



Juvenile Australian Wood Duck. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Danny Fog.



Eurasian Coot. Photo: Danny Fog.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Danny Fog.

## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 15 April 2023

Our 15 April surveys began at 7.15 am with a warm wind (19°C) and dispersing cloud cover. Twelve observers joined our first survey around Area A pond.

We recorded a total of 30 species—down from 33 species in March but there were more birds in circulation.

Excitingly, our data seems to indicate that new birds are acclimatising to Chain of Ponds areas E and F, with a potential shift in distribution and an increase in bird populations. It will be interesting to track whether this is sustained in coming months.

For the first time, Area F in the Chain of Ponds produced the highest number of species (22) and largest number of birds (113) out of the 7 survey areas. Its total number of wetland birds had risen to 58 from the previous maximum of 44 recorded in December 2021. Previously, in every survey since July 2019, the highest species diversity was recorded in Area A around the reserve's original pond. On this occasion, 18 species were recorded in Area A and 81 birds counted.

Area E, in the Chain of Ponds to the north of F, also showed a marked increase in species diversity (17, up by 2 from the previous high of 15 in December 2021) as well as an increase in bird numbers. Even Pond 2, which is close to busy Nepean Highway, had water birds on it. We recorded 10 wetland species in Area E (the previous wetland species high was 6 in March 2023) and a total of 49 wetland birds (39 was the most counted previously, back in May 2022).

The picture was rather different on the other side of the reserve, where the grassy slopes, eucalypts and other native trees of Areas B and C were comparatively quiet. Tania Ireton reported: 'The number of species for each area (12 in B and 11 in C) was probably slightly above the average but there was no real reason for this. A few red-flowering gums in Area B had blossoms but only had a couple of Noisy Miners feeding. Most of the birds recorded were flying overhead.'

Tania's group went on to record 15 species and 74 birds in Area G (Elster Canal) but 'Area G only had these numbers because it was just after high tide, so there were quite a few ducks on the survey side of Glen Huntly Road Bridge.' Of the 40 Chestnut Teal



Little Pied Cormorant. Photo: Danny Fog.



Masked Lapwing. Photo: Danny Fog.



Common Starlings. Photo: Danny Fog.



Crested Pigeon. Photo: Danny Fog.

recorded in the survey, 29 were on the Canal. By comparison, most of the Pacific Black Ducks were in Area A pond (16/32) and Australian Wood Ducks (28) were almost evenly distributed between Areas E and F.

We were pleased to see a Little Grassbird flitting between the reeds in Pond A as we had not recorded any since January, when 3 were present. It was also exciting to find 6 Australasian Grebes: 3 in Area A, 1 in E and 2 in F. This was the largest number ever recorded in our surveys; it was also the first record for E, and only the second for the Chain of Ponds (one was previously recorded in F in March 2023). We still have no survey record of Hoary-headed Grebes in the reserve although they have been photographed in Area A between surveys.

Eurasian Coots were also recorded for the first time in E (7). There were another 9 in F, where only 1 or 2 have been recorded on 3 previous occasions. Dusky Moorhen numbers had also increased, with 7 in E, 9 in F, 4 in A and 1 in D. Among the other wetland birds, we recorded: 3 Little Pied Cormorants (possibly the same ones in A and B, with single birds in C and D) and 3 Little Black Cormorants (2 in A and 1 in G); 2 White-faced Herons in F; 11 Purple Swamphens spread across A, E and F; 7 Grey Teals (2 in E and 5 in G); a pair of Masked Lapwings moving between D and E; a Silver Gull (above A and B); and Welcome Swallows circulating in every area, with a maximum of 9 in C.

We did not see the Buff-banded Rail recorded in March, nor the Spotless Crake recorded in Area A over the previous week on Gio Fitzpatrick's wildlife camera. The long-term resident Tawny Frogmouth family, last spotted in Area B at the end of March, was also conspicuously absent.

Unfortunately, the pest Noisy Miner was again recorded as the most abundant species (51, present across all areas). Exotic species consisted of Common Starlings in Areas E and F, with most (21 out of 29) recorded in F, and Rock Doves, with 4 out of 5 seen along the Canal.

Rainbow Lorikeets were still abundant (45, in all areas except E) but only 3 Musk Lorikeets were recorded (in F and G). Four Eastern Rosellas circulated between D and F, with one sighted in B. There were no observations of Red-rumped Parrots, but 9 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo were recorded along the Canal and another flying around the reserve.

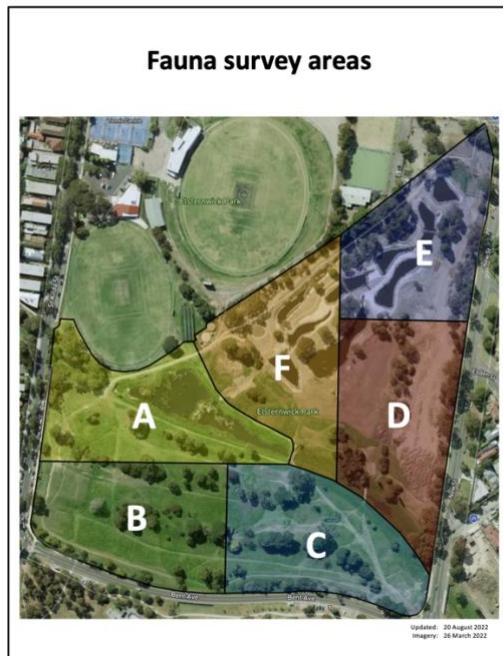


Eastern Rosellas. Photos: Danny Fog.

Our records show very few Red Wattlebirds in recent months but there appeared to be more on this occasion, with a possible total of 6 recorded in A, B, E and F (half were in B). Among the other 'terrestrial' birds, Pied Currawongs were observed in C (3), D (1) and F (2), and Little Raven records were up from 3 in March to 17. Most were seen flying across A (6); others were distributed across B (1), C (3), F (3) and G (4). Their numbers fluctuate widely, depending on whether there are flocks passing through North Brighton/Elwood. Three Grey Butcherbirds were recorded in both C and E, and single birds in D, F and G. Also circulating around the reserve were Australian Magpies (12 recorded across C, D, E, F and G), Magpie-larks (17 recorded across B, D, E, F and G), and Crested Pigeons (13 recorded across A, C, D, F and G). These species seem to have stable local populations, but their distribution varies from month to month.

**Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton**

**Photos: Danny Fog**



**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 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>