



Juvenile Nankeen Night-Heron. Photo: Susan Carden.



Rainbow Lorikeet feeding on eucalypt blossoms. Photo: Susan Carden.



Little Black Cormorant. Photo: Sue Forster.

## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 10 February 2024

Eleven observers turned up for our February survey, which started a little early at 7.10 am to include 2 Red-rumped Parrots spotted near the meeting point. The temperature was a balmy 16 C, rising as early morning clouds cleared and a beautiful sunny day emerged. We had special visit from baby birder 9-month-old Asher, who appeared calmly appreciative of father Stephen's training effort.

By the date of our survey, pumps had been turned off for one week to allow ponds to dry out over summer. Muddy flats were emerging around their edges, providing foraging for wading birds.

Species diversity was high: we recorded a total of 32 (an increase of 2 since January), comprising 16 wetland, 14 'terrestrial' and 3 pest/feral species. Overall, bird abundance (378) was average, but a little lower than in January. The feral/pest bird count (59) had halved due to lower numbers of Rock Doves (3) and Common Starlings (22) in the area. Overall, wetland species were more numerous, largely due to an increase in Purple Swamphens (25), Grey Teal (7), Australian Wood Ducks (11) and Welcome Swallows (15).

The greatest species diversity was recorded in Areas F (20) and A (19) with E (15) midway between the areas with lowest diversity (11–12 species in each of B, C, D and G). With a total of 82 birds, Area A recorded the greatest abundance, followed by E (66), F (63), B (61), G (44) and C (37). Area D, where building work is still proceeding, had a disappointingly low count of only 25.

There was an excellent range of species in Area A with the Baillon's Crake showing briefly as it fed on the mud around the exposed roots of reeds, and a juvenile Nankeen Night-Heron perched on a log in full view (also seen afterwards in the Chain of Ponds). Both Musk and Rainbow Lorikeets appeared to be travelling through the reserve as there were very few trees flowering (at least in the southern half). Crested Pigeons (9) were enjoying perching at the top of the large, mostly dead cypress in Area B, and we were serenaded by two Grey Butcherbirds in Areas C and F. Crested Pigeons were recorded in 5 out of the 7 survey areas and their total (32) was nearly twice that of any 2023 monthly record.

It was almost low tide at Point Ormond so the canal at the Glen Huntly Road bridge was entirely mud



Crested Pigeon. Photo: Susan Carden.



Grey Butcherbird. Photo: Susan Carden.



Chestnut Teal family. Photo: Sue Forster.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Susan Carden.

with no ducks present. Our disappointment was offset by a single Little Wattlebird feeding in the large eucalypt on the southwest corner of the bridge, with 5 Australian White Ibis flying overhead towards the reserve. The single Pacific Black Duck in this area was feeding in the canal just down from the St Kilda Street bridge. A total of 14 Black Pacific Ducks were recorded across Areas A, E, F and G.

Area A is typically where we hear or see Little Grassbirds, and this month we could only detect 2 (down from 4 in January). It was also the location for a single Willie Wagtail (not recorded here at all in 2023) and Grey Teal (7). Australian Wood Ducks (11) were only found in the pondage in Area E, calmly cruising with heads buried beneath the waterweed.

In Area E, Pond 4, a pair of Chestnut Teal were tending 4 very young ducklings. Our only other breeding records were a juvenile Magpie-lark with adult female in Area A and the previously mentioned juvenile Nankeen Night Heron (also recorded in January). This very streaked bird has not yet attained the adult-like immature plumage of a one-year-old Night-Heron (see *The Australian Bird Guide*, 2019).

Other resident waterbirds were present in fairly low numbers in Areas A, D, E and F, including Dusky Moorhens (12) and Eurasian Coots (8). A pair of Masked Lapwings had returned and were seen in D and F, and 2 White-faced Herons and 2 Little Black Cormorants were circulating throughout the reserve. No Little Pied Cormorants have been observed in our two 2024 surveys.

Among the terrestrial birds, a pair of Eastern Rosellas were moving between Areas D and F, 2 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were recorded in Area C, and 25 Little Corellas flew over Areas B, F and G. Australian Magpie (17) and Magpie-lark (14) numbers had marginally increased, but slightly fewer Little Ravens (9) were recorded than in January. Red Wattlebirds (9) were present in low numbers in every area except D.

As usual, Rainbow Lorikeets (39) and Noisy Miners (43) were the only species observed in all 7 sections.

Bob noted that on this occasion we were rewarded by 20 dogs on lead inside the reserve, but in Area G (along the canal) 5 dogs were off-lead.

**Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton**  
**Photos: Susan Carden and Sue Forster**



Purple Swamphen. Photo: Susan Carden.



Bird survey areas excluding Area G, Elster Canal.



Pondage in Areas E and F (by Gio Fitzpatrick).

**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>