

COG Surveys



The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is responsible for collecting, storing and disseminating bird data for the COG "area of interest" which stretches from latitude 34° 45' to latitude 36° and longitude 148° 40' to longitude 149° 45' (encompassing Yass, Adaminaby, Bredbo, Lakes Bathurst and George, the Federal Highway to just short of Goulburn and the Shoalhaven River to the Kings Highway). We gather the information we need for informing local authorities about the state of our birds, and provide a summary annual bird report each year, published in Canberra Bird Notes. We also provide these data to Birds Australia for national atlas purposes.

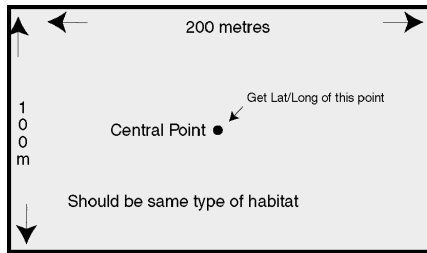
Reporting Your Records

Records of your birdsightings ARE IMPORTANT, particularly those of species in decline or at risk of decline. Reporting your sightings is now much more convenient than previously. There are a number of methods.

Survey Methods

1. Two Hectare Search (Preferred Method)

Observe within a two hectare area (100m x 200m, 140m x 140m, or approx 80 m radius circle) for 20 minutes. Repeat observation every three months if possible.

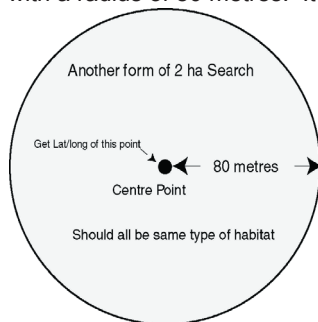


Identify clearly the location of each 2ha

Search site. Use GPS where possible to give precise Latitude and Longitude of each site (GPS can be borrowed from COG for periods of 2-3 days).

Try to ensure that the two hectare area is of **similar habitat**. This is important. The 2 Hectare Search area does not have to be a neat 100X200 rectangle. It may be a circle with a radius of 80 metres. It may be a square or another shape.

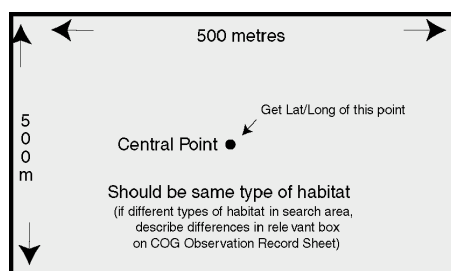
Record estimates of numbers, counting only the birds **within** the two hectare search area.



Repeat the process at other sites, centres no closer than 400 metres. Use a new record sheet for each different 2ha Search site. Try to get a good coverage of major habitat types.

2 Area Search

Search within 500 metres of a central identified location, or within 5 kilometres of that location (indicate which on observation sheet). Please indicate Latitude and Longitude of central point of search area.



Search for at least 20 minutes, and for no more than one day. If you search the same area for more than one day, submit a separate record sheet for each day.

Record on COG Observation Record Sheet, the actual numbers of birds (or estimate when necessary) counting only the birds **within** the search area. Repeat the process at other sites, at sites no closer than 1.5 km (if search is within 500 metres) or 15 km (if search is within 5 km).

Please note that the COG Observation Sheet should be used for both the 2ha Search and the Area Search.

3 Incidental Sightings

Incidental Sightings are for periods less than the 20 minute minimum survey period, for reporting only a few species that are worthy of a separate report. Be as precise as possible about the time and location, including latitude/longitude wherever possible.

1 Online at <http://www.cogatlas.org.au>

This is COG's online data entry system for COG surveys. All you need is your COG observer code and a password. The relevant information is on the website. Contact Paul Fennell on 6254 1804 or through the email on the front page of the website.

2 Using COG paper observation forms

The COG Observation form and the COG Incidental Record form are available at COG meetings, or from Paul Fennell or Nicki Taws (ntaws@bigpond.com or phone 6251 0303). Alternatively the two pages may be **downloaded** from the COG website : http://canberrabirds.org.au/maps_forms.htm. Please, if possible photocopy a single form back to back from the two pages, as this makes them much easier to process and store.

Place completed sheets in the red collection box at meetings or mail them to COG Records Officer, PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608.

3 Online at <http://www.birddata.com.au>

If you are a Birds Australia member and are already using this method of reporting your data to Birds Australia, you can use this avenue of reporting your data. Each year COG and BA exchange the data for the COG area of interest, so records sent to Birds Australia come back to COG for inclusion in the COG Annual Bird report. **The important thing is to record your observation only once.**

4 Birds Australia Atlas Forms

Similarly, records sent to Birds Australia on these forms are reported back to COG.

5 BirdInfo

If you are using BirdInfo to record your data, you can download from that and email your export datafile to Paul Fennell at ptf@grapevine.com.au.

Whatever method you use, report your observations only ONCE. Duplicate sightings will cause problems both for COG and BA.

Critical Elements

Time Data:

We use a the 24-hour clock (15.25 not 3.25 pm).

Location:

Use GPS. COG has GPS receivers managed by the Field Trips officer, Anthony Overs at 6254 0168, or aovers@grapevine.net.au. The COG website has maps to assist you in pinpointing which COG grid cell you are in; also, photocopied grid cell maps and help are available at COG meetings.

Use Google Earth and Google(or other) Maps:

If you have broadband you can get precise lat/long information for any spot on the globe using Google Earth. You have to download and install the free Google Earth program. You can hover the cursor over your spot, and it shows the precise latitude and longitude. Google Earth is available from: <http://earth.google.com/>. Google Maps can assist you identify your spot (as can any other map or atlas) to help you find it on Google Earth.

Grid Reference: Maps available at COG meetings, and on line at http://canberrabirds.org.au/maps_forms.htm to identify COG grid.

How to Report Your Records

Site Data: Mandatory Items in Bold

Item	COG Obs Record Paper Copy	COGAtlas On-line
Name, Observer Code, Contact Details	Fill in at top of page.	Type in Observer Code (E.g. FeP1) and password. Other fields are automatically filled in. May be updated by user online.
Number Surveying	Fill in box at top of page	Type in. Default value is 1.
Time Data	Fill in Date, Time Started and Time Finished	Use Dropdown boxed to enter data. Note that the date cannot be in the future, and there must be both Times started and finished.
Positional data Location (Other positional data not mandatory, but accurate positional data preferred)	You must clearly describe site location, and if possible provide Grid No, and Latitude and Longitude. If GPS used fill in fields for Datum, and accuracy If you provide only the Location and not the other data, make sure there is a clear description so that the site can be pinpointed on a map.	Either , select a standard location (e.g., Campbell Park or ANBG [Aust National Botanic Gardens]) and the Grid No and Lat Longs will be added automatically. OR Describe location, add in Grid No and Lat / Longs. This new location will be added to the standard location look up table. Users should be accurate when adding in location data.
Type of Search	Select one of the options available	Select from the options available
Weather	Select from the temperature, wind and precipitation options available	Select from the temperature, wind and precipitation options available
Habitat	Complete either A (Forest, Woodland, shrub land, heath) OR B (Other Habitat) Not both.	As for paper record, but be careful – at the moment, once a radio buttons is pressed, the field is filled in and cannot be reversed.
Additional notes	Add any information about the site	Add any information about the site

BirdSighting Data

Item	COG Obs Record Paper Copy	COGAtlas On-line
The Sighting page	The list of birds likely to be seen in the region is in taxonomic order, in groups, on the reverse of the page, there are five spaces at the end to write in any species not listed.	There are three options for locating the birds for inclusion in the record. Option 1: A complete list of birds of the region organised in taxonomic order as for the paper form. There are more birds on this list, as there is no capacity to write one in. You need fast broadband to download this list, but you can enter all your birds in one hit. Option 2: A fast text filter to find any bird according to the letters in their name. Type in "aust" and you will get every bird with "Australian" in its name. Option 3: The birds are listed in taxonomic group order similar to the paper form. You can list all the honeyeaters for example on the one screen.
Abundance	Write in your best estimate of numbers of the species observed.	Enter the estimate in the Abundance field. A number is required, not just an x for presence.
Breeding	Write in the code from the list on the top of the page in the box.	Select the appropriate entry from the dropdown list.
Flying Over	Circle the Abundance number	Tick the Flying Over box
Sighting notes	Not available Use the additional notes on previous page	Type in any information in the box provided.

Helpful hints

- Put the birds first. Never disturb a nest or eggs.
- Don't enter private property without permission.
- If you are surveying in a remote area, tell a friend or neighbour where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Take suitable clothing, footwear and water.
- For the 20 minute observation period, move slowly and quietly or sit still for a while and let the birds come to you; it is easier to hear calls when you are not moving
- Keep the sun behind you
- Mornings (first four hours after sunrise) and towards evening are the best times for observations
- Windy conditions make observation and identification difficult
- If you are at all in doubt about a record, leave it out