



Gang-gang

JUNE 2024

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING

Wednesday 12 June 2024

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

The June 2024 meeting will be a normal face-to-face one held at our usual venue. As COVID is still widespread in the community attendees should heed social distancing and good hygiene practice etc, and use their common sense and stay home if they have COVID symptoms. Mask wearing is recommended.

Kim Farley - Pilotbird in the ACT. Rare? Yes. Hard to find? Not so much.

Matt Herring - Tracking the Australian Painted-snipe, a wetland enigma

Please note that construction at CGGS is currently occurring around the Gabriel Drive parking area, and access to there is not available. So please use the Chapel Drive entrance and park there. Given the problems we had with access to the Multi-media Centre (MMT) from there at the May meeting, the [CGGS has provided a better alternative route as shown in the map on p 8](#).

Once parked proceed down past the Chapel and smaller Admin Offices, keeping them to your left. Just past the

[Continued Page 2](#)

Everyone welcome

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

There was only one moderate rain event about 10-12 days into the five weeks from 24 April to 28 May inclusive covered by this column. Otherwise, the weather has been mainly dry and only gradually getting cooler, but with as yet no really cold days or severe frost. Despite this bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (AoI) seems to have been very low. With a few exceptions most of the spring/summer migrants which don't overwinter were not reported during the period. There has also been a very low number of "unusual" species reported, with no reported "specials" which allowed many observers to view them.

Of spring/summer migrants still present in April, during the period there were no further reports of the **Black-eared Cuckoo** (last reported on 1 April), **Brush Cuckoo** (30 March), **Pallid Cuckoo** (also 30 March), **Eastern Koel** (3 April) and **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** (7 April). However, there was still a single report of a **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** heard at Campbell

[Continued Page 4](#)



Swift Parrot

Geoffrey Dabb

latter turn left along a relatively flat and straight broad path keeping the columns to you left. Near to the end, go left up the 3 m wide steps, turn half right and you will find an open glass door. Go through this, across the empty room and past the toilets, and then either enter the MMT through the bottom door or go further along and up the steps where you reach the usual entry door. Though it is well lit, as it will be dark a torch for finding your way to the MMT and back to your car after the meeting is recommended.

The short presentation will be by **Kim Farley** on "**Pilotbird in the ACT. Rare? Yes. Hard to find? Not so much**"

This short presentation is based on one Kim gave at the Australasian Ornithological Conference in 2023 but will focus a little less on the data and a little more on the bird itself - including where it lives in the ACT, its appearance, its beautiful song, and how you can maximise your chances of experiencing this delightful local species.

The main presentation will be by **Matt Herring**, the lead wildlife ecologist at Murray Wildlife, on "**Tracking the Australian Painted-snipe, a wetland enigma**".

Matt will introduce this cryptic wetland bird; explain why they are one of Australia's most elusive species and provide a national sightings update. He will present all the latest information on the birds being tracked, including some unexpected finds about where the birds can roost, along with "Gloria" and "Marcelina", who have recently captured the Australian public's attention with their large movements of over 1000 kilometres. If you don't have it already, you are bound to catch the painted-snipe bug!

Summary of Presentations from the May Meeting

The short presentation was by Doug Liang on "MARCH OF THE MINERS (or why I really don't like Noisy Miners anymore)".

While Doug labelled it a "shamelessly unscientific observation" in his local area around Waramanga over the past 20 years, it was clear from the questions after that many in the audience shared his experience that the Noisy Miner's movement into gardens has driven out many species, in particular the smaller ones.

Doug attributed the expansion of the Noisy Miner's range (in his case from local reserves as well as from the southwest side of Mt Taylor) to two main events, the 1997-2009 Millennium Drought and the 2003 Canberra Bushfires, and particularly the long period of reduced eucalyptus flowering.

Whereas they traditionally foraged and territorially mobbed in eucalypt canopies, since the more recent drought and fires the Noisy Miner has been observed at ground level in Doug's garden, where they forage for nectar and fearlessly mob all other species.

He felt that while the three recent wet years may have produced some more nectar, much of it may have washed out in the rain, perhaps providing little incentive for the Noisy Miners to return to their local reserves.

Doug divided an analysis of his records of the species recorded in his garden into "little obvious change, modest or rapid decline, gone, or increasing". Apart from the smaller birds it was a surprise that even larger aggressive birds such as the Red Wattlebird and Common Myna were designated as rapid decliners or even gone.

He did end up on a slightly brighter note with the recent reappearance of both the Eastern Spinebill and White-browed Scrubwren in his garden.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Doug for his interesting presentation about an event in his local area which many of us have shared. We appreciate the effort he put into preparing and delivering this presentation, which once again demonstrated the extreme value of making careful local bird observations.

The main presentation was a shared one between Michael Mulvaney and Chris Davey on “How a citizen science project has informed us about the Gang-gang Cockatoo”.

The audience was very impressed to learn from Michael that this project on the Gang-gang Cockatoo, which was listed as endangered nationally following a 69% decline in reporting rates over 20 years and was significantly affected by the 2019-2020 bush fires, covers the whole of its SE Australia range, and not just the ACT.

To date the call for information has led to the reports of 1350 “activity around hollows” sightings (950 in the ACT) of which around 100 are now known to be nest sites. All of these are in eucalypts with some dead trees used in wet years due to flooding problems.

Many of these nests are within inner suburban ACT and tend to be in clusters within 250 m of the urban edge. Diet composing of 275 different food items has also been determined from 16,798 photographed feeding events.

Chris presented results of the past 3 breeding seasons, noting egg laying to fledgling takes about 12 weeks with the latter occurring mainly in January. There has been a surprising around 60% fledgling success once eggs have been laid, far higher than for local cockatoos such as the Galah. Reasons for nesting failure were also listed, with the Brushtail Possum a major factor.

An ongoing ACT Parks and Conservation project trying to determine abundance and local movements was also described. Despite a considerable effort in 2021 distance sampling found there were insufficient counts to determine abundance. Genetic sampling using feathers has also had limited success, largely due to misidentified Crimson Rosella breast feathers, as has the trial use of artificial nest tubes to enhance breeding opportunities.

A nest selection study of 88 (half known nest sites and half random) trees has allowed measurements of preferred nest hollow size and structure, but again needs further work, with thought being given as to methods to be able to specifically identify individual birds.

Once again on behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Michael and Chris for their very informative presentations. They are both very deserving of our congratulations for their initiative in driving this major undertaking of this surprisingly little studied species. We are all delighted in the ACT’s and in particular COG/Canberra Birds’ major role. Our very best wishes for its future success including in determining abundance and local movements.

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 11 June

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

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

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

Look for the table with the binoculars on it.



Fan-tailed Cuckoo

David Cook

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for in June *continued from Page 1*

Park on 24 May. Surprisingly the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, the least migratory local cuckoo, was reported from 2 locations only, both in NSW and most recently on 1 May.

There were also no reports of the **White-throated Needletail** (last reported on 3 April, the related **Fork-tailed Swift** (20 March), the **Rainbow Bee-eater** (1 April) or the **Sacred Kingfisher** (14 April). This also applies to the **White-throated Gerygone** (12 April), **Common Cicadabird** (1 April), **Leadend Flycatcher** (15 April), **Australian Rufous Fantail** (16 April), **Horsfield's Bushlark** (21 April), **Rufous Songlark** (1 April) and **Fairy Martin** (19 April).

However, the **Western Gerygone** was still reported from Campbell Park on 24 April (the first day of the period), and the **Australian Reed-Warbler** was still reported from around 8 locations up to the time of writing, as was the **Tree Martin** still reported from 7 locations.

Of the birds that usually leave by the end of April the **Noisy Friarbird** was still reported from 4 locations, being present up to the time of writing, and the **Rufous Whistler** was still reported from 10 locations. The **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** was still present at up to 40 locations and the **Grey Fantail** from at least 70 locations. A number of the last three species are expected to overwinter, as is the **Dusky Woodswallow** (still reported from 8 locations), **Olive-backed Oriole** (surprisingly reported from just 4 locations, most recently on 19 May), **Mistletoebird** (still reported from 14 locations) and **Superb Parrot** (still reported from close to 50 locations, 16 of these being south of Lake Burley Griffin).

So, during June please keep an eye out for the overwintering spring/summer migrants mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as for any others mentioned above that.

Of the species that return to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, **Scarlet Robins** continue to be present in greater numbers than for some years, again being reported from around 50 urban/peri-urban locations. In contrast the **Flame Robin** has been reported from just 9 such locations, similar to April. While this includes their regular late autumn/winter spot on the SW slopes of Mt Arawang, perhaps it hasn't been cold enough yet to bring more of them in closer. The **Rose Robin** has been reported from 9 locations, all of them on or E of the Murrumbidgee River. Again, no confirmed **Pink Robin** sightings were reported.

There were reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** from 5 urban/peri-urban locations, including up to 2 birds regularly from the ANBG. This is from a remarkable total of 20 locations during the period, 10 of these being from different spots in the Tallaganda NP area on 2 May. There were reports of up to 2 **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** from 3 locations in the Queanbeyan River/Googong Dam area over the period.

Up to 2 **Bassian Thrush** were reported from the ANBG during the period, as well as one from the adjacent ANU on 28 April, but with a report from just 1 location in the mountains to the W of the Murrumbidgee River. Up to 3 **Swift Parrots** were confirmed only from the Village Creek area of Lake Tuggeranong on 25 April, but there have been no reports of the **Brown Gerygone** during the period. So please keep an eye out for them as well as the other species mentioned above anywhere in the COG Aol.

There were again very few "unusual" birds reported. No **Magpie Geese** were reported in the COG Aol during the period and the **Freckled Duck** was reported only from the monthly Lake Bathurst surveys, with 6 there on 27 April and 21 ducks on 19 May. Up to 2 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported only from the Trucking Yard Lane dam. The **Australian Shelduck** was reported from 8 locations during the period, as usual from the NE through to the E of Canberra, with easily the maximum being the 240 ducks seen on the Wollagorang Rd on 8 May (there were also 200 seen there on 1 May). These numbers are well up from April.

Blue-billed Ducks were reported from 2 locations with a maximum of 8 ducks at the Upper Stranger Pond on 16 April, but with a massive 424 ducks at Lake Bathurst on 27 April. This is by far the most I can ever recall being reported from the COG Aol. Checking eBird back to 1 January 2000 indicates the next highest count for NSW is 258, followed by 160. Interestingly there were none reported from there on the following survey on 19 May, so they appear to have been moving through.

Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 6 locations, all in NSW to the N or NE of Canberra. Multiple ducks were only reported from Lake Bathurst and the adjacent Morass, with a maximum of 20 and 16, respectively, on 27 April. Except for a single **Great-crested Grebe** observed from the NW end of Lake George, this species was also only reported from Lake Bathurst and the adjacent Morass, with a maximum of 17 and 3, respectively, again on 27 April.

Stubble Quail were reported only from south of Queanbeyan (a single bird on 4 May) and Tirrannaville (just south of Goulburn on the Braidwood Rd) from where an unclear number were reported on 15 May. However, **Brown Quail** were reported from around 16 locations, well up from April. Five **Painted Button-quail** were reported only from McLeods Creek NR (Gundaroo) on 24 May, but, again no **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

A **White-headed Pigeon** was reported from Gowrie on 29 April and a single **Peaceful Dove** from the ANBG on 13 May, but again no **Brush Bronzewing**, **Diamond** or **Bar-shouldered Doves** were reported during the period. There were also no further reports of the **White-throated Nightjar**.

There were again no **Baillon's Crake** reported during the period. In contrast up to 5 **Spotless Crakes** were reported from a remarkable 24 locations, well up from April, and largely due to a number of targeted observations over several days. Again, in contrast **Australian Spotted Crakes** were reported from only 2 locations (well down from April) with 2 birds at Paddys Pond (West Belconnen) and a single bird at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR), both on 27 April. Single **Buff-banded Rails** were reported from 2 locations (down from April), the National Arboretum on 2 May, and several times at the Goulburn Wetlands during May, but up to 2 **Lewin's Rails** were reported from 7 locations, well up from April.

I find the above results very interesting, in particular the numbers of **Spotless Crakes** and **Lewin's Rails**, both once thought to be very rare in the COG Aol. It has also been my impression that crakes and rails were hard to find or not present in late autumn/winter. Given they would also have been looked for during the targeted surveys, the much lower numbers for the other species would appear to be accurate.

Up to 23 **Pied Stilts** were reported from 4 locations, 3 from the NW or SW side of Lake George, as well as from Lake Bathurst. No **Banded Lapwings**, **Red-necked Avocets**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Pectoral** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, or **Red-necked Stint** were reported during the period. The **Common Sandpiper** was last reported from the Village Creek inlet at Lake Tuggeranong on 20 April; where this single bird overwinters is a complete mystery.

A **Caspian Tern** was reported from the JWNR on 30 April, but no **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Tern** were reported during the period. The **Australasian Little/Black-backed Bittern** was again not reported during the period.



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No **Little** or **Plumed** (formerly **Intermediate**) **Egrets** were reported during the period, but **Great Egrets** were reported from around 8 locations (similar to April). Up to 3 **White-necked Heron** were reported from 6 locations. **Royal Spoonbills** were reported from 6 locations (down from April but with 15 seen at the JWNR on 30 April), and **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from 6 locations, similar to April, but with a remarkable 18 birds reported from the Morass on 19 May. No **Glossy Ibis** were reported during the period.

Up to 2 **Barn Owls** were reported from 7 locations during the period, well up from April, and **Black-shouldered Kites** were again reported from many locations, so it appears there are mice around. A **Black Falcon** was reported from the JWNR on 18 May, and a **Spotted Harrier** near Gundaroo on 16 May. However, there were no reports of the **Pacific Baza**, **Grey Goshawk** or **Black Kite** during the period.



Blue-faced Honeyeater

Harvey Perkins

A **Glossy Black-Cockatoo** was heard in the Tallaganda NP on 25 May and two **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** were heard and briefly seen in the Woden Valley on 9 May (and a single bird on 27 May), but no **Azure Kingfisher**, **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Scaly-breasted** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period, though up to 6 **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 6 locations.

A **Scarlet Honeyeater** was reported from the Yass Valley on 26 May. Up to 5 **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** were reported from 5 locations, 4 of these being from its known range within Canberra, but also 3 birds at Hearn Rd Boambola (about 4 km NW of Murrumbateman) on 22 May. This seems to be the first sighting between Canberra and Yass from where they have been reported previously. No **Singing** or **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period.

Again **White-fronted Chats** were not reported from the ACT but were from 6 locations to the NE within NSW with a maximum of 25 birds at the Yass River on 26 May. The **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** was reported just 2 locations, 2 birds from Zosterops Corner (Yass Valley) on 9 May and from the downstream picnic area of the Googong dam on 13 May. After returning and breeding here over summer there was only the single report of the **Red-capped Robin**, 1 bird at Hearn Rd Boambola (see above) on 22 May. No **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Black-faced Monarch** (last reported 19 April), **Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finch** were reported during the period.

Again, very few “unusual” bush birds, in particular pigeons/doves, raptors, parrots and honeyeaters, were reported during the period. However, the high number of some duck species and other waterbirds is noted, having been reported from the monthly Lake Bathurst surveys as well as some targeted surveys by several observers.

Of the species I have asked readers to keep a special lookout for, **Jacky Winters** were reported from 3 locations during the period. Of these there were up to 5 birds at the known locations of Top Naas Rd between 4-14 May, with a single bird at Back Creek Rd Gundaroo on 16 May and 2 birds at Sutton on 21 May. Both are new locations, at least in recent times.

The **Hooded Robin** was reported from 7 locations, with up to 3 birds reported from the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd between 25 April to 18 May, 1-2 birds from Top Naas Rd on 4-5 May, and 3 birds from the Scottsdale Reserve on 4 May, and the two families were still present on Kym Bradley’s patch to the S of Canberra, all known locations. Two birds were also found at 3 new locations closer to Canberra, the Bullen Range NR on 5 May, the Paddy’s River TSR and Naas Rd at Spring Station Creek, both on 12 May.



LET'S CATCH UP

Please join us for an informal
Canberra Birds social evening at the

PUBLIC (bar & dining)
Corner of Flinders Way & Franklin St, Manuka
(across from Coles)

4th WED of each month (7 to 9 PM)
next date: June 26.

Look for the table with binoculars on it



EVERYONE WELCOME

Image by Cape Koala Arts ©

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 3 known locations, with up to 2 birds reported from the Nelanglo TSR between 24 April to 3 May, 1 bird at the Naas Rd at Apollo Rd on 10 May and a single bird at Kym Bradley's patch to the S of Canberra on 21 May. Given that they often move in closer to Canberra during late autumn/winter, this is a low number.

Limited breeding information has come to my attention for the final month of autumn. One species to look out for during June is the **Black-shouldered Kite**, a well-known autumn/winter breeder; given the high numbers present (see above) they should be breeding again this winter.

Andrea and I have been seeing many mixed feeding flocks (MFF), with the best being 12 species bathing in and moving around a 2 by 0.5 m puddle on the N boundary of Narrabundah Hill. This included a pair of **Scarlet Robins** bathing separately, with the female doing so most enthusiastically for around a minute. I can't recall seeing this species bathing much before. Apart from a **Speckled Warbler** also bathing was a **White-eared Honeyeater**, a female **Golden Whistler** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**, three species that seem to be present in greater numbers in our local area this autumn. So, keep watching out for this phenomenon as they will keep forming until breeding starts later in winter.

Apart for the large numbers of **Australian Shelducks** and **Blue-billed Ducks** mentioned above, there have been some large flocks of other ducks with the maximum of 80 **Australasian Shovellers** at the JWNR on 19 May, which is dwarfed by the 240 ducks at Lake Bathurst on 27 April. There was also 460 **Grey Teal** at the latter that same day. Large numbers of **Straw-necked Ibis** have been reported gathering in the Narrabundah/Symonston area (a maximum of 92 at the latter on 25 April) apparently having a last-snack before going to roost at Callum Brae.

On 25 May Geoffrey Dabb posted that the **Little Corellas** were back to eat the acorns in Narrabundah, he estimated well over 600 of them, which is still a low count compared with those in the area several years back. I have also noticed flocks of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** feeding on the median strips/verges in South Canberra, but I am seeing very few in my local patch of NW Chapman/West Rivett despite there being an active roost of 100 birds about 1 km away.

Please watch out for the last of the departing spring/summer migrants and those overwintering mentioned above, and for more of the returning autumn/winter altitudinal migrants, MFFs and single species flocks, as well as roosts and roost flights. 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 e-mail Discussion List ("COG chat line") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always, I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.

Jack Holland

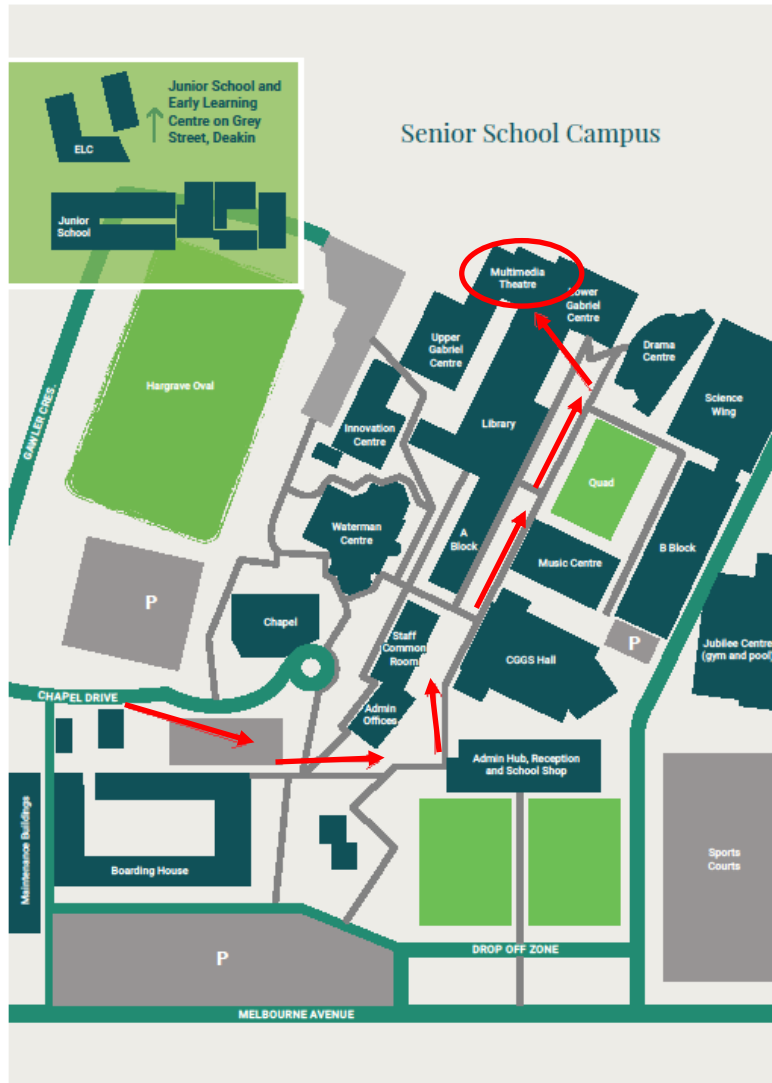
Ethical Birding Guidelines

Canberra Birds now has its own set of [ethical birding guidelines](#), which the committee endorsed in April this year to sit alongside our [code of conduct](#). The guidelines cover bird watching and bird photography, and bird welfare and bird habitats. Many thanks to all members who gave their input.

The guidelines are available on [a new webpage on our website](#), along with a longer [explanatory document](#) that lays out their context and purpose, and gives links to similar material prepared by other organisations. They cover how to minimise disturbance to birds, taking care around nesting birds, impacts of large groups and frequent visits, bird photography, use of call play-back, and respect for local laws.

It is hoped that the guidelines will be useful to both new and experienced birders.

June Meeting : map showing access to the Multi-media Centre (MMT)



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Committee News

The Committee met on **16 May** and worked briskly through a full agenda. It was nice to have Chris Davey join us at the beginning of the meeting. Points of interest this month include:

Chris Davey's proposal to repeat the 1997 COG survey of Honeyeater migration. This would run in autumn 2025 over three weekends. Following discussion, the Committee was very happy to support the proposal as a Canberra Birds (COG) project under the leadership of Chris. Calls for volunteers to take part will be made via Gang-gang, the Chatline and our Facebook page. Chris noted, and the Committee warmly supported, providing familiarisation training for volunteers before the event - which will help and be of interest to our newer birders.

Representing COG, Jenny Bounds attended the regular Biodiversity Conservation Forum meeting on 16 May. The Forum brings together ACT government, community groups and other stakeholders. A key point of interest from this meeting was the ACT Nature Conservation Act, statutory review. A discussion paper for public comment is to be issued soon, to which COG will provide a response. Another point of interest was a Commonwealth funded woodland and grassland restoration program underway for two years at three ACT sites: Mts Ainslie/Majura, Urambi Hills and Namadgi NP.

Creation of a new set of Canberra Birds information and promotional brochures is approaching completion. These follow on, and will update our earlier publications, taking into account changes in birding activity and locations over the years. Steve Read, Julie Hotchin and Jenny Bounds have worked on the brochures, with more recent input from Geoffrey Dabb, Susanne Edgar and Liam Manderson.

Lastly, an update on our newish Canberra Birds Facebook page. As of mid May the page had just over 300 followers. These include COG members, people who are not members, and also other local conservation related groups. Our most popular post to date has been Anthony Overs' Thornbills of the ACT, taken from his presentation to the April COG meeting. This has been viewed 1,300 times (!) since posting in late April.

Neil Hermes *President*

Canberra Birds Garden Birds Survey Forms

The Canberra Birds bird year is drawing to a close and so are the Garden Bird survey forms for 2023-24. The final date for recording observations from the 2023-24 season is 2 July 2024.

New survey charts will be available at the June and July COG Members Night. Any completed charts can also be left at the meeting. If observations have been entered into EXCEL files then please send to me or to Duncan at dun-can.mccaskill@gmail.com

If you are unable to deliver or obtain new charts please contact me to make arrangements for delivery.

Many thanks,
Chris (MOB 0418 679 847)

Sale of Remaining Books

Canberra Birds has unsuccessfully sought a replacement book sales coordinator. As a result, book sales at meetings will be discontinued and we are offering the remaining stock for sale.

Please contact Prue Watters (prue.watters@gmail.com) if you are interested in purchasing or require information on any of the listed titles.

Publication	Copies	Sale Price
Compact Australian Bird Guide	2	\$25.00
Birds of Prey of Australia - Debus	1	\$29.00
Complete Guide to Finding mammals - Andrews	1	\$28.00
Field Guide to Butterflies of the ACT - Bond	4	\$25.00
What Birdo is that? A field guide to Bird People - Libby Robin	1	\$27.00
Birds of the Australian High Country - Hermes	1	\$30.00
Field Guide to Birds of the ACT - calls & songs CD	4	\$10.00

Birding in the Murray Darling Basin - contribute to a survey

A Griffith University research team is investigating bird watching in the Murray Darling Basin and is inviting participation from birders. The Basin crosses Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia and includes rivers, creeks, and wetlands as well as human-made lakes and sewerage outlets.

Bird watching is a popular activity and Griffith University and the Murray Darling Basin Authority would like to know more about it. What makes a place an ideal bird watching spot? As a bird watcher do you have a favourite spot in the Basin that you go to regularly, either by yourself or with friends? Do you stay in the region? How do you find sites to visit, and do you share your information with others, for example on eBird?

Dr Margaret Cook is working with Associate Professor Jim Smart and Dr Jeremey Harte to try and answer these questions. We hope that you would be willing to complete a 10 minute online survey. Ideally the survey would be completed mid July 2024. There is the option of a follow up interview. Your privacy will be protected, and the information will be used for research purposes only.

If you would like to be involved, please email Margaret Cook at GUbirdstudy@gmail.com.

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 28 April - Honeysuckle Creek

Ten members and guests joined me for a walk around the loop track which starts at the old Tracking Station site. We avoided the campground areas, which were very crowded. As we were about to start on a cool morning a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** appeared over a nearby hill, which was a good start. Before we reached the start of the track, we'd already seen a couple of **Eastern Yellow Robins** and several **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**. Along the track a variety of small birds stayed just out of sight, but we eventually found a stretch of the track where **Brown** and **Striated Thornbills**, **White-browed Scrubwrens**, **Red-browed Finches** and a flock of **White-naped Honeyeaters** were seen. We heard a single call from a **Crescent Honeyeater** but could not locate the bird. At the conclusion of the walk a pair of **Scarlet Robins** were foraging on the edge of the old station site, and a small flock of **Buff-rumped Thornbills** were seen by all. **White-eared Honeyeaters** and **White-throated Treecreepers** were seen and heard several times.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 5 May – Square Rock

Seven warmly dressed members began the ascent to Square Rock from the car park on Corin Road at 9:15am. The weather was a cool 10 degrees, with a slight breeze and overcast skies, and this continued for the entire walk. First encounters were with **Crimson Rosellas**, a **Grey Currawong** and a couple of **Grey Shrike-thrush** as we ambled along the well-formed boardwalk and hiking trail. Bird sightings were few and far between along the 4.9 km ascent, but some of us were rewarded with the sight of an **Eastern Shrike-tit**, while some also verified a **Spotted Quail-thrush** on the descent. The unmistakable calls of **Superb Lyrebirds** were heard at two points along the walk and also at the car park. Although not plentiful, **White-eared Honeyeaters**, **White-browed Scrubwrens** and **Brown Thornbills** were seen (counts of 3 or less). Six **White-throated Treecreepers** and an estimated 15 **Striated Thornbills** were added to the list of 14 species in total. Other walkers on the trail also showed us a photo of a dingo, which was seen on the rocks at the car park prior to commencement of our walk. The views from Square Rock were well worth the walk in itself. We had covered a total distance of 9.8 kilometres by 1:15pm when we got back to the car park.

Mark Tindale

Sunday 12 May – Pine Island North

Thanks to 13 attendees on COG's Mother's Day outing wearing or carrying raincoats, we managed to propitiate the rain god and maintain my lucky rating for leading 'fine' weather walks, and we got back in time for various mothers to get to their day's festivities.

Perhaps the most numerous species was **Red-browed Finch** with many in several flocks along the river, mainly in/on blackberries but also exploring the mistletoe growing on Casuarina; some of the mistletoe was in flower so maybe was attracting insects. However, the prize for most biomass probably belongs to the two **Wedge-tailed Eagle** we saw early in the morning. Other largish birds seen were **Australian Magpies**, **Australian Raven** and **Pied Currawong**; slightly smaller were **Grey Butcherbird**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Red Wattlebird**, **Magpie-lark** and **Crimson Rosella**.

By and large it was a day of many medium to smaller birds, which was rather nice. There were **Red-rumped Parrot**, **Golden Whistler**, **White-eared**, **Yellow-faced**, **Brown-headed** and **White-naped Honeyeater**, **Eastern Spinebill**, and **Noisy Miner**. Among the really small birds were **Weebill**, **Yellow-rumped**, **Buff-rumped**, **Striated**, **Yellow** and **Brown Thornbill**, **Scarlet Robin**, **Silvereye** and **Superb Fairy-wren**. We were surprised we saw only one **Grey Fantail**.



Yellow Thornbill

Duncan McCaskill

Not surprisingly, because half the walk was along the Murrumbidgee River, we saw several water birds: **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Eurasian Coot** and **Australasian Grebe**.

Thank you, Sandra for keeping the bird list.

Michael Robbins

Wednesday 15 May - Montgomery Creek at Googong

In glorious birding weather, 12 of us set out to explore the Montgomery Creek area at Googong. Led by Lia, we made a figure of 8 loop, walking in all about 3 kms. This area of Googong had not been visited for a while by COG members and it certainly didn't disappoint. In all 34 species were observed.

We were welcomed by 3 **Flame Robins** which stayed poised long enough for us all to get a good view. The various ponds that we passed had a good variety of birds, including **Black Swans**, **Australian Wood Ducks**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Grey Teal**, **Australasian Grebe**, **Dusky Moorhen**, **Eurasian Coot**, **Australasian Swamphen**, **Australasian Darter**, **Little Pied Cormorant** and **White-faced Heron**. The **Red-rumped Parrots** were out and about, and **Yellow-faced**, **White-plumed**, **Brown-headed** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** were seen.

Other species included a **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Yellow-rumped Thornbills**, **Red Wattlebirds** and **Weebills**, among the more commonly seen parrots and black-and-white birds. **Golden-headed Cisticolas** kept hiding in the reeds, but we still managed to see 6.



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Thanks to Lia for leading this very enjoyable birding morning. The area is worth a return visit.

Penny Moyes

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 May – ANBG Beginners' Outings

The birding for beginners outing scheduled for 18 May was booked out two weeks in advance, so a repeat outing was scheduled for the following day. I was thrilled to have so much interest from new birders and new members. A total of 21 people attended across the two outings. There were a few no-shows which was unfortunate.

Saturday was absolutely miserable with a savage cold wind spoiling the otherwise sunny morning. Most birds kept their heads down and were not very cooperative. We did manage to get good looks at **Superb Fairywren**, **New Holland Honeyeater** and **Red Wattlebird**. Despite the poor conditions, the participants went away happy.

Sunday was much more pleasant, with little to no wind and a bright sunny morning. The birds were much more active and obvious. During our first stop for a chat on the lawn just below the café, we had great views of **Red-browed Finch**, **White-browed Scrubwren** and **Brown Thornbill**. Also, while we stood on the lawn, an **Australian Hobby** flew over above the treetops - it came back and circled around affording all participants excellent views. Further into the gardens, we had wonderful, close views of **Eastern Spinebill**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Eastern Yellow Robin**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Spotted Pardalote**, and a blue male **Satin Bowerbird**. **Crescent Honeyeater** was heard and seen briefly. My thanks to Sue Lashko (Saturday) and Elliott Overs (Sunday) for helping me to wrangle each group.

Anthony Overs

Future Field Trips

COG Trips

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

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

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

Changes to trips are notified on:

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

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

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

Sunday 9 June - Wollogorang Lagoon and Wet Lagoon, Cullerin and Lade Vale

This will be in open country and a good tally of raptors is possible. Wollogorang Road is about 5kms past Rowes Lagoon on the Federal Highway. Look out for **White-fronted Chats** and **Black Kite**. Wet Lagoon has **Whistling Kites** and **Swamp Harriers**. Cullerin Road at Mutmutbilly Creek had **Brown-headed Honeyeaters** recently. Lade Vale Stockpile is good for **Diamond Firetails**.

Meet in the carpark close to the road at Lyneham Netball Centre in Northbourne Ave (just north of the Mouat St/Antill St lights) at 8.00 am for carpooling. Distance covered will be approximately 200 kilometres, so the suggested contribution by each passenger to their driver is \$10 (please bring cash). The trip will be slow birding along back roads with little walking. Degree of difficulty easy. End time approx. 2.30pm. Bring water, hat, sunscreen, morning tea and lunch, and wear long pants and appropriate footwear. Morning tea will be at the park in Breadalbane and lunch in the park at Gunning – picnic tables and toilets available at both locations.

Please register with the leader by 7 June with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Numbers limited to 16 (4 vehicles).

Bill Graham (bsgraham1948@gmail.com)

Saturday 15 June - Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve - Superb Lyrebird survey

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

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

Register with Chris Davey (chris_davey@aapt.net.au) 0418 679 847 with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Chris Davey and Peter Fullagar

Wednesday 19 June – McQuoids Hill

We haven't visited McQuoids Hill for a couple of years. Meet at 9am at the entry on Kambah Pool Road opposite the golf course.

We will walk anti-clockwise around the hill. It's a quite easy walk on a track and will take a couple of hours. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing appropriate for mid-winter weather. **Register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Sunday 23 June – Oaks Estate

Meet at 9am at the lower end of River St in Oaks Estate. There's a small dirt parking area right at the end, otherwise park on River St, preferably on the same side as any cars already there. This is an easy walk, along the Molonglo and Queanbeyan Rivers. Most of the time we will be in the ACT, but a diversion to the historic Riverside Cemetery takes us into NSW. It is an 'out-and-back-walk' (about 6km total distance), all on tracks.

As usual, bring hat, sunscreen and water, and wear sturdy shoes. **Register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 30 June – Kelly Road

Meet for carpooling at 8.30am at the Motor Registry on Couranga Cres in Hume. Kelly Road is off the Monaro Highway, not far past the NSW border. It runs for several kilometres parallel to the highway, and in the past has been a popular spot with COG members. Once we get to Kelly Rd we'll be driving along the road, with several stops, with walks along the road at points where the vegetation looks promising. **Register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com with your name and mobile number, and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 14 July – Wanniassa Hills

Meet at the informal car park at the top of Long Gully Road at 8.30am. We will then cross the road and enter the reserve near the reservoir and follow some of the firetrails. Birds seen in the reserve in last few years include **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins**, **Painted Buttonquail**, **Common Bronzewing**s, various honeyeaters and raptors, and many of the small bush birds. Sturdy shoes are essential, and dress appropriately for the weather. **Register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com by Friday 12 July with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Sandra Henderson



The eight card designs:

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

Canberra Birds 8-pack of greeting cards

Stock up on greeting cards, and be ready for all occasions!

Each fun and vibrant card pairs a different bird species with an iconic Canberra location. The cards are drawn by local cartoonist **Stuart McMillen**, a resident of Gorman Arts Centre, Braddon.

Greeting cards **\$6 each** or **8-packs for \$40**.

Shop directly via
stuartmcmillen.com/shop

Sunday 28 July – Nadjung Mada NR and surrounds, Kenny

The first half of the walk follows Old Wells Station Road (this section is a firetrail, not a road) north through the relatively newly gazetted Nadjung Mada Nature Reserve; as such the habitat is mainly grassland with a few old paddock trees and some wetlands as the headwaters of Sullivan's Creek run across our route. After about 1.5 km, we leave the firetrail to loop back to the south west, parallelling our outward path, but this time walking across paddocks and taking in a small woodland, before rejoining the firetrail close to our starting point. Trip distance is approximately 3 km.

The route is gently uphill/flat on a fire trail that is well maintained; but depending on rainfall, it can be quite muddy, so wear appropriate footwear. Dress warmly and bring hat, binoculars and water.

Register with Michael Robbins at mrobbins@home.netspeed.com.au with your name and mobile number and name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Michael Robbins and Peter Miller

Extended Camp to Warren Wetlands and Gundabooka National Park 14 – 20 Oct 2024

An extended camping trip is planned to Warren and Gundabooka NP, both in inland NSW. The town of Warren is north west of Dubbo (about 470 km from Canberra) and Gundabooka National Park is another 320 km further, to the north west. We are planning 1 night at a Caravan Park in Warren on 14 Oct and a morning exploring the fabulous wetlands on the edge of town. We will move on to Gundabooka NP on the afternoon of 15 Oct and the trip ends Sunday 20 Oct. Campers are to make their own campground and caravan park bookings and ensure they have a relevant National Parks Pass. Once at Gundabooka we will be birding around the broader campground area and the subsequent days we will drive to places further in the park. We have not done a "reccie" for Gundabooka so the trip will be a bit exploratory. Contact John Goldie or Kathy Walter to **register** on walter.goldie@gmail.com. The trip is limited to 16 people. Campers are to make their own arrangements for getting to and from the start/finish.



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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

2023-2024 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

R Pettersson
J Raath
S Ramenllini

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for July 2024 edition:

Wednesday 26 June 2024

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

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary, COG,

PO Box 331, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips) except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged.

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