



Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Photos: Danny Fog.



Noisy Miner. Photo: Susan Carden.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Danny Fog.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird report 14 June 2025

We had a very quiet and cold morning, particularly due to the cold breeze which faded later. Over one hour and twenty minutes of surveys, the temperature climbed rapidly from 6 °C to 11 °C as the sun rose higher. Despite our late start time of 8 am, there were many late arrivals. We finished Area A with 15 observers and gained another 4 during subsequent surveys.

Those surveying Area E were lucky to have eagle-eyed Yalukit Willam Nature Association president Gio Fitzpatrick onboard. There was great excitement when Gio identified a Fan-tailed Cuckoo in flight, which conveniently landed nearby with a Sparshall's Moth caterpillar in its bill, and was captured in photos by Danny Fog. Unfortunately, the cuckoo was soon chased off by a Noisy Miner. Fan-tailed Cuckoos are very rare visitors to Bayside; this was our first Yalukit Willam survey record of one, and Gio thought it might be the first observation since the reserve functioned as a golf course.

Generally, numbers were down both in species and individual birds. Our total of 359 birds was the second lowest this year. (The lowest was 338 in January). May's total of 525 was exceptionally high, but our low June total was bolstered by large numbers of lorikeets (78 Rainbow Lorikeets, 17 Musk Lorikeets), masking the fact that some areas (B, G) only yielded single wetland birds this month.

Despite the lower species diversity in most areas, the overall species count of 30 was one higher than in May. However, 7 species were represented by just one bird: Little Grassbird, Little Black Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Australasian Grebe, Welcome Swallow, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, and Red Wattlebird.

Area A, around the original pond, had the highest species diversity (17) but Areas D and E had marginally greater abundance: 68 birds in D and 66 in F compared to 64 in A. The lowest bird count was 33 in both Areas B and G, and the lowest species count was 6 in B. Due to its maturing habitat, including swales and muddy flats, Area D is now consistently attracting more bird species (15 in June) as well as greater numbers. Species diversity and wetland bird abundance (13) has been lower than usual in Area F, where ponds and soaks have been dry or at a low level



Common Starlings. Photo: Danny Fog.



Australian Wood Duck. Photo: Susan Carden.



Crested Pigeon. Photo: Susan Carden.



Grey Butcherbird. Photo: Susan Carden.

over the past couple of months, both due to gambusia remediation and revegetation of aquatic plants. Area F numbers were boosted by a flock of 13 feral Common Starlings.

Area A's numbers were bolstered by 15 Australian Wood Ducks, with 12 on the grass and 3 up in a tree. Two were perched on a nest box. A brief glimpse of a Little Grassbird showed that they were still present during winter. After completing the Area A survey, 3 Crested Pigeons and 2 Common Starling were sighted.

Area B was very quiet, with only 6 species, so a brief flyover of the St Kilda St-Bent Avenue corner by 15 Little Corellas was welcome. Noteworthy was a Little Raven refurbishing a nest in one of the tall eucalypts along the St Kilda St side. Little Ravens build nests well-obscured by hanging leaves, so they can be difficult to spot, whereas Australian Magpies prefer any leaves to be above their nests for a clear view all around.

Area C had many lorikeets flying through, 13 Musk and 15 Rainbow, as well as a pair of Eastern Rosellas feeding in the grass. We had been hearing Pied Currawongs, but they were all out of the survey area until 6 were finally added in Area G. The canal was very quiet, partly due to the encroaching low tide at Point Ormond (scheduled for 10.54 am). As a result, the basin at the Glen Huntly Road bridge was almost entirely mud with no birds except for 2 Rock Doves.

Among the wetland birds, Eurasian Coot (10), Dusky Moorhen (18) and Purple Swamphen (17) abundance has remained relatively consistent over the past 3 months, but duck abundance has fluctuated widely. This month we had 33 Australian Wood Ducks, mostly in Areas A and E, but only 10 Pacific Black Ducks and 10 teals (8 Chestnut Teal and 2 Grey Teal). We recorded just one Welcome Swallow, probably because it was still too cold for insect activity, and a pair of Masked Lapwings were observed moving between Areas A and D.

Little Raven numbers (25) were down from the May high of 39, as were Australian Magpies (down to 8 from 20 in May), Magpie-larks (13 compared to 21 in May), and Pied Currawongs (9 compared to 26 in May). As well as the aforementioned Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Red Wattlebird, Eastern Rosellas and lorikeets, terrestrial bird species also included a pair of Grey Butcherbirds in Areas C



Rainbow Lorikeets examining a nest box. Photo: Susan Carden.



Pied Currawong. Photo: Danny Fog.



Masked Lapwings. Photo: Danny Fog.

and G, 7 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (mostly in Area A), and 3 sparsely distributed Crested Pigeons (one in each of Areas C, D and F).

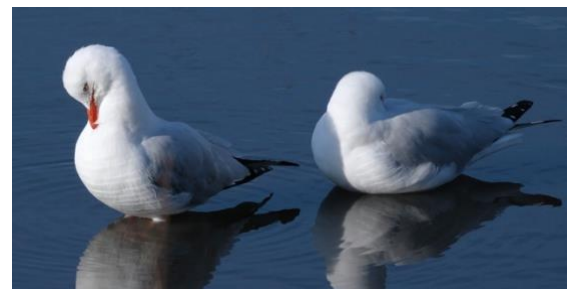
Of the feral/pest birds, Noisy Miner numbers (42) were slightly higher than usual, and 14 were recorded in Area E alone, but only 2 Rock Doves were seen, and the 16 Common Starlings were all in Areas E and F.

For the first time in 9 months, we recorded no dogs off-lead, which was a good outcome as we counted 29 on-lead. The one sour note of the survey was the discovery of an intact dead rakali with blood on its chest near Billabong 2 in Area D.

Since our last group bird survey (10 May) many other birds have been added to the list by photographers on YWNA Facebook. They include: **Buff-banded Rail** (12, 19 May, EstebantheNatureman; 29 May, Quentin Mattiske); **Black-shouldered Kite** (14, 17 and 29 May, Esteban; 26 May, Danny Fog); 3 **Nankeen Night-Herons** roosting in the cypress by the canal (21 May, Danny); **Willie Wagtail** (21 May and 1, 7 June, Danny); **Spotless Crake** (22 May and 1 June, Fiona Etheridge; 11 June, Bryan Meade; 12 June, Quentin Mattiske); **Great Egret** (25 May, Emma Louise); **Red-rumped Parrot** (1 June, Danny); **Australian Hobby** (4 June and 2 other sightings, videos, Gio Fitzpatrick); **Wedge-tailed Eagle** (10 June, Gio Fitzpatrick, no photo). Congratulations to all these dedicated photographers for some exciting visual records.

Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton

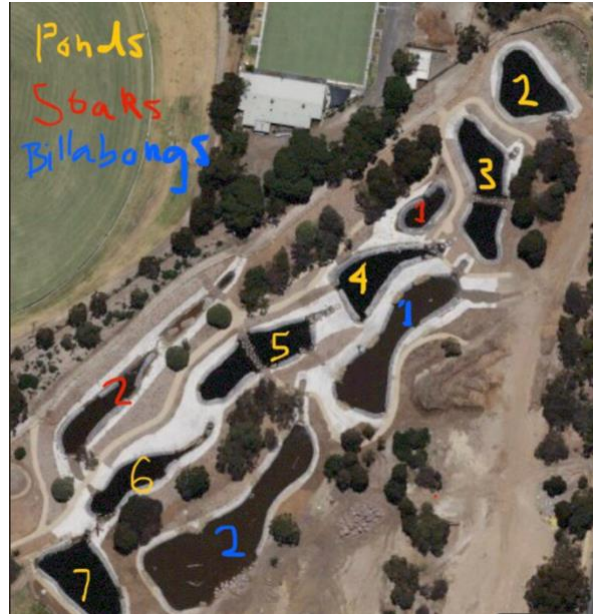
Photos: Susan Carden and Danny Fog



Silver Gulls. Photo: Susan Carden.



Left: bird survey areas (G is Elster Canal).



Right: Chain of Ponds, Gio Fitzpatrick.

Bird survey list for 14 June 2025

Wetland birds: Eurasian Coot, Little Black Cormorant, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Little Grassbird, Australasian Grebe, Silver Gull, White-faced Heron, Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swampphen, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Masked Lapwing, Welcome Swallow (14 species).

Terrestrial birds: Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Little Corella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Musk Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Little Raven, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Currawong, Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark, Red Wattlebird, Crested Pigeon (13 species).

Pest/feral: Noisy Miner, Rock Dove, Common Starling (3 species).

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 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.