Central Canberra

**Curtin horse paddocks, McCulloch St**

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

**Illoura Horse Paddocks (Curtin)**

Where : I accessed the paddocks from Heysen St, near the corner where it becomes Devonport St. A very promising start with four **Flame Robins** along the track from the gate. As I neared the main horse yards, a group of **Double-barred Finches** were fossicking in the hay in one of the yards. A group of ten **Straw-necked Ibis** flew over, possibly coming from the oval further down Devonport St, where a much larger group was foraging when I drove past later. There are quite a few paddocks – I avoided the ones currently in use, but wandered to some groups of trees. I covered very little of a very large site, and saw 19 species.

**Narrabundah Wetlands**

Where is it: Matina St in Narrabundah. (Matina St changes its name to Goyder St at some point along the street). It is right next to the Monaro Highway, across from the Canberra South Caravan Park. There is parking on Matina St.

This has been on my list for a while, so I took the time to wander around in late March. The wetlands (the Mill Creek Rehabilitation Project, according to the sign) diverts Jerrabomberra Creek through a series of ponds then back into the creek. The creek itself continues on between the wetlands and highway. If you visit, be sure to wander to the underpass near the wetlands silt trap – it’s where the **Welcome Swallows** nest and roost.

There seemed to be lots of small fish in the shallow ponds, which had attracted a **White-faced Heron**, as well as **Great** and **Little Pied Cormorants**. With slightly raised reedy areas between the ponds it may become a good area for crakes when the vegetation is more established.

**Duntroon Horse Paddocks**

Where: Addison Rd off Fairbairn Ave, near the playing fields

This is a very large area, with quite a few separate paddocks. The paddocks, as is the case with most of the government agistment areas, are separated by fenced off vegetation lines. The Duntroon paddocks have electric fences around most if not all paddocks, but there are step-throughs in many of the gates. The most numerous birds were **Australian Magpies** and **Magpie-Larks**. A large group of **White-winged Choughs** was being annoyed by a magpie at the horse yards as they gathered in a noisy group where some feed had been spilled. Many of the vegetation lines had little undergrowth, but one patch with some bushes had a group of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and a family of **Superb Fairy-wrens**. Some of the paddock areas were very wet underfoot.

**Hackett horse paddocks**

Where: the entry is on Antill St, directly across from Justice Robert Hope Park. At first glance these look to be very attractive agistment spaces, with many large trees scattered through the paddocks. I visited on a cool and overcast day, and covered 1.5km. Both species of rosella were plentiful, but apart from a single Striated Pardalote, small birds were completely absent. A pleasant enough place to walk, but not a great birding location.

**Black Mountain woodland walk**

Where is it: this loop walk starts and ends at the Caswell Drive carpark. I joined a couple of other COG members for this walk organised not as a COG outing but a Friends of Black Mountain outing. The weather was a little threatening, and rain started as we finished the walk. The undoubted highlight was good views of a pair of Varied Sittellas flying across the track and stopping in a trackside tree. Quite a few parrots, including Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, were investigating hollows or looked to be already settled in hollows. Slightly earlier in the morning I’d walked part of the track and found a variety of honeyeaters, with Brown-headed Honeyeaters the most numerous, as well as a pair of Olive-backed Orioles and numerous small birds.

**Black Mountain – Summit and Forest Loop tracks**

Where : the Summit track starts near the substation at the end of Frith Rd behind CSIRO. The Forest Loop runs off the Summit Track and loops around the mountain. Crimson Rosellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were busy inspecting hollows in many spots, and several Striated Pardalotes were seen displaying. The major mixed flock we encountered included Striated Thornbills, both pardalotes, Buff-rumped Thornbills and White-throated Treecreepers.

**Lyneham Wetland**

Where is it: Goodwin St, Lyneham

This is a suburban water quality control pond. There were no surprises among the species seen, and I was pleased to see a sign (not an official one I suspect) asking people to not feed the ducks. Hardheads, Pacific Black Ducks, Grey Teal and Australian Wood Ducks were present. Two pairs of Superb Fairy-Wrens were busy on the grass, one of the males in full colour, and the other male just starting to colour up.

**Mount Mugga Mugga.**

Since I am now reluctant to park at Callum Brae, and instead park at Animal Services up on Mugga Lane, I noticed that there’s an entry into the Mount Mugga Mugga Reserve near the carpark. The first part of the walk was unremarkable, but the bush on the corner of Hindmarsh Drive and Mugga Lane was full of bush birds such as Speckled Warblers, various thornbills, Grey Fantails, Rufous Whistlers, honeyeaters, Weebills and Superb Fairywrens. I’ll have to go back to explore some of the other parts of this reserve.