



Early morning moon. Photo: Danny Fog.



Pacific Black Duck (foreground) and Australian Wood Duck (behind). Photo: Tania Splawa-Neyman.



Female Chestnut Teal. Photo: Tania Splawa-Neyman.



Masked Plover. Photo: Danny Fog.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 8 July 2023

It seemed like dawn had barely arrived when our survey group started off around Area A at 7.45 am. The temperature was 12° C and the ground was mostly soggy underfoot due to heavy overnight rain. The sky remained overcast and there was a strong, gusty wind. Despite a dire weather forecast, 14 observers turned up, including 6 new faces.

Our total bird species count was 26 for the second consecutive month, 7 less than our highest 2023 count of 33 in March and 2 more than our lowest of 24 in February. Overall bird numbers were also lower than usual.

There were far fewer ducks around than in previous months, and only one Australasian Grebe was found in Area F pondage. Chestnut Teal numbers had dropped from 84 in January to 10 (in A, D and G); Pacific Black Ducks were down from 46 in March to 18, and Australian Wood Ducks had dropped from 40 in May to 14.

Just 10 species were recorded in Chain of Ponds Area F, which had the highest overall species count in 3 surveys from April to June. On this occasion, Areas A and E shared the top species count (15), followed by D (14), B (12), G (11), and C and F (10).

As usual, the most abundant species was Rainbow Lorikeet (total 58, recorded in every area). Also observed in every area were Noisy Miners (total 43, 9 fewer than in June) and Little Ravens (45), which were now flocking in the reserve.

Unlike the ducks, Eurasian Coots were showing an increased presence (26 recorded across A, D, E and F; up 22 from a low of 4 in March). Other waterfowl populations, such as Purple Swamphens and Dusky Moorhens, were relatively stable. Wetland birds also included Welcome Swallows (3 flying over B), Silver Gulls (9, over A, B and C), an Australian White Ibis over B, and a Masked Lapwing foraging in A and D.

The feral count was relatively high due to feeding of 27 Rock Doves along Elster Canal (Area G). Common Starlings (6) were the only other feral

species, and these were scattered across the reserve in low numbers.

The 'terrestrial' or non-wetland birds included 3 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in G, and a pair of Grey



Eastern Rosella. Photo: Tania Splawa-Neyman.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Tania Splawa-Neyman.



Male Magpie-lark. Photo: Danny Fog.

Butcherbirds calling loudly in C, D and E, with another recorded in G. Magpie-larks had a strong presence, with 22 counted across A, D, E, F and G. Crested Pigeons (10 in A, C, D) and Australian Magpies (13 in A, B, E, F, G) were present in average numbers. A Pied Currawong and a Red Wattlebird were recorded in E and an Eastern Rosella in both B and C.

Many birds were catching the wind gusts, including a White-faced Heron that flew through Area B to Elster Creek where it was photographed. It was flushed from there and was counted again in Area C. After the survey two White-faced Herons were seen flying through Area G.

Very few trees were in flower so there were few lorikeets feeding. Most were flying through, including a single flock of 12 Musk Lorikeets that flew straight through Areas B and E.

Although there was plenty of water at the Glen Huntly Road bridge, off-lead dogs had chased most of the birds away except for a pair of Magpie-larks, 4 Pacific Black Ducks (one pair copulating) and 3 immature Chestnut Teals. A pair of Chestnut Teal were seen earlier along the channel but were flushed by an unrestrained dog.

There was some evidence of early breeding activity. A pair of Rainbow Lorikeets were peeking out of a nest box in Area A, an Australian Magpie was seen carrying twigs in Area D, and a pair of Australian Wood Ducks were perched on nest boxes in Area E.

We did not see the Brown Quail, which is still being recorded on Facebook in Area E, and the Gang-gang Cockatoos that were resident over several

months had moved on. No grass birds, frogmouths, corellas, egrets or cormorants were recorded during the survey, although a Little Pied Cormorant was on Pond A when the group left.

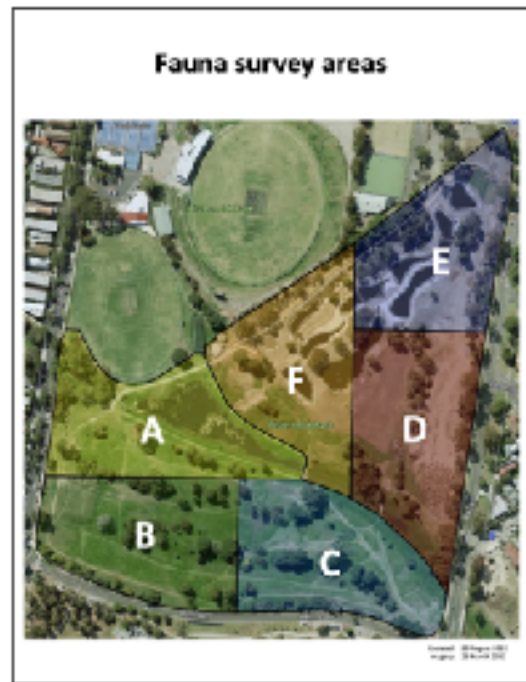
Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton

Photos: Danny Fog and Tania Splawa-Neyman

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Purple Swamphen. Photo: 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 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>