



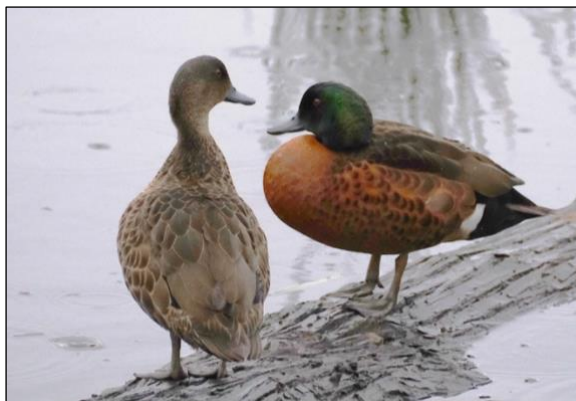
Crested Pigeon in the rain. Photo: Susan Carden.



White-faced Heron in breeding plumage. Photo: Sue Forster.



Grey Teal. Photo: Susan Carden.



Chestnut Teal (male on right). Photo: Susan Carden.

## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 14 September 2024

The weather forecast for our September surveys was inauspicious but entirely correct. Starting at 7 am and ending around 8.35 am, it was cold, the temperature sticking at 10°C. It was also wet, with light rain strengthening to steady rain after 8 am and increasing wind. The ground was soaked, with standing puddles.

Surprisingly, 8 people turned up for the survey, including 4 new observers. After our first survey in Area A, we divided into 2 groups with survey leader Tania Ireton taking charge of new birders.

Our total bird count (296) was the second lowest for the year (June was lowest with 275 birds). It was also more than 25% lower than the total August count, but the number of species (28) remained the same, at the low end of species records.

Totalling 169, 14 wetland species made up 57% of the count. Of the remaining 43%, 28% were listed as 'terrestrial' (11 species, 82 birds) and 15% (3 species, 45 birds) were in our pest/feral listing. We recorded 49 more wetland birds than in August, but 119 fewer 'terrestrial' birds and 50 fewer pest/feral birds. The variation in numbers may have been due to non-wetland species seeking shelter from the rain and cold. It was 'good weather for ducks', as the saying goes, but not for the rest of us!

Area A had the highest number of species (15). Species diversity had flattened out over the 7 survey areas since the August survey, with all the other areas recording 9 to 12 species each. Area B was the only area showing increased species diversity (up from 10 to 12 species) while 2 areas of good pondage (A and E) showed a decline both in species diversity and bird numbers.

Before we could begin the survey, a White-faced Heron was photographed foraging at Pond A in full breeding plumage: note the long nuptial feathers and orange-tinged legs in the image. Most birds recorded in Area A were Eurasian Coots (14), Dusky Moorhens (9) or Grey Teals (6). The pond area also yielded 3 Chestnut Teal, 3 Purple Swamphens, 2 Pacific Black Ducks, one Australasian Grebe and one Little Grassbird. With a total of 51 wetland birds (including 7 Silver Gulls and 5 Welcome Swallows), this was the most species rich and abundant area for September.



**Mother Australian Wood Duck sheltering her young from the rain. Photo: Sue Forster.**



**Dusky Moorhen. Photo: Susan Carden.**



**Purple Swamphen. Photo: Sue Forster.**



**Little Raven. Photo: Susan Carden.**

Across the 7 survey areas, we recorded increased numbers of Welcome Swallows (33), Chestnut Teal (30), Eurasian Coots (29) and Grey Teal (14), but there were surprisingly few Pacific Black Ducks (3)\* and Australian Wood Ducks (7). Wood Ducks were only observed in Area E, their numbers swelled by a mother duck patiently sheltering at least 3 young beneath her widespread breast and fluffed out wings (see image). Four ducklings were videoed swimming with parents on 3 and 12 September (Robyn de Havilland, Rick Hammond, YWNA Facebook entry). The full complement of wetland birds also included a single Little Pied Cormorant and a single Little Black Cormorant.

Area G was a lot quieter than normal. With the Point Ormond high tide scheduled for 10.36 am there was sufficient water at the Glen Huntly Road bridge for 16 Chestnut Teal and a single Grey Teal. It was obvious that someone has been feeding them as they all headed towards us and got out of the water when we moved down the slope towards the canal.

In Area B only one eucalypt had a few blossoms, which were being enjoyed by 2 Rainbow Lorikeets. Rainbow Lorikeets were also feeding noisily on flowering eucalypts along New Street near the bridge. A total of 29 were observed in low numbers across every survey area while just 11 Musk Lorikeets were glimpsed over Areas B and F. Two Galahs were recorded over Area C and a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo in Area G. Eastern Rosellas were not recorded during the surveys but one was heard calling from Area F when the nearest survey group were in Area D.

As we left Area E, a family of 5 Australian Magpies (2 adults, 3 immature) began carolling together on a eucalypt branch in Area F. Were they singing to raise their spirits? They certainly raised ours!

Among the other 'terrestrial' woodland birds, only Magpie-larks (14) were much in evidence. No Wattlebirds were seen and just a single Pied Currawong, 4 Crested Pigeons and 6 Little Ravens were recorded. A Grey Butcherbird was calling in Areas A and C. We were also pleased to see a Willie Wagtail dancing around Area E, a small bird species that was rarely seen in the park until 6 months ago.

Possibly due to the wet conditions, we recorded just 24 Noisy Miners, less than half the number of seen in August. The other pest/feral observations were Common Starlings (total of 15, mostly in





Bird survey areas excluding Area G, Elster Canal



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

#### 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](mailto:bob_alyson@aapt.net.au)

Area F) and Rock Doves (total of 6, mostly in Area G).

\*Danny Fog later posted a photo of Pacific Black Ducks with 5 young on 16 September (YWNA Facebook).

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

#### 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>