



## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 13 April 2024

Our April survey started at 7.15 am, drawing 10 observers. It was a fine, calm morning with some cloud and a comfortable temperature of 13° C.

We recorded a total of 30 species across all 7 areas, comprising 15 wetland species, 12 'terrestrial', and 3 feral or pest species. Area A produced the greatest diversity (21 species). Its total count was 98 birds. Area F in the Chain of Ponds had fewer species (18) but a slighter higher bird total (103) and the same number of wetland species as Area A (10). Some of the ponds and billabongs were being drained, resulting in lower water levels, muddy edges and a concentration of invertebrate food for birds.



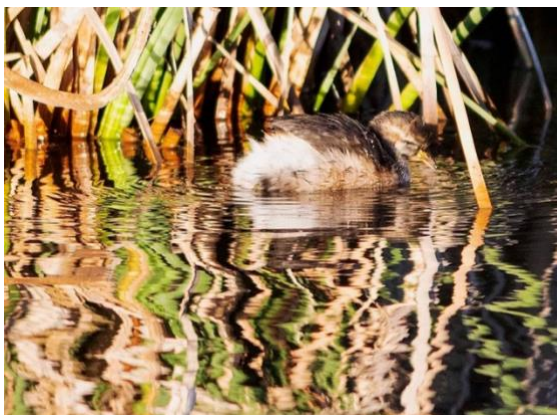
A major difference between this survey and that of March was in the species of duck recorded. While Chestnut Teal dominated in March (total of 64) only 13 were recorded in April. This month, Pacific Black Ducks were present in all areas except D, with large flocks recorded in Areas A and F (38 and 27 respectively), producing a total of 94 birds. Their circulation was low, in occasional groups of 3 or 4. It would be interesting to know more about the regional dynamics of duck dispersal. For instance, could the opening of the duck hunting season this week have bought more Pacific Blacks into Melbourne?



Little Corellas. Photos: Danny Fog.

We had a good diversity of birds with a noticeable decrease in Noisy Miner numbers in every area, resulting in a low total of 21. None were recorded in Area C. Feral birds —Starlings (5) and Rock Doves (2) —had also dispersed since March.

A large flock of Little Corellas in a tree across the other side of St Kilda Street was a noisy accompaniment to our Area A survey. They subsequently dispersed and flew through other areas. There was a notable increase in waterbird numbers in Area A with 10 species consisting of 38 Pacific Black Ducks, 5 Australian Wood Ducks, a Grey Teal, a Great Egret, 3 Purple Swamphens, 8 Dusky Moorhens, 9 Eurasian Coots, 5 Welcome Swallows and an adult Australasian Grebe with a well-grown juvenile that still had a striped head. Two White-faced Herons were seen in Area A after the survey, and one was recorded during the survey in F.

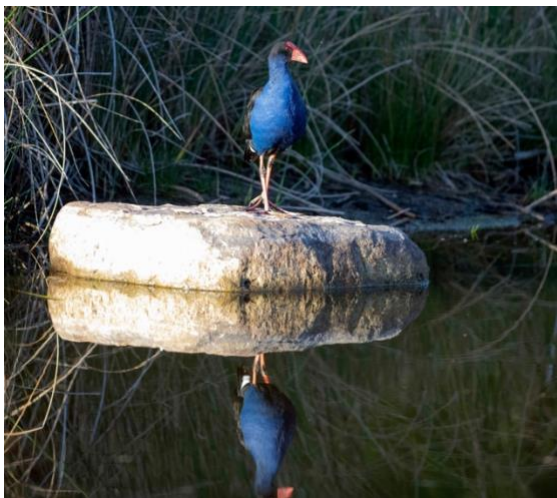


Australian Grebe. Photo: Danny Fog.

The number of birds in Area B was significantly swelled by several groups of Little Corellas flying through, resulting in a total of 39. Several Crested



Great Egret. Photo: Danny Fog.



Purple Swamphen. Photo: Danny Fog.



Masked Lapwing. Photo: Danny Fog.

Pigeons were roosting at the top of the large, mostly dead cypress but most flew away before we could start the count. The number of species was also increased by waterbirds flying through the area, including 6 Pacific Black Ducks, 3 Chestnut Teals, 3 Silver Gulls, a Little Black Cormorant and a Little Pied Cormorant.

In Area C we were beautifully serenaded by 3 Grey Butcherbirds in a dead tree. The absence of flowering eucalypts reduced the numbers of lorikeets and all were flying through the reserve on their way elsewhere. Eleven more Little Corellas flew through along with 4 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, one of which was being harassed by 2 Australian Magpies. Single Red Wattlebirds in Areas B and C were the only honeyeaters recorded apart from Noisy Miners.

Area D is still currently under construction and was very quiet, except for 32 Little Corellas passing overhead. Its low species count (9) included 3 Dusky Moorhens, 2 Purple Swamphens, a single Welcome Swallow, 3 Australian Magpies, one Pied Currawong, 5 Rainbow Lorikeet, 4 Crested Pigeons and the highest number of Noisy Miners in the survey (7), presumably because its vegetation still consists mostly of eucalypts fringing bare patches of earth.

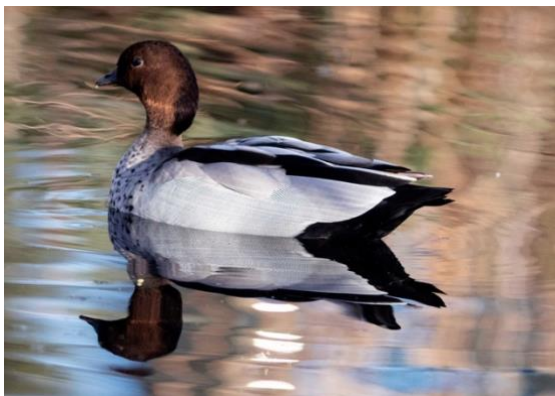
In the Chain of Ponds, Area E has less pondage than F and produced only half as many species of wetland bird, but 19 Rainbow Lorikeets were recorded overhead, and a pair of Eastern Rosellas were observed moving between the areas. Masked Lapwing, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Currawong and Magpie-lark were recorded in E but not in F, while Australian Magpie and Musk Lorikeet were recorded in Area F but not E. A flock of 12 Crested Pigeons observed in F probably dispersed around the other areas in smaller numbers. Overall, there was a marked decrease in Musk Lorikeet observations since March, with only 9 recorded. Their peak was in January when 78 were noted. By comparison, Rainbow Lorikeet observations (59) had nearly tripled since March.

As well its large influx of Pacific Black Ducks, Area F had good numbers of Dusky Moorhen (12) and Purple Swamphen (12) with smaller numbers of Eurasian Coot, Australian Wood Duck and Purple Swamphen accompanied by an Australian Grebe, a White-faced Heron and a Welcome Swallow.

Area G was relatively quiet and the tide was at the mid-point so duck numbers were down, with 12 Pacific Black Ducks, 2 Chestnut Teals and 1 Grey



Rainbow Lorikeet. Photo: Danny Fog.



Male Australian Wood Duck. Photo: Danny Fog.



Bird survey areas excluding Area G, Elster Canal

Teal at the Glen Huntly Road bridge. As we were walking back after the survey 6 Masked Lapwings and a Spotted Dove flew over, too late to be added to the survey. A Willie Wagtail was also heard in Area A as observers left the reserve.

**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 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>