



Survey group for Areas B, C and G. Photo: Susan Carden.



Survey group for Areas D, E and F. Photo: Danny Fog.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Photo: Susan Carden.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Susan Carden.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 10 August 2024

When 16 enthusiastic bird observers met at 7.45 am the air temperature was 10 C and the sky was cloudy. Luckily, the sun soon appeared, providing perfect, still conditions for our surveys.

There had been some recent habitat changes. A large amount of vegetation, mainly weeds, had been cleared near the New Street bridge and to a lesser degree around the lake. Now that the wildflower meadow has opened, the fences around Area D have also disappeared, making it more difficult to locate our area boundaries but easier to circumnavigate the reserve.

We recorded a total of 28 bird species, comprising 13 wetland species, 12 'terrestrial species' and 3 pest or feral species. Out of a total count of 416 birds, 120 were wetland, 201 terrestrial, and 95 pest/feral. The pondages and creek seemed quiet but monthly 2024 wetland bird counts have fluctuated widely: the lowest was 99 in January with a maximum of 217 in May. The August wetland bird count was similar to that of June and July.

Area A (the original lake and surrounds) had by far the highest species count (19) and abundance (101 birds). The fewest birds (34) were recorded in Area C, but Areas B and G had the fewest species (10 in each). In the Chain of Ponds, Areas E had a count of 79 across 17 species while F recorded 59 across 13 species.

The most numerous birds were recorded flying overhead: Musk Lorikeets (73), followed by Rainbow Lorikeets (58) and, sadly, Noisy Miners (55, up 7 from June/July and the highest count for 2024, with most abundance in Areas D and E). Among the terrestrial/woodland birds, we also observed 24 Little Ravens, 16 Magpie-larks, 15 Australian Magpies, 3 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, 2 Red Wattlebirds and 2 Pied Currawongs. A single Galah and single Eastern Rosella were seen in Area G, and an Eastern Rosella was heard in F after the area had been surveyed. Although once regularly recorded in small flocks, just one Red-rumped Parrot was seen in Area A.

Among the wetland birds, Dusky Moorhens (23) were most abundant, followed by Purple Swamphens (18) and Eurasian Coots (15). There were comparatively few ducks: just 12 Pacific Black Ducks, 11 Chestnut Teal and 6 Australian Wood Ducks. In Area A we saw a single Australasian Grebe



Eurasian Coot. Photo: Susan Carden.



Male Chestnut Teal. Photo: Susan Carden.



White-faced Heron with Little Black Cormorant. Photo: Danny Fog.



Masked Lapwing. Photo: Danny Fog.

and single Little Pied Cormorant, and a Little Black Cormorant was recorded in Area E along with 2 White-faced Herons. Four Masked Lapwings appeared in Area E, and 14 Silver Gulls and 11 Welcome Swallows flew through the reserve or were circling above.

The pest/feral bird total of 95 made up nearly a quarter of the count, dominated by Noisy Miners (55), which were recorded in every area. One Noisy Miner was spotted in Area D carrying grass for nesting. Common Starlings (28) were also observed in Areas A, C, D, E, and F, and Rock Doves (12) in Area G.

Spring has certainly arrived as several birds were either hanging around nest hollows (Sulphur-crested Cockatoo), building nests (Grey Butcherbird) or already sitting on nests (Australian Magpie). The Grey Butcherbirds were very active, flying through Areas A and B with nesting material on their way to Area C where the nest is being built in the canopy of a eucalypt. All the Grey Butcherbirds recorded in A, B and C and F were a single pair making good use of the surrounds. There was very little flowering inside the reserve (at least in the southern section) so most of the lorikeets were flying through.

As the high tide was at 6.31 am we had high hopes of ducks at the Glen Huntly Road bridge but only saw a pair of Pacific Black Ducks and a White-faced Heron, along with a pair of Magpie-larks and several Rock Doves (Feral Pigeons).

Although widely reported on Yalukit Willam Facebook, we did not see the Black-shouldered Kite that has been frequenting this area over the last few weeks. In the early afternoon Susan Carden went back to the reserve and photographed it perched on a dead tree.

Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton
Photos: Susan Carden and Danny Fog

Coordinator wanted

Our bird survey group coordinator Bob Tammik has moved to another area, and we need a new coordinator to maintain the group contact list and send out monthly email reminders of survey times and dates. Please let Bob know ASAP if you can help: bob_alyson@aapt.net.au



Black-shouldered Kite. Photo: Susan Carden.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Susan Carden.



Grey Butcherbird. 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>