying over, contributing to a total of 26 species.

After a slow amble through the Flats we crossed Haydon Drive and started the second stage along Bruce Ridge. What a difference water and dense understorey can make, with the dry woodland along Bruce Ridge producing only 16 species. Of note were the 18 **Rock Doves** and many **Rainbow Lorikeets**, both no doubt due to the proximity of Calvary Hospital. Interestingly, virtually no **Silvereyes** were recorded when compared to the numbers passing through the Flats. We managed to find a route along the Ridge and back across Haydon Drive to Gossan Hill where we spent about 45 minutes walking the eastern side of the Reserve.

Chris Davey

Sunday 7 March – Wee Jasper

Eleven members travelled to Wee Jasper on a perfect autumn morning. We were warmly welcomed by members Patricia and Richard who have a property on the edge of the village, with a wonderful garden of limestone rocks, fruit trees, native and exotic trees, and plenty of shrubs which provide protection to a variety of small birds. The house block is surrounded by paddocks (for Angora goats) which run down to the Goodradigbee River. A slow wander over almost 3 hours yielded 50 species, with vocal garden residents including **Olive-backed Oriole**, **Satin Bowerbird**, **Noisy Friarbird** and **Australian King Parrots**. A **Peregrine Falcon** whizzed past and was missed by most, but later did a slower fly-by over open paddocks, giving good views to everyone. **Diamond Firetails** and a **Restless Flycatcher** were other highlights.

After a leisurely morning tea on the house verandah, we took our leave of Patricia and Richard and drove the short distance to a section of The Hume and Hovell Track. By this time, it was quite warm and birds were less active, but eagle-eyed Ryu soon spotted 4 **Spotted Quail-thrush**, two of which gave close views – a new bird for several people. Our 1 km walk into the forest also yielded a calling **Australian Owlet-nightjar**, **White-throated Gerygone** and **Eastern Yellow Robin** among the 7 extra species added here.



Goodradigbee River at Wee Jasper

Tee Tong Teo



Peregrine Falcon

Tee Tong Teo

We then lunched in Billy Grace Reserve on the banks of Wee Jasper Creek “serenaded” by a begging **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** which made hearing any other birds almost impossible. However, we did manage to add **Yellow Thornbill** and **Mistletoebird**.

Soon after we crossed the Goodradigbee River on the way home, Sandra spotted a raptor circling close to the road and a quick stop followed. The bird had obligingly perched and revealed itself to be a **Brown Falcon**, bringing our species total for the morning to 50.

Many thanks to Patricia and Richard for hosting us, and to Lia for creating the eBird list.

Sue Lashko

Sunday 14 March – Scott Nature Reserve, Mulloon

This outing was postponed due to wet weather and will now be held on Sunday 23 May. See **Future field trips** for details.

Wednesday 17 March – Molonglo River

This Wednesday walk was planned so members could take a look at what is probably the major breeding site for cormorants and **Australasian Darters** in the ACT.

The birds did not disappoint, with occupied nests, young in nests, and/or newly fledged young for **Little Pied Cormorants**, **Little Black Cormorants**, **Great Cormorants** and **Australasian Darters** observed. Sadly, some of the lower nests have now disappeared, swallowed up in the floods which passed down that river only a week or so later.

A good number of **Satin Bowerbirds** were seen, as was a **Sacred Kingfisher**, as well as many bush birds. A total of 34 species was seen.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 28 April – Murrumbidgee River walk from Tharwa

Nineteen members met at 08:30 in the carpark by the bridge over the Murrumbidgee River, at Tharwa. The river was flowing well, evidence of all the rain we have had in the district over the last 7-10 days. It was a glorious autumn day, despite an expectation that there may be fog, which was patchy on the way through the Tuggeranong Valley. We had a leisurely stroll and encountered a small mixed feeding flock early in the morning. We were looking into the sun, which was still low in the sky, so we relied heavily on calls to identify which species were included.

Some of the seasonal migrants were still around including **White-throated** and **Western Gerygone**, **Rufous Whistler** and **Noisy Friarbird**. **Silvereyes**, mainly the Tasmanian race, were prolific and **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were moving through in small numbers, with the largest flock numbering 20. No **White-naped Honeyeaters** were observed. A **Scarlet Robin** was heard and a few of us saw a **Rose Robin**. Four **Australasian Darters** circled overhead, ensuring nice views for everybody. Other highlights were **Speckled Warbler**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Rainbow Bee-eaters**. There was a little water still flowing over the causeway, which is just a couple of hundred metres from the end of the accessible track in any case, so we turned around there.

A total of forty-five species was observed.

Lia Battisson



Silvereye

Tee Tong Teo



Speckled Warbler

Tee Tong Teo

New Places: March 2021

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**.

Flea Bog Flat

This area off Jaeger Circuit in Bruce is certainly one I'll visit again. A fledgling **Pacific Koel** was moving around the woodland patch, with two very busy **Red Wattlebirds** appearing every few minutes with food. Throughout the area there were dozens of **Silvereyes**, with smaller numbers of **Grey Fantails** and various thornbills.

Kowen Forest – East Kowen

I visited the Kowen Forest off the Kings Highway near Queanbeyan to look for the **Scarlet Robins** that had been reported. Even before I'd parked the car I could see a couple further down toward the locked gates, hopping on the road and perched on the fence. It was not a great day weatherwise, so I did not spend a lot of time there, but walked some of the tracks on the left of the road. It became obvious there was a web of cycling tracks, so I could easily have become lost, but it was filled with small birds, including **Leaden Flycatchers**, **Varied Sittellas**, **Spotted Pardalotes** and various thornbills. Next time I visit I'll have a map so I can explore more of the area. I saw 30 species in 40 minutes.

Pierces Creek Forest – Vanitys Crossing Road

This visit to Vanitys Crossing was with the express purpose of finding a **Spotted Quail-thrush**, and involved walking the road beyond the locked gate at the crossing, with Lach Read as a guide. This particular area was not one I'd explored previously. After a strenuous walk (for me, having shorter legs than my three companions!) of nearly 2km, we came to a corner where the birds had been seen previously. After a short time one was heard nearby, and was spotted sitting very close to the road, on a dead branch, and calling non-stop. Well worth the effort! **Great Crested Grebes** were spotted on the Cotter River far below, **Superb Lyrebirds** were calling, and a good variety of bush birds were added to the list for the morning.

Queanbeyan Nature Reserve

Where is it: off Hoover Road in Queanbeyan, which runs off Lanyon Drive.

This is largely a grassland reserve, with the Button Wrinklewort, a critically endangered plant species, found here in good numbers. There are signs asking that walkers stay on the formed tracks, which does limit birdwatching, but since it was raining and I wasn't keen on walking through tall wet grass, it wasn't too limiting. I started by walking along the track from the entrance, where a large information sign is about to be erected if the new frame structure is an indication. I followed that track for about 1km, where it disappeared into a low point with a lot of water flowing across the track. After returning to the entry I then walked down the road alongside the reserve (past the archery and dog training areas on the other side). Highlights in the reserve were **Australasian Pipits** flushed off the track, and a **Peregrine Falcon**. On a better day when the main track is not flooded, there may be more bush birds in the more wooded areas I couldn't get to.

Sandra Henderson

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.

Easter Saturday 3 April - Narrabundah Hill - morning outing

Description: 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 again been timed for the autumn 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 these two boundaries, depending on conditions and the species seen possibly along most of the western one, and we will 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 the Scarlet Robin and mixed feeding flocks, or late departing summer migrants such as the gerygones.

Meeting time: As it is the last day of Daylight Savings, **this walk will start at 9:00 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 timing in 2019).

Meeting place: Meet 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.** Please take water and morning tea to have on the track.

Name of leader and contact details: To participate, please contact Jack Holland by E-mail on jandaholland@bigpond.com – please include your mobile and emergency contact name and number.

Sunday 11 April – K2C surveys Williamsdale - 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 7 April**. Email: ntaws@bigpond.com or 0408 210 736.

Sunday 18 April - Goorooyarroo NR

Description: Goorooyarroo NR covers 829 hectares and is located in north-east Canberra. It consists mainly of Yellow Box-Red Gum grassy woodland and has a predator-proof fence within part of the reserve. It is a great reserve for finding birds typical of this habitat, such as honeyeaters, pardalotes and thornbills, and we will hopefully see **Superb Parrots**.

eBird hotspots: Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve

Meeting time and place: 8.30 am at the carpark off Horse Park Drive near the intersection of Horse Park Drive and the Federal Highway, NOT the entrance near the old Rocks Carpark.

Walking distance: 5 km approximately - we will see how far into the reserve we wish to walk on the day.

Degree of difficulty: Fairly easy as we will be walking the main undulating track in the reserve.

End time (approx.): 12.30 pm

What to bring: Water and morning tea.

Participants must register with the leader, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Numbers limited: no

Name of leader and contact details: Suzi Bond, email chowchilla29@yahoo.com

Saturday 24 to Monday 26 April – Mallacoota – ANZAC Day weekend

This trip is currently full. If you wish to go on a waiting list in case of cancellations, contact martinflab@gmail.com

Sunday 2 May – private property near Tharwa

Description: We will be led by the owners of the property across some open grassland before exploring a valley of Yellow-box woodland for a couple of kilometres. We will then loop back to the homestead for a relaxed morning tea.

The 270-acre property is accredited with 'Land for Wildlife' and we will walk through the section that is designated as part of the Conservation Area for the Box Woodland Programme and is also a pink-tailed worm lizard Habitat Protection area.

Expect the usual range of rosellas and other parrots, a number of honeyeaters and treecreepers. We will also look for other autumn birds such as **Scarlet Robin** and mixed feeding flocks.

Those who are keen for a bit of a challenge can walk to the top of the hill from the homestead for excellent views across Namadgi National Park.

Meeting time and place: 8:30 am, on south side of Tharwa Bridge, on the left near the public toilets, for carpooling.

Walking distance: Approximately 4 km

Degree of difficulty: easy-medium (at times a moderate slope and slightly rough track).

End time: approximately 11:30 AM to 12:00 PM

What to bring: water, hat and sturdy shoes. Morning tea is being generously provided by the owners of the homestead (Gold coin contribution to the Smith's Road Rural Fire Brigade).

Numbers limited: yes, maximum 16.

Need to register: yes, with Sue Genner at suegenner@gmail.com or 0418 670 704, providing name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Sunday 9 May – Goulburn

This outing, slightly further afield than our usual day trips, will visit the Goulburn Wetlands and the Marsden Weir. At the wetlands, there are ponds which attract a variety of waterbirds, and COG member Frank is a very regular volunteer there. The Marsden Weir is on the Wollondilly River, and there is a walking track along the river. Over 90 species have been seen at the weir and waterworks reserve, and over 130 at the wetlands. Numbers limited to 20 participants. Please bring lunch and the usual water, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat.

Registration is essential, to Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com; please provide your name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Meet at 8am at the National Library carpark for carpooling (carpark on the corner, across from Questacon). There is free parking there at weekends. Suggested petrol contribution \$7 per passenger.

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 22 May – Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

This morning walk will be the first for 2021 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Anthony Overs will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for a couple of hours. Meet at 9.15am at the ANBG bus shelter. Registration is essential; please provide your name and mobile phone number, as well as an emergency contact name and number. Book your place with Anthony (0419 202 155, or anthony.overs@gmail.com), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please make sure to bring your binoculars and field guide. **If you do not have binoculars, please let me know as COG can supply you with a pair to use on the day.**

Note that the aim of the walk is to introduce you to bird-watching, not bird photography, so please leave your camera at home.

Anthony Overs

Sunday 23 May – Scott Nature Reserve, Mulloon

Description: Scott Nature Reserve is in the Mulloon area, south of the Kings Highway, approximately halfway between Bungendore and Braidwood. It covers an area of 151 ha. NSW NPWS has given permission to COG to visit the Reserve. It is renowned as a stronghold of the threatened **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** as the Black Sheoak is prominent there. The Reserve is rarely visited by birders.

eBird hotspots: none yet. I have nominated the Reserve as a hotspot.

Meeting time and place: 08:30 am at the car park of Mick Sherd Oval, Gibraltar Street, Bungendore: ☎35.254229, 149.444036

Walking distance: 7 km approx.

Degree of difficulty: moderate to difficult as it commences and ends with climbing over a gate and 1 km of bush-bashing. The rest is on a good track.

End time (approx.): 12:30 pm

What to bring: water & morning tea

Numbers limited: yes

Name of leader: David McDonald

Registration is essential at email 14mar21@canberrabirds.org.au, or phone/text the leader on 0416 231 890 - please provide your name and mobile phone number, as well as an emergency contact name and number.

Sunday 30 May – Mulanggari Grasslands NR

Description: The reserve is 160 hectares and includes native and exotic pasture and endangered Temperate Grassland. There is Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy woodland on the north and west ridges. Highlights have included **Superb Parrot**, **Stubble Quail**, **Brown Songlark**, **Australasian Pipit** and **Eurasian Skylark**.

eBird hotspots: Mulanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve.

Meeting time and place: Meet at 9.00am at the Newsome Street entry in Franklin via Well Station Drive off Gungahlin Drive or Flemington Road, then Hoskins St through to Gwen Meredith Loop. Sturdy boots and gaiters are recommended due to long grass, grass seeds and thistles.

Walking distance: 5 km, a medium to hard walk.

Time ending: 12.30 pm.

What to bring: water, morning tea and something waterproof to sit on.

Numbers limited: yes, maximum of 20.

Leader and contact details: Bill Graham graham.br63@grapevine.com.au. Participants must register with the leader, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and number of an emergency contact.

Tom Oliver Award 2019 - Birdlife Photography

At the January 2021 COG meeting, Con Boekel gave a short talk about the bird-related things he has done since retirement. One of the things he has done is write a photo essay for which he won the Tom Oliver Award in 2019. The 28-page essay is being published in Gang-gang over three issues. The first part was published in the February issue and the second part in the March issue. The final part follows here.

Bird photography for what?

A photo essay

If the eye is a window to the world as well as a mirror to the soul, what is a camera?



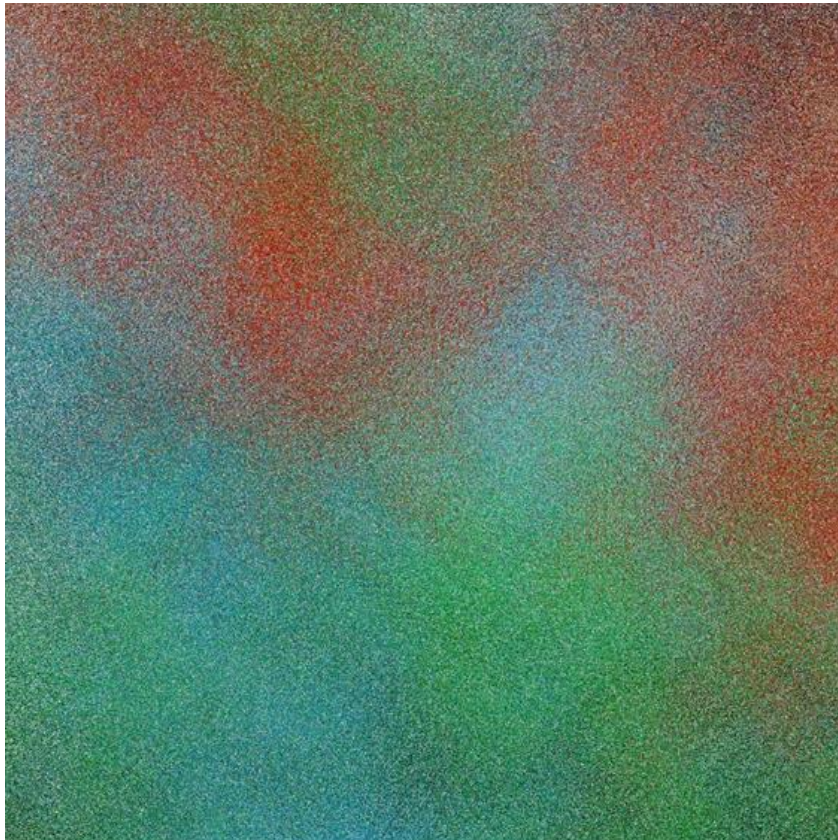
Grey Butcherbird

*Image taken on 31 August 2017 at Kingscliff, NSW¹ f/7.1, 1/400sec, ISO
1600, 500mm²*

In this image the author is reflected in the eye of a Grey Butcherbird.

1. All images were captured by the author using Canon equipment, generally a combination of a Canon 5D Mk IV camera and a Canon EF 500mm 1:4 L series lens.
2. Each image is annotated with a basic set of technical details. These relate to capture only but are intended to show that there is virtually an infinity of technical choices available to bird photographers when capturing, processing and presenting an image. Images have generally been processed using DPP4, PSE 13 and Neat Image.

9. Extinction



Paradise Parrot

*Image captured on 8 February 2019 at CSIRO Gungahlin, ACT f/8,
1/200 sec, ISO 2000, 14mm*

Recently extinct species may continue to exist only as specimens in collections or in museum displays. The last Paradise Parrot was recorded in the wild about 90 years ago. Cattle grazing, changes to burning practices, and possibly the introduction of pathogens are thought to be implicated in the extinction of the Paradise Parrot.

Around a million other species are threatened with joining the Paradise Parrot.

What choices might photographers make when making images about extinction and extinct birds? It can be a difficult challenge! It is much easier to choose to photograph presence than the absence of presence. Do we choose to take images of landscapes, seascapes and skyscapes bereft of birds?

Do we take images of threatening processes? Do we provide commentary that links images to extinctions or to potential extinctions?

In this image I have chosen to express extinction as the dissolution of Von Humboldt's connectedness. In particular, I have avoided any semblance of a living creature. Once a bird is extinct its colours, and the distribution of colour in the bird's plumage, no longer have the functions they had when the birds were alive. For example, the vibrancy of the male's colours may have been a signal to a female making choices about whether a male was healthy and strong and would therefore have made a good partner for her reproductive efforts. With extinction this meaning is lost as are a host of other connections.

The Paradise Parrot has long been of special importance to me. Its species name is '*pulcherrimus*' which means 'most beautiful'. Gilbert, its European discoverer, was so taken by its beauty that he wanted Gould to name it after him. 'Paradise' and 'Paradise Lost' evoke special meanings in our culture.

How could I present an image of the extinction of the Paradise Parrot?

To achieve the intended effects for this image I first captured an image of some CSIRO Wildlife Collection specimens. Just seeing the specimens was quite an emotional experience for me. Then I used very heavy post processing to redistribute and disorganise the colours. I expressed my sense of personal loss at the extinction of the Paradise Parrot by creating a beautiful field of colours derived from Paradise Parrot plumage. *Homo sapiens* inherited a paradise of biodiversity. What will we leave?

10. Adaptation and evolution



Grey-crowned Babbler

*Image captured on 27 April 2019 at St George, Qld f/6.3, 1/1000
sec, ISO 2000, 700mm*

The Anthropocene Era is a global exercise in stopping evolution altogether in a growing number of species and accelerating evolutionary pressures on many other species. We can confidently expect that birds will attempt to adapt. The best adapters will more likely survive and breed. How might bird photographers demonstrate adaptation and evolution? In one sense, this is an almost automatic choice because it is happening all around us all the time. On the other hand, some photographic mores inhibit photographs of adaptation. In particular, there is some adherence to false expressions of 'natural'. What could be more natural than species adapting to new and 'unnatural' circumstances?

Much of the range of the Grey-crowned Babbler has been cleared or otherwise altered by farming regimes. Fire regimes, hydrology, and plant composition have all been extensively altered.

Now the Grey-crowned Babbler is adapting to built environments. I have chosen to demonstrate this adaptive behaviour by showing a bird gathering lawn clippings for nest material. I have also chosen to include a section of kerb. Minutes earlier, the bird had been feeding along the kerb line, the kerb having served to accumulate some soil and some detritus – a suitable new environment for growing Babbler food. In choosing this image, I have given priority to telling an adaptation story over what might otherwise be considered to be an ideal image. In particular, I have chosen a ‘messy’ composition. The collection of nesting material offers hope that the birds are not only adapting but evolving to meet their altered circumstances. The Grey-crowned Babbler conservation status is ‘secure’.

11. Resilience



Australian Pelican

Image captured on 24 May 2019 at Bourke, NSW f/9, 1/3200, ISO 1600, 500mm

The Australian Pelican breeds in selected locations and then disperses over vast distances. When it comes time to breed, the birds return to their breeding range. Why were the birds in this image leaving Bourke at this time? Because the Darling River was drying up as a result of a record drought as well as excessive off-take for irrigation.

Elsewhere, a cyclonic downpour was sending a massive surge of water towards Lake Eyre – a major breeding location when flooded.

Evolution has fine-tuned bird aerodynamics in response to the laws of physics. This flock is gaining height using a thermal. When the birds have gained sufficient height, they will glide in search of the next thermal. By riding repeated thermals, the birds can cover huge distances while using very little energy. This species is rated as 'least concern' on the IUCN Red List. Will the Australian Pelican's energy efficiency and its resilience help it to survive ever greater human impacts on Australia's water resources?

How might bird photographers express the hope for the future that lies in the resilience of birds?

For this image I looked for an opportunity to capture the birds arranged in a circle formation while gaining height by riding a thermal. I was hoping the birds would move directly overhead to emphasise the axis of the thermal. I also looked for an image in which all the wings were spread wide – not a single bird is using energy by flapping its wings. I cropped to a square format to emphasise the birds circling.

Conclusion – Acting locally

We are well into the biggest, fastest, and most intense environmental changes since *Homo sapiens* became a separate species. As bird photographers, we can try to ignore these changes. But the changes themselves will probably not allow that to happen. We can try to ameliorate the impacts of the changes by harnessing our photography. Taking a beautiful bird image for its own sake remains a valid exercise but we need to move beyond that. This essay has explored some of the ways of thinking about our bird photography that might help send various forms of SOS messages on behalf of the birds.

The birds demonstrate that the life force is strong within them. They will try to adapt and to evolve. They are resilient.

The biggest single choice we can make is to lend the birds a hand with our bird photography.

Cornelis (Con) Boekel

2 May 2019



Acknowledgements

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Dr Graham Cam PhD and the team at Birdlife Photography for providing a constructive and ethical framework from within which to develop my bird photography.

Dr Leo Joseph PhD and the team at CSIRO National Wildlife Collection for providing access to specimens of the Paradise Parrot.

Dr Glenn Pure PhD and Dr Ian Wilson PhD for their particular help in developing technical aspects of my bird photography.

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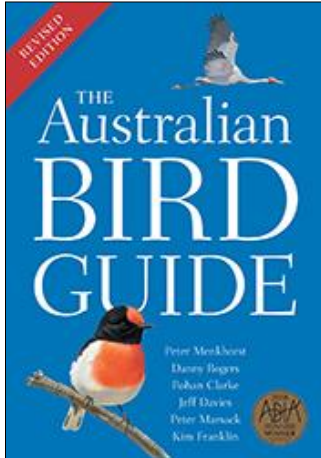
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Publications for sale

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

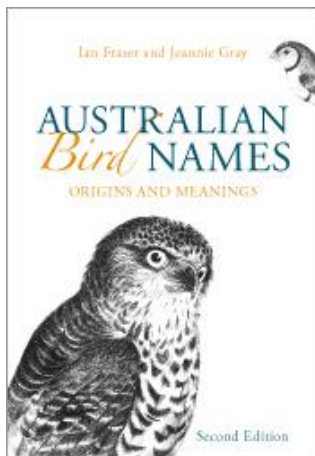


The Australian Bird Guide— Revised Edition

Peter Menckhorst, 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

2020-2021 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new member:

A Laracy

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for May 2021 edition:

Wednesday 28 April 2021

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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COG E-mail Discussion List

COG has an email discussion list for members and friends: 'CanberraBirds'.

Join (subscribe to) the list by following the links on the COG website or by sending an email message to canberrabirds-subscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au. The subject line and body of the email can be empty.

To unsubscribe, either permanently or temporarily, send an email message to canberrabirds-unsubscribe@lists.canberrabirds.org.au.

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