



Young Tawny Frogmouth (adult behind). Photo: Susan Carden.



L to R: Purple Swamphen, Black-tailed Native Hen, male and female Chestnut Teals. Photo: Susan Carden.



Black-tailed Native Hen. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australian White Ibis. Photo: Danny Fog.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 9 November 2024

Fifteen observers made an early start, at 7 am, on a cool, fine morning with a slight breeze. The sun was low and bright, gradually raising the temperature from 11 to 16 °C.

We recorded 410 birds, of which 14% were feral or pest birds. As in October, we noted a total of 33 species, but 5 species recorded this November were pest birds, albeit in small numbers. Wetland birds comprised 15 species and terrestrial birds 13 species.

The higher overall count (up by 63) was partly due to increased numbers of Welcome Swallows and Rainbow Lorikeets. Twenty-five swallows were counted around the pond in Area A, where many juvenile and immature birds were roosting on the reeds. They were also recorded in every area but D.

Area A had by far the highest count: 137 birds, more than double the second highest count of 60 in Area G. It also had a good range of species (17) including a lot of ducks and waterhens as well as 3 Little Grassbirds and 2 Australian Reed-Warblers calling from the reeds. A pair of Red-rumped Parrots and a Crested Pigeon were seen in Area A just after the survey finished so they missed being counted. Crested Pigeons were, however, recorded in Areas D and F.

There appeared to be very little flowering in the reserve, so Rainbow Lorikeets were all flying through or sitting on nestboxes. A juvenile Australian Magpie was recorded in Area B with an adult male, adult female and 2 immature females, evidence of a successful nest this season. A single Eastern Spinebill called from somewhere in Area B, a new bird for the list.

A family of Tawny Frogmouths was seen in Area C with an adult and chick in the nest and the other adult sitting on a horizontal branch in an adjacent tree. Unfortunately, the remains of a second chick were found under the tree.

Four ibis (a single Straw-necked Ibis and 3 Australian White Ibis), 3 Little Pied Cormorants and 2 Australian Wood Ducks flew through Area C to swell the species count. The Straw-necked Ibis was also counted over Area D and a single Australian White Ibis later landed in Area E.

Area D, which still has a low-level of vegetation,



Straw-necked Ibis. Photo: Danny Fog.



Adult with two young Purple Swamphens. Photo: Danny Fog.



Young Australian Wood Ducks. Photo: Danny Fog.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Photo: Danny Fog.

was quiet (39 birds, 10 species). Two Australian Wood Ducks were grazing on seedlings in the wildflower meadow section, and a pair of Dusky Moorhens were swimming with 3 young on Elster Creek by the New Street bridge.

We also found breeding activity in the Chain of Ponds, in Areas E and F. During the October survey we observed a nesting Purple Swamphen on a pond in Area E. Four eggs had since hatched and both parents were foraging close to the nest, each supervising 2 young. Danny Fog drew our attention to one adult that was feeding 2 chicks on grass seeds rather than the more usual crushed reed or rush stems. In Area F, we also noted 2 Australian Wood Ducks with 2 young.

Growling Grass Frogs were calling in Pond 5, Area E, as we surveyed its birds. Perhaps the later hour improved activity. We recorded 51 birds and 15 species in this area, including 8 wetland species. Just as we were leaving a large flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos made a noisy circuit as the dominant bird took up a stand on top of the dead tree.

Area F was particularly quiet by comparison to other months, with only 33 birds and 12 species recorded. Unfortunately, we did not find the Black-tailed Native Hen that had been photographed in this section over the previous week. It emerged shortly afterwards, and Danny took some new photos.

Area G (Elster Canal) was the stand-out for this survey with 19 species recorded including another new bird for the list, a female Australian King-Parrot. Eleven Sulphur-crested Cockatoos had a raucous time flying up and down the canal and we also had an Eastern Rosella and at least 3 Grey Butcherbirds. Two Grey Butcherbirds were also recorded in Areas C and D.

Feral species were well-represented in Area G with single Common Starling, Common Blackbird, Spotted Dove and 3 Rock Doves. With a high tide expected at 9.13 am we had hopes of ducks at the Glen Huntly Road bridge but were initially disappointed. There was just one pair of Pacific Black Duck. Fortunately, teal were spotted underneath the peppercorn on the southern bank, and we added 11 Chestnut Teals and a single Grey Teal. Both teal species were well-distributed across the survey areas, producing a total of 38 Chestnut Teal and 10 Grey Teal.



Grey Butcherbird. Photo: Susan Carden.



Eurasian Coot. Photo: Susan Carden.



Growling Grass Frog. Photo: Susan Carden.

In addition to the above mentioned species we recorded: a single Australasian Grebe, 2 Silver Gulls and 10 Eurasian Coots in Area A; a single Galah (Area B); Eastern Rosellas, either singly or in pairs, in Areas B, E, F and G; Little Ravens (total of 6 in Areas A and G); Magpie-larks (total of 12 across Areas A, C, D, E, G); and 2 Red Wattlebirds (Area G).

Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton

Photos: Danny Fog and Susan Carden

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 (off map) 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 Hayley Pottenger: hayley.pottenger@gmail.com
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 survey records, go to Birddata website, select the Shared Sites tab and type Elsternwick Park in the filter: <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au>

