



Grey Butcherbird with juvenile on nest. Photos: Fran Pfeiffer.



Tawny Frogmouth with juveniles on nest. Photo: Danny Fog.



Magpie-larks guarding their nest. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 8 October 2022

Nine observers turned up for our 7.30 am October survey. After heavy rain during the previous day and night, we were blessed with a still, sunny (11° C) morning and 3 photographers to capture the action. Inevitably, there was standing water in some grassy areas and paths, and strong water flow into Elster Canal from the original pond in Area A.

Plenty of nesting and breeding activity was evident throughout the survey areas. Our leader, Birdlife Bayside president Tania Ireton, described her highlights as:

'Area B—a Grey Butcherbird nest with 3 well-grown young in it, being fed by 2 adults. One adult brought minced meat and the other brought a dragonfly. [This was the first time that observers had seen a Grey Butcherbird nest in Bayside.]

Area G—an adult Grey Butcherbird with 2 juveniles, one of the juveniles was rolling on the ground to remove leaf litter from a short thick stick. Once it was free, it picked up the stick, flew up into a tree and practiced wedging the stick into a fork in the branches, obviously practising for when it captures live prey. We also found 3 Little Raven nests, one may have had young as an adult was perched on the rim and was bending its head down into the nest.'

Elsternwick Park Association Facebook has had postings of two fluffy young Tawny Frogmouths that hatched in a nest near New Street (Area E) several weeks ago. Although well-camouflaged, they were just visible above the nest, guarded by their father with mother roosting close by in an adjacent eucalypt. The maximum number of Frogmouths recorded at any time in the nature park is 4. In Area D a pair of Noisy Miners were guarding their nest in a eucalypt and a pair of Magpie-larks were finishing nest construction. In Area F Magpie-larks were actively defending a nest with 3 young in it from a marauding Little Raven, and in Area G a female Magpie-lark was feeding a juvenile. Given all their breeding activity, it was not surprising that Magpie-lark numbers (17) were at their highest for 2022 (the lowest recorded was 2 in April).

Some water birds were accompanied by young in Areas A and F: in A, a pair of Chestnut Teal were swimming with a single duckling and 2 very young juvenile Purple Swamphens were being fed by 2



Male (right) and female (left) Chestnut Teal with duckling. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Purple Swamphen with very young juvenile. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Australian Wood Ducks shepherding their brood. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australian Magpie gathering nest material. Photo: Danny Fog.

adults; in F a pair of Australian Wood Ducks were leading their 5 ducklings into the Chain of Ponds. Laura observed that, compared to other ducks, Wood Ducks are particularly diligent and watchful parents; these birds were carefully controlling the movement of their offspring from all angles.

Other signs of breeding intent were evident in Area E, where an Australian Magpie was gathering grass as nesting material and a pair of Chestnut Teal were in a tree, possibly looking for nest hollows. A Pacific Black Duck and a pair of Australian Wood Ducks were seen checking out nest boxes in Area F, while a Rainbow Lorikeet poked its head out from another, located in a higher tree.

We were thrilled to find an Australian Reed Warbler in Area A as this species has not been recorded in a survey since February 2020. Its loud and persistent calling was likely to herald breeding intent. The calls of 2 Little Grassbirds were also heard around the pond. On the grassy rise beside it, 2 male Red-rumped Parrots were feeding together; the females may have been nearby in nest hollows.

Another infrequent visitor, Long-billed Corellas, were recorded in C (1), D (1) and G (3). Their last survey entry was nearly 3 years ago—November 2019. They are distinguished from the Little Corella by an elongated upper mandible, much more red on the face and a red crescent on the throat.

A total of 29 species were recorded, 3 fewer than the 2022 top of 32 in September. There were more species than usual in A (20), D (13) and F (16), while Area G retained an average 12 and B (9), C (8) and E (7) were on the low side. Area A had the most abundance with 77 birds recorded, followed by G with 64. There were fewest birds in Areas C (26) and E (24).

Pacific Black Ducks (17) and Chestnut Teal (17) were well distributed, but Australian Wood Ducks (16), Purple Swamphens (14) and Dusky Moorhens (10) were only found in A, D and F, and Eurasian Coots (4) only in A. Welcome Swallows (19) were recorded in A, C, D, E, and F. Crested Pigeons (13) had returned to A, C, and D, and feral pigeons (16 Rock Doves) were recorded mostly on the canal (G), although 13 flew into A after the survey finished. There were also more Silver Gulls than usual in circulation (20), with 13 sighted above Area A.



Rainbow Lorikeet in nest box. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australian Reed-Warbler. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Male Red-rumped Parrot. Photo: Danny Fog.



Long-billed Corella. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.

A single Eastern Rosella was seen in A, D, F and G, and a single Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in B and G. Single records were made for a female Hardhead and an Australasian Grebe on the original pond (A), a Red Wattlebird (F), a Pied Currawong (heard in G), a Masked Lapwing (F) and a White-faced Heron (F), which may have been a parent to 2 juveniles in a nest tree further along the canal. Out of a total of 64 birds, only one waterbird was recorded on the canal—a Chestnut Teal.

On this occasion, there were no records of cormorants, Grey Teals, Common Starlings, Common Mynas, Spotted Doves, Little Wattlebirds or Galahs.

Surprisingly, Noisy Miner numbers were at their lowest for 2022, with a total of only 25 (a top of 47 was recorded in May) although, as usual, they were in every section. The only other honeyeater was one Red Wattlebird, which has been seen regularly in F. Little Raven numbers were also lowest for 2022—8 (the top was 67 in July when a large flock had gathered in the playing field adjacent to F). Conversely, Rainbow Lorikeet numbers were the highest recorded for 2022 at 65 (the lowest being 39 in August).

Report: Sue Forster

Photos: Danny Fog and Fran Pfeiffer

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White-faced Heron. Photo: Danny Fog.



Crested Pigeon. Photo: Danny Fog.

Description of current vegetation and habitat by section:

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 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 surveys 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>

