

June 2012 Canberra Gang-Gang Survey

Preliminary Report

Background

Canberra birdwatchers were invited to submit reports of Gang-Gang sightings, aural records of Gang-Gangs and nil reports from the month of June 2012. Records were accepted from the Canberra urban area and nature reserves close to urban areas, but not further away. Nil records were accepted for specific birdwatching trips undertaken in the Canberra urban area and nature reserves close to urban areas, but nil reports for the absence of Gang-Gangs in the suburbs were not accepted.

The aim was to secure a baseline measurement of Gang-Gang Cockatoo abundance in the ACT using a survey methodology that can easily be repeated from year to year.

Results

A total of 263 records were received for the month from 48 observers. Of these 208 were positive and 55 were nil reports. Of the positive reports 38 were aural records and 170 sight records. 665 Gang-Gangs were reported, although this total will include multiple sightings of the same individuals.

The metric which can be reported from these sightings, and which can be repeated from year to year, is

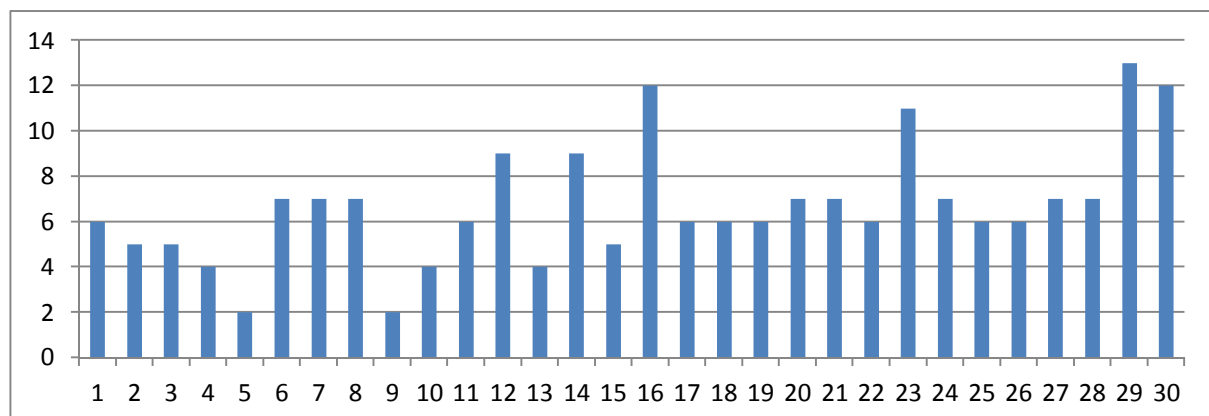
$$\frac{\text{Number of records} - \text{nil records}}{\text{Number of reporters}}$$

Giving the result **4.3**.

Only 81 records out of 170 sight records broke down the birds by sex or age, and no conclusions can be drawn from the sex/age composition of groups that were reported, other than that single birds, pairs, family groups and larger agglomerations were all reported.

Discussion

The records were spread across the whole month in an essential random distribution.



Days of high reporting do not correlate with weekends, and days of low reporting do not correlate with poor weather, except perhaps in the first few days. A few observers were away

for the first part of the month, meaning total observations for the latter half of the month were more numerous.

The distribution of sightings was recorded by suburb. The suburbs with the highest number of records were

Ainslie	9
ANU	28
Barton	5
Deakin	38
Garran	5
Hughes	27
Lyneham	29
Narrabundah	19

Apart from this many other suburbs had one or two records. No records were received from any of the Tuggeranong suburbs, only one from the Gungahlin suburbs, and none from the Belconnen suburbs west of Lake Ginninderra. Weston Creek had a few records, as did the Woden valley suburbs and the suburbs north of Ainslie and east of Northbourne Avenue. It was surprising that there were only two records from the Australian National Botanic Gardens, and many nil records from there.

Clearly the inner north and inner south suburbs are a hot spot for Gang-Gang sightings, though whether this is because of the abundance of observers resident in these areas or a genuine concentration is difficult to tell from the data. One piece of information that might indicate that Gang-Gangs are more widely spread is that the number of records for Lyneham is made up largely of the records of two observers resident in the suburb.

Two further pieces of information that might support this interpretation of a wider Gang-Gang distribution are: the population of 30 Gang-Gangs resident for some years in the Bruce area noted by Matsumi Robertson, and the population of approximately 20 known to be resident in the Lyons area.¹

Notable records

Elvis: Elvis is a male Gang-Gang (distinguished by a very droopy crest) observed several times in a Lyneham backyard by Lindsay Northrop. The fact that one Gang-Gang which can be identified as an individual is a constant visitor to a particular spot suggests that many other sightings in the same spot are the same individuals returning. Elvis was observed five times in the period 22-30 June (Lindsay was not observing earlier in the month,) and the company he kept on each visit is an indication of the fluid nature of Gang-Gang social groups (at least in urban Canberra in the winter):

22 June: Elvis observed with 2 imm males, 1 adult male and 4 females

23 June: Elvis observed with 3 females

26 June: Elvis observed with 2 imm males, 1 adult male and 2 females

29 June: Elvis observed with a female (exhibiting pair-bonded behaviour), 1 imm male and 1 adult male

30 June: Elvis observed with a female (exhibiting pair-bonded behaviour)

¹ Information on these populations was not recorded in the database owing to lack of specific records for June 2012.

Beak and Feather Disease: two birds suffering from this disease were located in the Deakin area and euthanised by the RSPCA. This occurred on 18 and 19 June.

Allopreening: this was observed between a male and female on 28 June by Geoffrey Dabb

Feeding dependent young: this was observed on 23 June by John Leonard and Peter Murphy (two separate reports of different birds). In the group observed by Peter the female was chewing birch (*Betula*) bark and feeding it to the dy, in the group observed by John the female was feeding the dy by regurgitation.

Gang-Gang 'Parliament': on 14 June around 16:40 in Jensen Street, Hughes, John Leonard observed at least three groups of Gang-Gangs (approximately 12 birds in all sighted) perched high in trees separated by several hundred meters creaking loudly at the other groups. This behaviour may be related to the birds' gathering in large flocks in the evening preparatory to roosting.

Large concentrations: Large numbers of Gang-Gangs (<6) were observed during the reporting period as follows:

Date	Time	Number	Location	Observer
03/06/12	10:40	20	ANU	Rosemary Blemings
03/06/12	10:00	10	Deakin	Marion Jones
04/06/12	10:00	10	Deakin	Marion Jones
06/06/12	13:00	20	Chifley	Mieke Van den Bergh
09/06/12	09:20	11	Garran, Red Hill	Tony Willis
14/06/12	10:00	12	ANU, Burton Hall	Michael Lenz (similar numbers also reported from this spot by Peter Cranston several times during the month with 17 on 29/06/12)
14/06/12	16:40	12	Hughes, Jensen Street	John Leonard (see 'Parliament' above)
19/06/12	am and pm	8	Lyneham	Lindsay Nothrop (two separate groups on the same day)
20/06/12	10:40	12	Deakin	Marion Jones
22/06/12	12:00	8	Lyneham	Lindsay Nothrop
28/06/12	09:00	8	Deakin	Marion Jones
28/06/12	11:30	9	Lyneham	Lindsay Nothrop
29/06/12	09:30	7	Deakin	Catherine Hindson

Hot Spots

From the reports the following publicly-accessible areas are noted as Gang-Gang 'hot-spots'. (NB I have not noted Gang-Gang concentrations reported from private residences, also the seasonal movements and distribution of Gang-Gangs will probably change seasonally, so these spots are only valid for June).

Hot Spot	Time of Day	No of Reports
ANU Burton Hall	09:00-10:00 weekdays	15
ANU campus generally	various	28 (includes above records)
Jensen Street, Hughes (area north of Hughes Primary generally)	08:00-10:00, 16:00-17:00	17
Deakin, area of Le Hunte/De Chair/Mcgregor Streets	various	19
Narrabundah, Rocky Knob Reserve, Brockman St and surrounding area	16:00-17:00	9
Deakin, Red Hill, various spots on northern and western sides inc Federal Golf Club	various	12

List of Observers

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D, Christine
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Hindson, Catherine
Jones, Marion
Lashko, Sue
Leonard, Oliver
Murphy, Peter
Ormay, Peter
Perkins, Harvey
Rowell, Alison
Smith, Alastair
Teh, Julian
Whitham, Wendy
Willis, Tony

Ayliffe, Dennis
Brannan, John
Casburn, Jean
Cranston, Peter
Crompton, Cathy
Dabb, Geoffrey
Emerton, Lindell
Fletcher, Felicia
Gregson, Wayne
Hide, Robin
Holland, Jack
Larkin, Matthew
Lenz, Michael
Maconachie, Michael
Nothrop, Lindsay
Payne, Nick
Reeson, Andrew
Robertson, Margaret
Smits, Jenny
Van den Bergh, Mieke
Whitworth, Benj
Windle, Keith