



Gang-gang

SEPTEMBER 2024

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday 11 September 2024

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

The September 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.

**Laura Rayner and Brett Howland -
Mapping the ACT Woodland Bird
Community Condition**

**Jim Hone - Birds of Namadgi National
Park**

Please note that construction 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. Then proceed to the Multi-media Centre (MMT) using the alternative route the Canberra Girls Grammar School has provided 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 latter turn left along a [Continued Page 2](#)

Everyone welcome

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

The weather over the 4.5 weeks from 28 July to 27 August inclusive covered by this column has been in 2 parts, with the first half clear, fine and frosty, and the second much warmer (with temperatures well above average), cloudy, windy (particularly the second week) and showery, though with limited total rainfall. Despite the warmer weather my analysis below shows that bird activity in the COG Area of Interest (Aoi) remained quiet, except that most of the expected early spring/summer migrants have returned. Again, there has been a very low number of “unusual” species reported, similar to July.

The species that gained most of the attention during the period was the continuing presence of the **Brown Gerygone** at the ANBG, with a maximum of 3 birds reported on 17 August. As usual they have been active and thus difficult to identify, especially as they were often in the company of other birds including the quite similar **Brown Thornbill**. [Continued Page 4](#)



Brown Gerygone

David Cook

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 either through the bottom MMT 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 **Laura Rayner** and **Brett Howland** of the ACT Government Environmental Offsets – Research and Evaluation area and is entitled “**Mapping the ACT Woodland Bird Community Condition.**”

Laura and Brett will show COG/Canberra Birds members a new ACT Government product that they hope members will find interesting. They’ve conducted an analysis of where woodland bird communities are considered is their highest condition. What does that mean? They’re going to tell you! An important result of their analysis includes areas of the ACT where limited bird sightings restricted their mapping. They have ideas about how to improve coverage and maybe COG/Canberra Birds members would like to help.

The main presentation will be by **Jim Hone**, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Canberra, on “**Birds of Namadgi National Park**”

The bird community at seven sites in the eastern part of Namadgi National Park was surveyed each year for 16 years. A total of 92 species was recorded. Two species, the **Common Bronzewing** and the **Common Starling**, increased over the study and six species declined, including the **Eastern Rosella**, **Eastern Yellow Robin** and the **Scarlet Robin**. Five Threatened species were recorded. The theoretically expected pattern of many smaller birds and fewer larger birds was observed, with a surprising aspect. Monitoring of the birds in Namadgi is recommended as part of on-going Park management.

Jim Hone studies wildlife population dynamics and management, including conservation. He has published on many Australian birds, such as helmeted honeyeaters, malleefowls, common mynas, and grassland, woodland and forest birds, and British birds, such as barn owls and grey herons. Jim has contributed to bird atlas work in Australia, NSW and the ACT.

Summary of Presentations from the 14 August Meeting

The first presentation was a bird of the Month talk by **Jack Holland** on the **Horsfield’s** and **Shining Bronze-Cuckoos**.

Jack noted that this was another pair of species that are often confused. While the adults are relatively easy to tell apart, the juveniles/immatures are much harder due to lower and variable extent of barring (therefore this is not the most reliable identification feature).

He summarised the key diagnostic identification features, then illustrated them from the Australian Bird Guide, HANZAB and the Pizzey and Knight Field Guide.

For the **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo** these (key features in bold) are:

- **Rufous sides to base of tail (another name is Rufous-tailed B-C!!)**
- **Bold white supercilium (eye-brow), long dark eye through to ear stripe**
- Barring of underparts is less complete than Shining (but this is less reliable)
- Strongly iridescent upperparts look glittering green when sun lit, duller when shaded, with pale scaling on scapulars and wing coverts

Juvenile is duller than the adult, with underparts plain or only barred on sides (**but always has eye/ear stripe and rufous-edged tail**)

For the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** these are (again key features in bold):

- **No exposed rufous edges to top of tail**
- **Whitish face lacks distinct eye/ear stripe**
- Greenest, glossiest bronze-cuckoo with broad near complete barring on underparts
- **Juvenile** - duller than adult - barring restricted to flanks
- **No clear eye/ear stripe or rufous edges to top of tail**

Jack noted that the **Calls are diagnostic but with a catch:**

The **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo's** usual call may be described as a slow, penetrating descending whistle, *tseeuw*, uttered persistently when breeding. It can also give a sparrow- or pipit-like *chirrup*.

In contrast the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** call is a series of faster (often quite manic) clear high-pitched whistling calls *fwee fwee fwee*, with each note rising in pitch, but importantly can **often conclude with one or more down-slurred notes similar to the Horsfield's**.

Jack played these calls noting that the change in the latter's call can lead to observers incorrectly concluding that both species are present. He also noted there was very limited calling out of breeding season.

Finally, Jack noted that while the two species prefer different habitats with the **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** preferring to be more in the open, including inland right across Australia and the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** more Eastern coastal and the SW corner, there is much overlap and habitat often cannot be relied on in separating the species.

On behalf of COG/Canberra Birds members many thanks to Jack for his very informative presentation which hopefully will help observers to correctly identify these species which are just arriving as both are near complete spring/summer migrants with very few overwintering in the COG Area of Interest. Note that his presentation is also being put on the Canberra Birds Facebook page.

The main presentation was a very interesting and informative talk by **Leo Joseph** on "**Tales of Australian Birds in New Guinea and New Guinean Birds in Australia**".

Leo delivered this with his usual good humour and at a very suitable level, in particular, results of the molecular genetics, DNA sequencing etc, for the mixed audience.

Attendees very much enjoyed his summary of prominent names in New Guinean ornithology and especially his meeting with Ernst Mayr where he correctly identified the **Blue-capped Ifrita**, which excretes a toxin into its feathers and skin to defend themselves against predators, as the most important bird in New Guinea.

Leo acknowledged well-known Canberra ornithologist and long-time COG member Dick Schodde as a key contributor to the early recognition of the very strong links between Australian and New Guinean birds, in a "hand-typed" paper he published with John Calaby in 1972.

We then enjoyed Leo's demonstration of these connections through his studies on the links of separate populations of a range of closely related birds including **Logrunners/Chowchillas**, **Sooty Owls** and **Forest Kingfishers**, as well as the evolution of the **Quail-thrushes**.



Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo

Harvey Perkins



Shining Bronze-Cuckoo

Harvey Perkins

We particularly enjoyed learning about the study of the **Olive-backed** and **Green Orioles** and the “weird” specimen which was concluded to have been the result of hybridisation of these species in New Guinea, where there is no habitat distinction between the two, but not possible in Australia where they live in eucalypt forest and rainforest, respectively.

Leo finished with the very complicated stories of the **Spectacled** and **Black-winged Monarchs**, which he has solved for the former through molecular studies. However, further work needs to be done on the latter, in particular the relationship between the very similar looking Australian species which breeds on Cape York and the one in NW New Guinea, with the very high mountain barrier making it very unlikely that the former migrates there for winter.

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

continued from Page 1

However, rather than being confined to the rainforest gully as is usual, they have mainly been observed in Sections 46 and 47, which are drier areas about 150 m uphill, though they have been occasionally found in the former or flying in between.

As I’ve mentioned in previous columns, this species, listed in the 2018-2019 ABR as a rare winter visitor from the coastal forests, has a very unusual distribution pattern in that it is a “reverse altitudinal migrant” tending to come to the ACT in autumn/winter. eBird from 2018 shows that in COG Aol it has only been reported from the ANBG in 2018 (plus a couple from the JWNR) and in 2023, all of which are between April to September, apart from a couple of sightings of a single bird in December 2023. However, eBird does show a couple of late spring/summer records from the Tallaganda area.

Of spring/summer migrants still present in July, there were still reports of a **Western Gerygone** calling and then seen at Campbell Park on 12 and 16 August, respectively, and the **Australian Reed-Warbler** was reported from 3 locations, including regularly up to 5 birds at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR (JWNR), otherwise single birds at the Coaldrake Avenue Pond on 14 August and the McKellar Pond on 15 August). So, while a few of this species overwintered, those at the JWNR could include early returnees.

The least migratory local cuckoo, the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, was reported from 12 locations, well up from the two in July, with again probably a mix of overwintering and returning birds. The same applies to the **Tree Martin** which was reported from 19 locations compared with just 2 in July. However, for the **Fairy Martin** all are likely returnees as they were reported from 17 locations compared with none in June and the first (a single bird at the JWNR where up to 15 were then regularly reported in August) on 29 July.

Rufous Whistlers were reported from 10 locations compared with 4 in July, so again probably a mix of overwintering and returning birds. **Dusky Woodswallows** were reported from 12 locations compared with the two in July (last on 26 July). There was then a break until birds, clearly returnees, were reported from 5 different locations on 20 August. The **Olive-backed Oriole** was reported from 17 urban/peri-urban locations, well up the 7 in July, and thus also likely a mix of overwintering and returning birds. This also applies to the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** which was present at around 45 locations (well up from the 19 in July) and the **Grey Fantail** from around 65 locations (only slightly up from the 50 in July).

The **Mistletoebird** was reported from 12 locations (similar to the 11 in July) and the **Superb Parrot** reported from around 40 locations, 10 of these being south of LBG (up from the 26 in July).

Of the species not present in July (or earlier in winter), the **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** was reported from 11 locations, the first being on 4 August from both the Zosterops Corner in the Yass River Valley and Wamboin. In contrast the **Horsfield’s Bronze-Cuckoo** has been reported from 2 locations only, the Aranda Bushland on 6 August and from Campbell Park on 25 August. Likewise, the **Pallid Cuckoo** has also only been reported from 2 locations, the Yass River Valley on 20 August and Whisker’s Creek Rd Carwoola on 23 August.

Of the other species which often start to return towards the end of August there have been no reports of the **Noisy Friarbird** or **White-throated Gerygone**. So, during September please keep an eye out for these, and also for (in rough order) the **Leaden Flycatcher** (please be very careful with your identifications, especially of females), **Latham's Snipe**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and the **Eastern Koel** (there was a likely report a very early male from the National Arboretum on 25 August).

Watch out too for increasing numbers of returning **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters**, though this is never as spectacular as their autumn migration. The **White-winged Triller** and **Rufous Songlark** also usually return towards the end of the month, numbers of these reaching the COG Aol, as well as the **White-browed** and **Masked Woodswallow**, will depend on how dry it is in the inland.

Of the species that come to Canberra and its surrounds from the mountains and higher country to spend autumn/winter here, the **White-eared Honeyeater** and the **Golden Whistler** were each still present at over 50 urban/peri-urban locations.

It has continued to be a very good winter to see **Scarlet Robins**, which were again still reported from over 55 such locations (similar to July). The **Flame Robin** has been reported from around 25 such locations, well up from July. Except for a female there on 27 August, they have not been reported from their usually regular late autumn/winter spot on the SW slopes of Mt Arawang since early August. However, Andrea and I have found some in the horse paddocks off the SW corner of Narrabundah Hill where we haven't observed them for some years. So, the increase in locations may reflect that they are on the move. The **Rose Robin** has been reported from a remarkable 19 locations, all but two of them on or E of the Murrumbidgee River. However, there have been no further **Pink Robin** sightings.

There were reports of the **Crescent Honeyeater** from 4 urban/peri-urban locations, including up to 3 birds very regularly from the ANBG, from a total of 9 locations during the period. The very quiet one in my Chapman GBS site, which I expect was different from the up to 2 birds recorded on Cooleman Ridge, seemed to move on early in August. There were reports of **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** from 3 locations, up to 3 birds at the close together sites, Tuggeranong Hill, Tuggeranong Hill NR (south) and the Rob Roy NR, as well as a further bird at the Scottsdale Reserve on 31 July.

Up to 3 **Bassian Thrush** were regularly reported from the ANBG, as well as one from Wamboin on 4 August, and two at the Tallaganda State Forest south. There were no **Swift Parrots** reported during the period, the closest being from around Chiltern in Victoria well to the SW.

Apart from the above **Brown Gerygone** observations at the ANBG, again few unusual birds were reported.

No **Magpie Geese** were reported in the COG Aol during the period, but 2 **Freckled Duck** were reported from Lake Bathurst on 17 August, and from the adjoining Morass on 24 August. Five **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were reported from the Trucking Yard Lane dam on 16 August, with a single one there on 21 August. A pair of **Australian Shelduck** were photographed at the Point Hut Rd dam on 11 August, but otherwise they were reported, as is usual, from 9 locations to the N through to the E of Canberra. However, numbers were low and further down from July, with the maximum being the 20 ducks seen on the Wollongorang Rd on 16 August.

Coffee and Chat at the Gardens Tuesday, 10 September

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.



Single **Blue-billed Ducks** were reported only from the Isabella Pond on 10 August and the JWNR on 25 August. Apart from the Tidbinbilla NR Sanctuary, **Musk Ducks** were reported from 6 locations with as for July the 20 ducks observed on The Morass on 24 August easily the highest number. Five **Great-crested Grebes** were reported from The Morass on 17 August, with a further one there on 24 August.

A single **Stubble Quail** was reported from Lake Bathurst on 17 August, with 3 flushed from Tuggeranong Hill, also on 17 August, but **Brown Quail** were reported from 17 locations, well up from the 7 in July. However, no **Painted** or **Little Button-quail** were reported during the period.

No **White-headed Pigeon**, **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Brush Bronzewsings**, **Peaceful** or **Diamond Doves** were reported during the period. There were also no further reports of the **White-throated Nightjar**.

A **Baillon's Crake** was only reported from the AIS on 24 August, but up to 8 (from Breadalbane on 18 August) **Spotless Crakes** were reported from 7 locations, similar to July. An **Australian Spotted Crake** was reported only from the Isabella Pond on 8 August. Single **Buff-banded Rails** were reported from 3 locations only, but up to 5 (again at Breadalbane on 18 August, otherwise singles) **Lewin's Rails** were reported from 4 locations, all seeming to reflect the no longer extensive the targeted surveys in the COG Aol.

Up to 40 **Pied Stilts** were reported from 3 locations, NW and SW Lake George as well as Lake Bathurst, where a single **Red-necked Avocet** was recorded on 17 August. No **Australian Painted-snipe**, **Banded Lapwings**, **Comb-crested Jacana**, **Common**, **Pectoral** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, or **Red-necked Stint** were reported during the period. Also, no **Caspian**, **Whiskered** or **White-winged Black Tern** or **Australasian Little/Black-backed Bittern** were reported. However, an **Australasian Bittern** was observed flying over Symonston on 3 August.

No **Little** or **Plumed** (formerly **Intermediate**) **Egrets** were reported during the period, and up to 2 **Great Egrets** were reported from 4 locations only, but mainly single **White-necked Herons** were reported from 9 locations in the N and NE of the COG Aol. Single **Royal Spoonbills** were reported only from the NW Lake George on 4 and 23 August, but **Yellow-billed Spoonbills** were reported from the NW and SW of Lake George, as well as The Morass (8 there on 17 August). No **Glossy Ibis** were again reported during the period.

Single **Barn Owls** were reported from 3 locations only during the period, but **Black-shouldered Kites** were again reported from many locations (though there was again very little breeding – see below). Single **Spotted Harriers** were reported from 3 locations, and a **Black Kite** from Murrumbateman on 25 August, but there were no reports of the **Pacific Baza**, **Grey Goshawk** or **Black Falcon** during the period.

An **Azure Kingfisher** was reported only from the Cotter Bend on 3 August. No **Glossy Black-Cockatoo**, **Cockatiel**, **Turquoise Parrot**, **Purple-crowned**, **Scaly-breasted** or **Little Lorikeets** were reported over the period, and **Musk Lorikeets** were only reported from 2 locations (12 at the University of Canberra on 11 August and 1 at Lake Tuggeranong on 15 August).

A **Blue-faced Honeyeater** was reported from the ANU on 3 August and two from the Roma Mitchell Crescent parkland (Watson) on 9 August, but no **Scarlet** or **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** or **Little Friarbirds** were reported during the period (see below for a further **Singing Honeyeater** sighting).

White-fronted Chats were reported from 4 locations (Kambah, the National Arboretum, Lake Bathurst and the Wollagorang Rd (where the maximum of 8 were recorded on 18 August), and a **Red-capped Robin** from the Molonglo Gorge on 27 July. However, no **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-browed Babbler**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Black-faced Monarch**, **Tawny Grassbird** or **Zebra Finch** were reported during the period.

During the period there have again been very few “unusual” bush birds reported, in particular pigeons/doves, parrots, honeyeaters or other passerines, continuing the low numbers in July.



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Good birding, good food

2025 Plains-wanderer Weekends

25 & 26 October 2025
8 & 9 November 2025
22 & 23 November 2025
6 & 7 December 2025

The 2025 November weekends will be limited to 6 participants per weekend & the October and December weekends will have the usual 8 participants.

Wet Season

Iron Range NP
A private tour that can take
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Contact Patricia for details

**Personal tours to the Denilquin district,
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Of the birds I have continued to ask readers to keep a special lookout for in 2024, **Jacky Winters** have only been reported 2 known locations, at Smiths Rd near Naas Rd and at the Glendale Depot, both on 1 August. **Hooded Robins** were reported from 4 known locations, 2 at Smiths Rd near Naas Rd on 29 July, up to 2 birds at Naas Rd at Apollo Rd between 29 July and 11 August, and up to 11 birds at the Scottsdale Reserve between 29 July and 8 August. There was also a pair present at Kym Bradley's patch to the S of Canberra.

Restless Flycatchers were reported from 4 known locations, with up to 2 birds at the Nelanglo TSR on 12 August, as well as single birds at the Scottsdale Reserve on 2 August, at Illilanga on 12 August, and at the Mullion on 19 August. Again, there have been no reports from closer to Canberra, where it regularly moved in to in recent late autumn/winters.

Limited breeding information has come to my attention for the last month of winter. Some observations follow *but first I need to remind readers of the care that needs to be taken around breeding birds as outlined the new COG Ethical Birding Guidelines which can be found through the link on the Home Page of the Canberra Birds web site (in particular please read and follow the sections on Nesting Birds and Bird Photography):*

- The **Crested Pigeons** on the nest in my GBS site I reported last month now have at least 2 chicks ready to fledge. To my surprise mid-month, a second pair built a nest <50 m away and one bird was soon sitting on it (even if the nest is fairly rudimentary, I'm always surprised how quickly they build).
- Following my comments last month, Sue let me know how delighted she was to have a pair of very orange headed **Black-shouldered Kite** immatures with their parents on her farm near Gundaroo this month. She also showed me a photo of an immature bird taken on Narrabundah Hill. Despite this another trawl through the many eBird records has not found any further breeding information despite the many photos and/or comments available.
- Around 7 am on 22 August there was a panic among the local birds, and I saw an **Australian Hobby** (a female by size) with very pointed wings and a long thin tail doing several circuits around the big blue gum and then swoop a **Pied Currawong** very near the nest which they unsuccessfully defended last season against an onslaught of the latter species (see my article in the July 2024 issue of Canberra Bird Notes). Around 4 pm that afternoon the same bird flew through, again causing much excitement.
- While it has quietened down, I have since heard their call or seen a bird (from the different sizes both sexes but only one at a time) sitting in an exposed position near the nest. While it remains to be seen whether they will stay long enough to try to breed again, after last years' experience it was very surprising to see their return, over 3 weeks earlier than in 2023.

I have still been seeing some mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) during the period. There was a quite late loose MFF of 10 species on Cooleman Ridge on 22 August, including a female **Scarlet Robin**, a pair of **Golden Whistlers**, 3 **Grey Shrike-thrush**, a **White-plumed Honeyeater** (which we rarely see there these days) and a **Yellow-faced Honeyeater** heard (the only one recorded there this winter).

For a very interesting MFF composition Stuart Rae has let me know that on 18 July he saw two **Singing Honeyeaters** (which he recognised straight away as he is familiar with them, having mist-netted, handled and banded them at West Wyalong) in one in the Mt Ainslie woodland, on the Ainslie side. They were in the canopy of Yellow Box with **White-naped**, **White-eared**, **Yellow-faced** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. There were fifteen species altogether in the MFF including the shrub layer feeders. A single adult male **Rose Robin** was amongst them, feeding in the lower canopy.

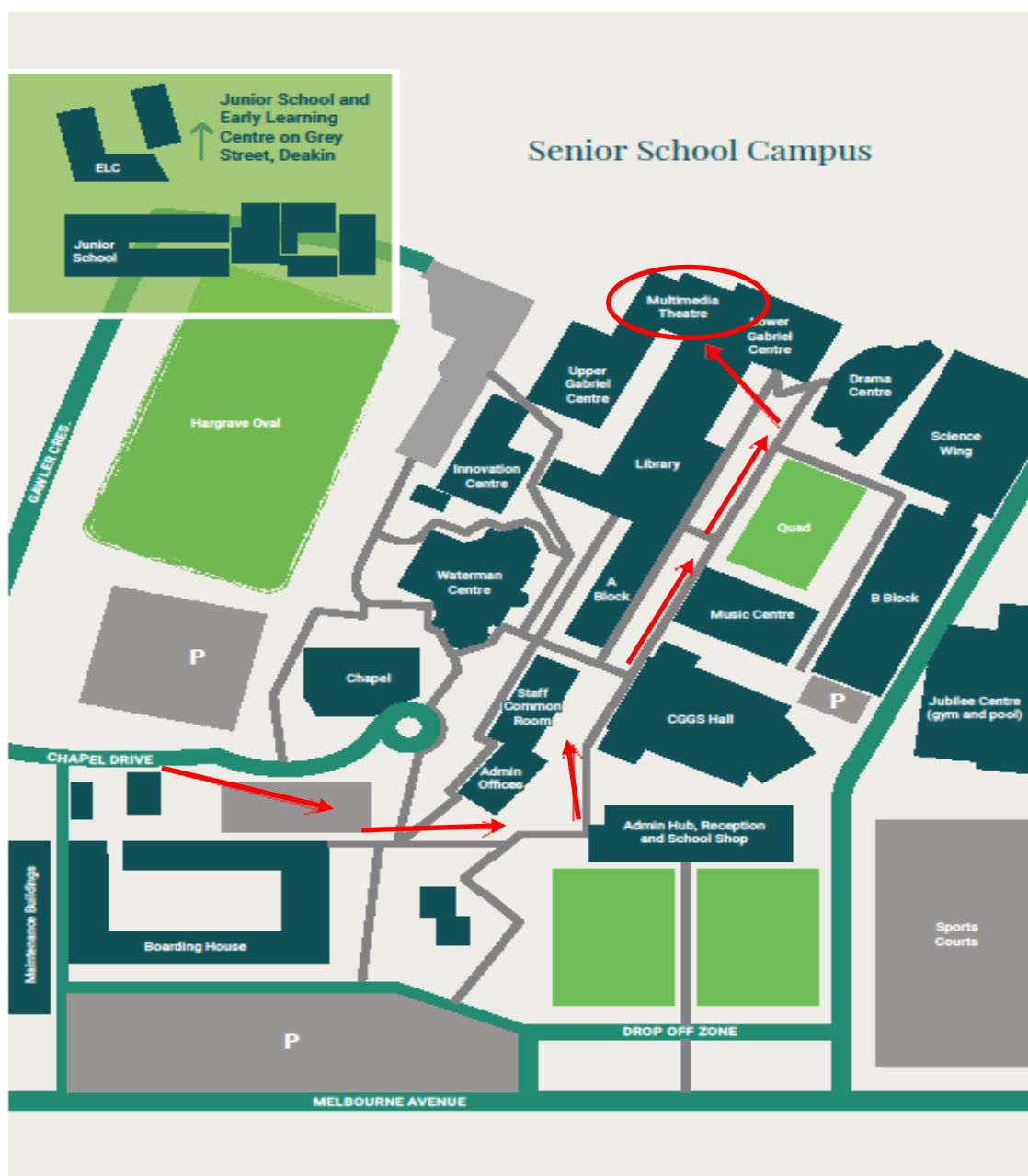
As mentioned above **Yellow-faced** and **White-naped Honeyeaters** should be returning soon though this is never as spectacular as their autumn migration. In my local area of Chapman/Rivett, Cooleman Ridge and Narrabundah Hill we have been observing some more of the partial migrants the **Red Wattlebird** (very few around this winter, probably due to the limited if any flowering) and the **Striated Pardalote** (also unusually very absent for the past few winters).

September is the first full month of significant bird activity in the COG AoI. So please watch out for more of the returning spring/summer migrants mentioned above, for the last of the leaving altitudinal migrants, for roost sites and flights, for any late MFFs or single flocks, and for early spring breeding activity. With the favourable conditions there should be lots of the last-named. 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

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



Committee News

The Canberra Birds committee met twice in August - once on the 22nd and again on the 29th. Key activities over the last month included:

- **South Canberra Memorial Park (Block next to Callum Brae Nature Reserve proposed for a Crematorium).** Canberra Birds made a submission, in support of a Request for Reconsideration of a 2019 decision under Commonwealth environmental legislation. The Reconsideration Request was made by the Friends of Callum Brae, based on new information about the use of the Block and other Canberra woodlands by Swift Parrots (nationally, critically endangered species) and the expert opinion of several researchers. This information was not considered in the original 2019 decision. The Canberra Birds submission was circulated on the Chatline, and will be published on the website. Jenny Bounds, with input from Steve Read, prepared the submission.
- On the 29th August the Committee endorsed a new **Canberra Birds design theme**. This retains traditional elements of our existing design and logo, but with a modern look that reflects the Canberra Birds identity. Members will have an opportunity to see the updated logo at the next Members' Meeting on **11 September**.
- Consideration by the committee of a **Discussion Paper on the Canberra Birds Database** which was submitted by Nick Nicholls and Chris Davey.
- The **Bird Interest Group Network (BIGnet) meeting** in Canberra on 21 September is rapidly approaching. BIGnet is a group of NSW birding groups plus Canberra Birds. We are hosting the meeting this year, which is being held at Wildbark at Mulligans Flat. Arrangements are in place and registrations coming in. The BIGnet members business meeting in the morning will be followed by a forum on community engagement in conservation in the afternoon. Contact Jenny Bounds, Julie Hotchin or Kim Farley for more information.
- The **Brochures** working group has reported good progress on a suite of Birding in Canberra brochures. The working group is Julie Hotchin, Steve Read, Jenny Bounds and Alison Mackerras, with valued input from other Canberra Birds members.
- Finally, the committee will get together for a **planning meeting** on 12 October to review the work we have done over the past year and to plan the work we intend for the coming year. It has been a busy year. The agenda will include consideration of further ways of attracting new members as well as more volunteers to get involved with Canberra Birds many activities.

Neil Hermes
President

COG'S BIRD BLITZ 2024

Saturday 26 October and Sunday 27 October

As many participants as possible are needed to conduct bird surveys across the whole of the ACT in an effort to obtain as complete a snapshot as possible of the birds in mid-spring. Details are on the COG website www.canberrabirds.org.au under the heading "Observing and Reporting Birds". The list of sites adopted will be updated shortly. Please let me know, blitz@canberrabirds.org.au, where you would like to survey and I will put your name against that site. If you regularly survey particular spots, it would be ideal if you could do them again, but feel free to also go somewhere different, or you can nominate your own area that isn't on the list. Included on the list will be "data-deficient" areas for which we are particularly interested in gaining records. The reasons for this will be discussed by the speakers at the main presentation to the September COG meeting.

Nicki Taws
blitz@canberrabirds.org.au
0408210736

Field Trip Reports

Sunday 11 August - Stirling Ridge

Twenty-one members and guests joined Chris Davey for a walk around historic Stirling Park in Yarralumla. From the car-park we could hear the first of many **Australian Wood Ducks**, which were checking out possible nest hollows, as were quite a few **Australian King Parrots**. Just after entering the park a pair of **Gang-gang Cockatoos** landed above us, but were chased off by **Noisy Miners** which also pursued **Pied Currawongs** and **King Parrots**. The only small birds seen or heard through the morning were both local pardalote species - no thornbills, fairywrens, weebills or small honeyeaters were found, perhaps because of the aggressive **Noisy Miners** in the site. **Satin Bowerbirds** were heard near a bush near the track, and a black male and green bird were seen flying away. A **Grey Butcherbird** was seen bringing sticks to a well-advanced nest.

We also looked at the remnants of the Westlake settlement, which at one time housed 20% of the ACT population, and saw Sewer Vent No 3, one of three on the Main Outfall Sewer, which is still in use today.

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 18 August – Jerrabomberra Wetlands – Waterbirds for Beginners

An enthusiastic group of beginner and “emerging” birders joined me for a most enjoyable morning in calm and sunny conditions. As they wandered in, there was time to have a close look through the scope at a group of **Australasian Swamphens** feeding on the grass near the carpark. After an introductory chat about binoculars and field guides, we established ourselves in Cygnus hide and spent about an hour there as the birds of Jerrabomberra Wetlands behaved in the most impeccable fashion, almost as though someone was in the background orchestrating the arrival of the next new species on cue. To complete our waterhens, a **Dusky Moorhen** fed right in front of the hide and just as everyone had studied it closely and identified the distinguishing features, the first **Eurasian Coot** glided in from stage left! **Australasian Grebes** were common, with some beginning to show some breeding colour, and a couple of **Australian Reed Warblers** occasionally dashed from reedbed to reedbed, before disappearing.

Ducks were similarly cooperative with a pair of **Pacific Black Ducks** dabbling just in front of the hide, followed by, firstly, three and then many more **Hardheads** on or diving near the big log. A sleeping **Grey Teal** was then spotted on a small log tucked against close reeds, before **Australasian Shovelers** made their appearance, giving everyone wonderful scope views.

Non-waterbirds also showed well with a pair of **White-browed Scrubwrens** perching, and sitting still, on dead sticks close to the hide, long enough for everyone to see their key features. **Superb Fairy-wrens** in all plumages darted back and forth or pottered around along the grassy edge.

We relocated to Bittern hide and had closer views of **Grey Teal** before a small bird was spotted moving in and out of the reeds near the waterline – the bird of the morning, a **Little Grassbird**. Everyone had great views of this frequently heard but seldom seen species. A second one was seen from Ardea hide and there were more calling throughout the morning. We then did a circuit around the rest of Kelly Swamp, adding to our list of waterbirds as well as woodland and grassland birds. A pair of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** soared overhead, a flock of **Australian White Ibis** appeared over the swamp, followed by another flock that also contained a single **Straw-necked Ibis**, and then a whole flock of the latter circled over the paddocks. **Australians Pelicans** did a fly-by but darters and cormorants failed to put in an appearance. **Red-rumped Parrots**, the Tasmanian race of **Silvereye**, and **Red-browed Finches** were seen well, then just as we were watching the latter, a **Whistling Kite** was spotted overhead but quickly vanished towards the east. Although listing was not the goal of the morning, we did see or hear close to 40 species.

Many thanks to the group for being so interested and engaged in the morning’s activities. Hopefully everyone, including the newcomers, will join us for future field trips.

Sue Lashko

Wednesday 21 August - Dickson and Lyneham Wetlands

Seventeen hardy souls, under the leadership of Sandra Henderson, hazarded the trek from the Dickson to the Lyneham Wetlands. Both wetlands are artificial, designed to harvest stormwater for ovals and regulate flows, as well as create habitat. The wetlands seem to have succeeded in the latter purpose; the ducks don't seem to care that they are artificial.

After fully circumnavigating the Dickson Wetlands, the expedition set off along the bike path through Dickson, narrowly avoiding commuting cyclists and braving pedestrian crossings. The group then mounted a determined assault on Lyneham Wetland, once again demonstrating its commitment to find birds in the wildest of terrain.

All species observed were relatively common Canberra residents. The highlight was probably the sight of an **Australian Raven** eviscerating an **Australasian Swamphen**. There were quite a large number of **Hardheads** on Lyneham pond, their chestnut-brown feathers looking particularly resplendent in the bright sun. They were also demonstrating their talents as diving ducks.

Crested Pigeons engaging in courtship behaviour and a Red Wattlebird collecting nesting material indicated that spring is on its way. As to be expected for suburban Canberra, there were plenty of **Noisy Miners** and **Pied Currawongs**, prompting idle speculation about whether a war between the two could actually be a good thing for the rest of Canberra's bird population.

By the time the group had returned to its starting location, a total of 34 species had been recorded.

Marcus Hellyer

Sunday 25 August – Kaleen Horse Paddocks (south) and Lyneham Ridge

On a mild, overcast morning, 19 members and visitors, including four children, gathered to explore this area which had not previously been visited by COG. A pair of **Australian Ravens** were busy carrying and then adding sticks to the beginnings of their nest high in a power pylon above the carpark. We began our walk in the horse paddocks south of Ellenborough Street, with birds concentrated in the planted eucalypts close to the road. **Weebills** showed well and **Red Wattlebirds** were very actively feeding particularly in branches close to the ground. We added the usual common parrot species, the black-and-white species and others as we continued through the grasslands to total 16 species for this section of the walk.

After using a tunnel under Gungahlin Drive, we entered Lyneham Ridge NR and immediately found **White-winged Choughs** feeding, before we quickly moved away from the traffic noise towards the ridge track. Bird activity gradually increased with a female **Scarlet Robin** sitting patiently for excellent views. Soon after we hit a hotspot with **Yellow-faced, Fuscous, White-naped** and **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**, **White-throated Treecreeper**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Striated** and **Spotted Pardalotes**, and a male **Golden Whistler**. A pair of **Buff-rumped Thornbills** showed well, but **Striated Thornbills** were heard only. This section of the walk yielded 26 species, with a total of 33 species seen for the morning.

We enjoyed the company of the children who were interested in everything around them, including rabbit holes, ants, dragonflies, caterpillars, and orange and black horehound bugs (*Agonoscelis rutila*).

Sue Lashko

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Future Field Trips

COG Trips

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

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

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

Changes to trips are notified on:

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

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

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

Sunday 1 September – Shepherds Lookout to Uriarra Crossing

Description: This walk will take us from Shepherds Lookout, with its excellent birding and views, down to the confluence of the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee rivers and Uriarra Crossing. We will return via the Uriarra Loop track, before climbing back up to Shepherds Lookout. Many interesting birds are often found in the area, including honeyeaters, cuckoos and birds of prey.

eBird hotspots: Shepherds Lookout <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2405757> and Uriarra Loop Track <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L9391286>

Meeting time and place: Meet at 8:00 am at the Shepherds Lookout carpark on Stockdill Drive in Strathnairn (accessed via Pro Hart Avenue). The small parking area can become quite congested, so please take care when parking along the roadside.

If using navigation apps, please note that there is no access to Shepherds Lookout from Uriarra Road, and you must select the carpark as your destination rather than the lookout itself.

Walk details: A moderate walk of approximately 9 kms that may take 3-4 hours. There may be gates or stiles to navigate as well as some narrow, steep and rocky sections.

What to bring: Water, morning tea, binoculars, sturdy footwear, sun protection, camera (optional).

Registration: Please register with Lachlan by email (poephila@outlook.com), no later than Friday 30 August. Participants should provide their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Lachlan Duncan

Sunday 8 September – Wee Jasper

Description: We will be visiting a private property in Wee Jasper which fronts onto the Goodradigbee River. The house is very interesting, having been built around the rocks.

Meet at: Denman Village shops off Felstead Vis, Denman Prospect, at 7.30am for carpooling.

Walking distance: 2 kms

End time (approx.): 12:30 back at Denman Village shops.

What to bring: Water and morning tea, sunscreen, a hat and sturdy shoes.

Name of leader and contact details: Please **register** with the leader, by email to liabattisson@outlook.com, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact. Please do so **before 7pm on Friday 6 September 2024**. Numbers will be limited to 16.

Lia Battisson

Sunday 15 September – Molonglo Gorge

Meeting time and place: 8:30am [Trail Head - Molonglo Gorge Picnic Area/Car Park](#).

This is a 6km round trip walk along the Molonglo Gorge hiking trail ([eBird Link](#)). It's a riverside woodland habitat. In addition to waterfowl and cormorants along the river, past highlights have included **Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Rufous Whistler, Pallid Cuckoo, Olive-backed Oriole** and a variety of raptors that soar in the skies above the river and gorge. Scenic views over the gorge, rapids and railway line are also a highlight. This is a medium to high difficulty walk, as there are some sections that involve scrambles over boulders and there is a total elevation climb of about 100m. However, the majority of the climb is at the beginning (walking poles, optional).

Bring water, a hat, sunscreen and morning tea as there is a pleasant waterside picnic area at the top of the gorge. End time should be approximately 11:45am.

Most of the trail is single file, so numbers are limited to 16 people. Participants must **register** with Mark by email at markjtindale@yahoo.com.au by Thursday 12 September, providing your name and mobile number, and the name and mobile of an emergency contact.

Mark Tindale

Wednesday 18 September - Lake Jerrabomberra

Meet at 9.00am in the carpark of David Madew Oval off Bicentennial Drive in Jerrabomberra. This will be a 2km walk on the lakeside path, with a short stretch along a suburban street. Over 100 species have been recorded at the lake over the years, making it the top eBird hotspot in Queanbeyan, but I don't recall COG ever visiting the lake. Please **register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Sandra Henderson

Sunday 22 September – private property near Murrumbateman

This morning outing will be to a property which is part of Birdlife's Birds on Farms project. It is a former vineyard, with revegetated sites as well as remnant vegetation sites. There should be a good variety of woodland birds as well as spring migrants.

Meet at Hall Primary School in Hoskins Street, Hall, at 8.00am for carpooling.

Registration is essential to smlashko@gmail.com, with your name and phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

Sue Lashko

Tuesday 24 to Friday 27 September – Culburra area

On this mid-week trip to the coast, we will explore Wollumboola Lake, Orient Point Wetlands Reserve, Abrahams Bosom and possibly other sights around Currarong, Silkwood Walk from Callala Bay to Callala Beach and other sites recommended by members of the Illawarra Bird Observers Club. We will encounter a range of waterbirds and shorebirds as well as bush birds. Some may wish to stay for an extra night so they can visit the Beecroft Firing Range



Image by Cape Koala Arts ©

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)

**3rd Wed of each month (7 to 9 PM)
next date: 18 September**

Look for the table with binoculars on it



EVERYONE WELCOME

where there have been excellent sightings of **Ground Parrots** and **Eastern Bristlebirds**. The Range is open to the public from midday Friday to Sunday afternoon.

Accommodation will be at Holiday Haven, Culburra Beach, (<https://www.holidayhaven.com.au/culburra-beach/>) which offers cabins and powered sites. Register with Prue at prue.watters@gmail.com with your name, mobile and the name and mobile of an emergency contact. Numbers will be limited to 16, so **please register early as caravan park bookings should be made soon**. Advise me if you would like to share. DO NOT book accommodation until I have confirmed your registration.

Prue Watters

Sunday 29 September– Pejar Dam and Jean Todkill Park, Crookwell

Description: Both dams are hotspots for raptors and waterbirds. The highlights include **Great-crested Grebes**, **Musk Duck** and **Blue-billed Duck**.

Meeting time and place: Netball Centre Lyneham at 7.00 am for carpooling. Suggested contribution to driver, \$10. Please bring the correct money.

Walking distance: Pejar Dam (St Stephens Road 0.5 km, main picnic area 1 km, North Arm 1 km) and Jean Todkill Park 1 km. Degree of difficulty: easy

End time: 4.00 pm at Lyneham.

What to bring: water, morning tea, lunch, sunscreen, water, sturdy shoes, hat.

Participants must **register** with the leader by text on 0466874723 or email bsgraham1948@gmail.com at least 24 hours before, providing their name and mobile number, and the name and mobile number of an emergency contact.

Numbers limited to 16.

Bill Graham

Sunday 6 October – Youth Haven (restricted access), Kambah

Helen Cross, who lives on the property, will take us on a walk around. With lots of old trees, a creek and several dams, and open grasslands, as well as proximity to the river, this is a haven for many small birds and water birds. Previous visits have resulted in good bird lists. Drive in from Kambah Pool Rd, following main track around to parking area which will be signposted. **Meeting** time is 8.30am.

The walk will take 2-3 hours and includes some off-track exploring. Please **bring** hat, water and wear sturdy shoes.

Limit of 20 participants. **Register** with Sandra at shirmax2931@gmail.com

Sandra Henderson

Saturday 12 October – Australian National Botanic Gardens – beginners' outing

This morning walk will be 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. 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 (0419202155, 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 ACT 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

Monday 14 to Sunday 20 October - Warren Wetlands, Macquarie Marshes and Gundabooka National Park – extended camping trip

An extended camping trip is planned to Warren, Macquarie Marshes and Gundabooka NP, 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 one 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 Macquarie Marshes on the afternoon of 15 October,

spend one night and then go on to Gundabooka NP on 16 October for 4 nights. The trip ends on Sunday 20 October. 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.

To register, contact John Goldie or Kathy Walter on walter.goldie@gmail.com. The trip is limited to 16 people. Please DO NOT make bookings until your registration has been confirmed. Campers are to make their own campground and caravan park bookings and ensure they have a relevant NSW National Parks Pass. Campers are also to make their own arrangements for getting to and from the start/finish.

Kathy Walter and John Goldie

Sunday 20 October – private property near Bookham

This mostly forested private property adjoining the Murrumbidgee River and Burrinjuck Nature Reserve is approximately a half hour drive south of Bookham. Water, riparian and woodland birds, plus annual migrants such as **Rainbow Bee-eaters** and **Olive-backed Orioles**, are likely, and there is a good chance of seeing raptors.

This day trip involves walking about 7.5 km on a property vehicle track which is rough and steep in places.

We will carpool from Hall Primary School, **leaving at 7.30am** and the intention is to be back at Hall about 3 pm. We will take a maximum of 16 people in 4 cars. Suggested contribution by passengers is \$10; please have the correct money.

Bring morning tea and lunch, water, sturdy footwear, appropriate clothing and sun protection.

Registration is essential to sonyaduus@gmail.com with your name, suburb and phone number, and name and number of an emergency contact.

We will notify via text message the previous night if the outing needs to be cancelled due to poor weather.

Sonya Duus and Michael Robbins

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October – 2024 Bird Blitz

See notice on [page 9](#) in this edition of Gang-gang and check the website www.canberrabirds.org.au under the heading “Observing and Reporting Birds”.



Rainbow Bee-eater

Geoffrey Dabb



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Image Credit: Alan Landford



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

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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.

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Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG membership

2024-2025 memberships:

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

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

Z Li
N Damaggio
M Mahoney
H Booth
C Langley
R McMichael

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for October 2024 edition:

Wednesday 25 September 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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COG E-mail Discussion List

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

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