



Bird survey group with Alyson Svenson on right. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Danny Fog.



Male Chestnut Teal. Photo: Danny Fog.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Danny Fog.

Thank you, Bob and Alyson

Bob Tammik and partner Alyson Svenson have been coordinating monthly Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird surveys since the surveys began in July 2019. From July 2024 they will no longer be living in Melbourne or attending surveys on a regular basis, but Bob will continue to email survey reminders on behalf of the group. Over 5 years, Bob and Alyson have done an amazing job in ensuring that (1) a survey team has been present every month (except for COVID lockdowns) and (2) that data for survey areas D, E and F has been properly recorded and uploaded to Birddata website. I'm thanking Bob and Alyson now as I won't be at the June survey: thank you both for your diligence, good humour, community spirit and contribution to our knowledge about the birds in the reserve. You will be sadly missed by Bayside bird observers, but we hope you find many great birding opportunities near your new home.

Sue Forster

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 11 May 2024

We started our May survey at 7.45 am with 15 observers. The temperature was a mild 15 C, with an overcast sky and occasional light rain that cleared. The water level of most ponds had risen due to heavy rain over the previous week, but remained low in drained Billabong 2. Dips in Area D had also filled with rain, drawing in a greater species diversity (15) and numbers of wetland birds (33) than would normally be observed in that location.

We recorded a total of 30 species across the 7 sections: 13 wetland, 13 'terrestrial' and 4 feral/pest. Area F (Chain of Ponds) had the highest species count (19) and greatest abundance (101 birds), followed by Area A lake (17 species and 88 birds, with the highest wetland bird count by area of 65 birds). Areas D and E both recorded 15 species; 13 were counted in Area G and only 10 in Areas B and C.

Our total count of 459 birds was 24 less than in April but included the largest number of wetland birds this year (217), swelled by an increase in Welcome Swallows (total 31) and Australian Wood Ducks (total 29) with continuing strong numbers of Pacific Black Ducks (45), Chestnut Teal (32), Purple



Masked Lapwing. Photo: Danny Fog.



Female Magpie-lark. Photo: Danny Fog.



Rainbow Lorikeet. Photo: Danny Fog.

Swamphens (24), Dusky Moorhens (17) and Eurasian Coots (15). We also recorded a Little Pied Cormorant in Areas E and F (an often seen resident on the dead tree); 8 Grey Teal in Areas D, E and G; 9 Silver Gulls flying across Areas A, C, D and F; and a pair of Masked Lapwings in D and F.

Pest/feral bird abundance was also high, due largely to the presence of 22 Rock Pigeons in Area G around the canal, increased numbers of Noisy Miners throughout the reserve (up from 21 to 39 since April) and a flock of Common Starlings, mostly in Area F (22, including 2 in E and one in G). Two Spotted Doves were also recorded for the first time in 2024.

By comparison, woodland or 'terrestrial' bird numbers were low (157), showing decreased abundance since April in every survey area. A higher Rainbow Lorikeet count of 70 bucked the trend, accounting for 45% of birds in this category. Little Corellas (7) and Musk Lorikeets (2) were only observed in Area B, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (6) and Red-rumped Parrots (2) were only seen in Area G, and only a single Red Wattlebird was recorded in Area C. A pair of Eastern Rosellas (probably the same birds) appeared in both A and F. Only Little Ravens (12), Australian Magpies (16), Magpie-larks (16) and Crested Pigeons (15) were well distributed in relatively stable numbers.

The count started when a White-faced Heron flew in and loudly made its presence felt as it landed close to where the group were gathered. A second White-faced Heron was later seen by the canal.

Raised water levels in the Elster Creek lake (Area A) resulted in a larger count of ducks than usual. Australasian Grebes were also present for the second consecutive month (single birds in Areas A and F).

The Area B count was boosted by 2 Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos flying through (also counted flying over F), followed by 7 Little Corellas. Three flowering eucalypts were enjoyed by at least 10 Rainbow and 2 Musk Lorikeets, with a few more Rainbow Lorikeets flying through the area. Two Red-rumped Parrots flew over the canal in Area G and, although it was approaching low tide, there was sufficient flow down Elster Creek for water to persist at the Glen Huntly Road bridge. We started with a single Chestnut Teal but as we stood there 6 more Chestnut Teals, 8 Pacific Black Ducks and a single Grey Teal swam from the other side of the bridge and came out onto the concrete, obviously expecting to be fed.



Bird survey areas excluding Area G, Elster Canal



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

To join a monthly bird survey, please contact Bob Tammik: 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>

A few birds were missed during some of the surveys as, after the 20-minute counts, we later saw 3 Grey Butcherbirds fly through Area A, one Grey Butcherbird fly into a tree in Area B, and 2 Australian Magpies, a Pied Currawong and another Grey Butcherbird in Area G. Interesting, all 3 species are closely related, and magpies are actually a type of butcherbird.

Apart from our Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo observation we were unable to match any of the more unusual species that Gio Fitzpatrick reported passing through in early May on YWNA Facebook (2 May 2024, 'Migration Day'). We hope the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Mistletoebird, Spotted Pardalote, Little Eagle and Whistling Kite return.

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.