



Male Gang-gang Cockatoo. Photo: Danny Fog.



Female Gang-gang Cockatoo. Photos: Danny Fog.

## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 10 June 2023

On 10 June, 14 observers met at the slightly later time of 7.45 am (calculated as 15 minutes after dawn). The weather was fine and sunny, but cold, with some cloud and a light breeze.

We recorded 26 bird species in total, the second lowest species count this year. (Our highest species count was 33 in March.) Our total bird count of 422 was a little higher than the 2023 mean.

The distribution of species was unusually even across the 7 areas, with 15 species recorded in each of A, F and G, 14 species in E, 10 in D and 9 in B and C. (Before April 2023, Area A had always recorded the highest species count, but this was eclipsed by increased diversification in Area F during April and May.)

The 2 most abundant species, found in every section were Rainbow Lorikeets (64) followed by Noisy Miners (54), with a particularly large number in Area C (19). Seventeen Rock Doves were also counted in Area C, giving it by far the highest number of feral bird species.

A major highlight was the continued presence of a family of 5 endangered Gang-gang Cockatoos feeding on gum nuts in Area D. They were previously recorded flying over Area A in May. These much-photographed birds (see YWNA Facebook) continue to delight visitors to the reserve with their loud 'creaking gate' calls.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos had increased in number, with 8 spotted in both A and G, and 20 Little Corellas were counted flying over D, but some more usually encountered parrots, such as Eastern Rosellas, were absent on this occasion, and the last Red-rumped Parrot was recorded back in January. Just 2 Musk Lorikeets were seen, both in Area C.

Tania noted that: 'There was a good variety of the more obvious waterbirds in Area A including a Great Egret and 3 Australasian Grebes. We had flowering eucalypts in Area B, which contributed to the high number of Rainbow Lorikeets recorded there (31). The highlight in Area C was a family of Grey Butcherbirds with an immature that was also spotted in Area B. High tide at Point Ormond was at 6.40 am. Due to the recent rains, the channel through Area G was full of fresh water all the way to the Glen Huntly Road bridge. It became obvious



Great Egret. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Danny Fog,



Little Pied Cormorant with fish. Photo: Danny Fog.



Little Pied Cormorant drying its wings. Photo: Danny Fog.

that the water was fresh when we noticed an Australasian Grebe (the first survey record of this species in G) and 2 Eurasian Coots feeding in the large open basin in what is normally brackish water. The high water also meant we had a lot of ducks—6 Grey Teal, 27 Chestnut Teal (including immatures) and 7 Pacific Black Ducks, as well as a Little Pied Cormorant and 2 Silver Gulls.'

Four Australasian Grebes were also recorded in Area F, and Pacific Black Ducks were also present in low numbers in A (7), C (3), E (4) and F (3). Areas E and F recorded 2 Chestnut Teal each. Grazing and swimming Australian Wood Ducks were found in Areas D (8), E (2) and F (8).

Among the water hens, a single Dusky Moorhen is being regularly recorded in Area D, where there is no permanent water, but a further 18 were spread across the ponds in Areas A, E and F. Area F had an unusually high number of Eurasian Coots (13)—also found in Area A (7) and E (10)—and Purple Swamphens (8), which were also present in lower numbers in A (4), C (2), D (1) and E (2).

Our wetland species were supplemented by Little Pied Cormorants, with one recorded in each of B, E, F and G, and just 4 Welcome Swallows.

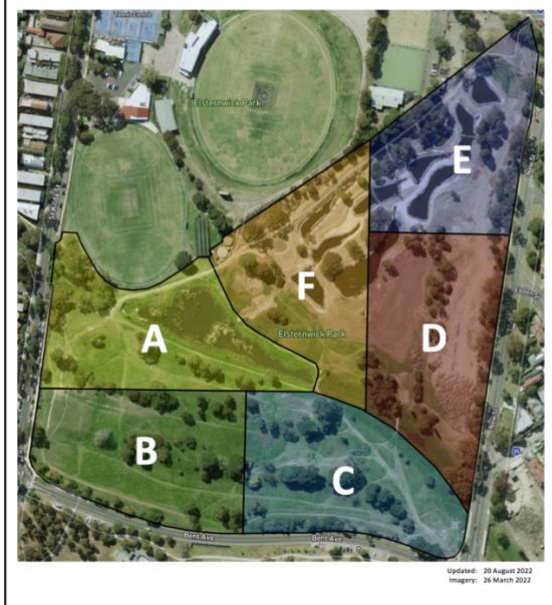
Our usual, more adaptive woodland/grassland species were present in unexceptional numbers: 14 Australian Magpies were spread across all areas except A and C, but mostly in B (7); 18 Magpie-larks were mostly seen in families of 3s and 4s, in all areas except C; 9 Little Ravens were recorded through A, B, D, F and G; 12 Crested Pigeons were in D, with one each in C and F; and a single Red Wattlebird was found in C. We saw no Tawny Frogmouths, although one was subsequently recorded later in June. Common Starlings (5) were our third feral species, as usual found in Area E, favouring the dead tree as their roost.

**Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton**

**Photos: Danny Fog**

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### Fauna survey areas



### Description of current vegetation and habitat by survey areas:

A: a large pond with well-established reeds around the edge and on small central islands.

B: grassy slopes with stands of mature eucalypts, including winter-flowering ironbarks.

C: grassy areas with stands of mixed native trees with Elster Creek on its northern side.

D: partly fenced area still undergoing landscaping; scattered mixed native trees with a line of mature eucalypts inside the New Street fence; bounded by Elster Creek to its south.

E: newly opened Chain of Ponds with scattered native trees, widescale planting around ponds (currently still under netting) and mature eucalypts inside the New Street fence.

F: grassy slope with scattered eucalypts fringing area A pond, leading to the Chain of Ponds and new beds of ground cover and shrubs adjoining the northern sports field fence.

G: Elster Canal flanked by grassy slopes, mixed plantings and a few mature eucalypts fronting urban housing and a school.

**To join a monthly bird survey**, please contact Bob Tammick: [bob\\_alyson@aapt.net.au](mailto:bob_alyson@aapt.net.au) The surveys are led by BirdLife Bayside president Tania Ireton. Start times are between 7.15 and 8.00 am, depending on sunrise. Seven sections (including Elster Canal) are surveyed in two groups, for 20 minutes each; both groups complete Area A together around the main pond. The process generally takes one hour and thirty minutes per group.

**To view the survey records** for all seven sites, go to Birddata website, select the Shared Sites tab and type Elsternwick Park in the filter: <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au>