

Capital Region Gang-gang Network.

September 2023 Report



Photo: Dave Bassett

Thanks to all Network members who have reported sightings of Gang-gang Cockatoos in our region during September. As described below, likely nesting sites will be where old hollow-bearing eucalypts are located in reasonable proximity (within 2-3km) to food sources, so Queanbeyan River (including the golf course), Googong foreshore, Molonglo Gorge, the Bushland Cemetery, and Cuumbeun Nature Reserve are all worth observing more closely. The ACT citizen science group reports that green wattle pods, eucalyptus and callitris/cupressus cones are important food sources at this time of year.

There have been multiple sightings of Gang-gang pairs in a number of properties bordering Cuumbeun Nature Reserve reported to me, both north and south of Captains Flat Rd, with one garden having a history of a breeding pair visiting daily and returning with newly-fledged young at the end of previous breeding seasons.

Hollow selection and nest preparation is likely to continue through October before breeding begins in November.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN OCTOBER.

The knowledge gained from the citizen science project in the ACT suggests that Gang-gangs seek out tree hollows with the following features:

1. Only observed in eucalypts, but across a wide range of species (eg Blakey's Red Gum, Scribbly Gum, Brittle Gum, Yellow Box, River Peppermint, Sydney Blue Gum have been reported with nesting hollows)
2. Hollows selected can be in both live and dead trees.
3. Height above ground ranges 3m – 9.4m.
4. Hollow entrance height ranges 7cm – 48cm; width 7cm – 32cm
5. Eucalypts will likely be 80+ years old to acquire hollows of these dimensions.
6. In the Canberra area about 10% of all hollows reported, across the year, as hollows of Gang-gang interest, were found to be nest trees.

The August Network update provided more detail of Gang-gang behaviours/signs to look out for during nest selection, and more information is available in the comprehensive report available at this link: <http://redhillregenerators.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Gang-gang-tell-tale-nesting-behaviours-Mulvaney-Tyrell-Davey-2022.pdf>

This recent update (28 Sept) on Gang-gang observations in the ACT and other regions has been provided by Michael Mulvaney:

It would appear that nesting has already begun on the NSW South Coast and that nests have either or are close to being selected elsewhere. I would appreciate if those that live near a known nest tree could check it out in the next week or so and report back to me if any Gang-gang activity is evident.

In an earlier email I explained how we collectively have observed a significant preference of Gang-gangs only using hollows in dead trees in wet cool years. Looks like Gang-gangs are about to prove me wrong again as there appears to be firm interest in two dead tree hollows this season, even though it is predicted to be hot and dry. Or perhaps the weather people don't know what they are talking about, but I am pretty sure its me.

This year, we are intending to employ about a dozen cameras at known hollows to gain a better understanding on who hollow visitors are (both competitors and predators) and whether erection of barriers (next season) affects visitation rates.

In Canberra we have also established a gallery of identifiable Gang-gangs - we have 15 that have unique recognisable features from Lady Gaga to Gold Feather - Crooked beak to one-eye Pie. Not all features may be permanent but they do provide a marker for at least some time.

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/collections/sightings/9883>

Of these 15 we have at least 4 records of just three birds. However we know that Baldy, Cheeky Rose and Eye Rose have returned to the close vicinity of trees in which they nested for at least 3 consecutive breeding seasons years and in Baldy's case for the previous 4 years. We also know that Baldy travelled 4km to forage while he was feeding two male chicks in a hollow. We only have one out-of breeding season sighting of a recognisable bird and that was Baldy seen in the vicinity of his and Mrs Baldy's Aranda nesting hollow. If you could keep an eye out for any distinctive birds and make a visual diary of sightings that may help us understand a bit more about Gang-gang movement.

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/collections/sightings/658>

Stacey has obtained good results from the genetic study of feathers and is getting an analysis together so that she can report on findings, she would still appreciate feathers from outside the Canberra area.

Cheers Michael Mulvaney

A copy of Michael's talk to Queanbeyan Landcare members and Network members is now available at this link: [->> https://www.queanbeyanlandcare.org.au/s/Queanbeyan_Landcare-MulvaneyPresentation.pdf](https://www.queanbeyanlandcare.org.au/s/Queanbeyan_Landcare-MulvaneyPresentation.pdf)

For further information or to report Gang-gang nesting activity, see Canberra Nature Map or contact me on isj@tpg.com.au

Ian Johnsson

Queanbeyan Landcare

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