



Juvenile Hardhead (Area A pond).



Pair of Australian Wood Ducks (Area E).



Purple Swamphen (Area D).



Little Pied Cormorant on netting frame (Area E).

Elsternwick Nature Park Bird Survey 11 June 2022

Words and images by Sue Forster

Despite the damp and chill (11°C feeling more like 5°C), 12 people turned up for our monthly bird survey at 8 am. Sadly, there was no Danny Fog to take photos! The noisy arrival of eight Sulphur-crested Cockatoos over the bridge prompted a rapid start to our recording in Area A, around the original pond.

We were rewarded with an uncommon sighting of a juvenile Hardhead duck, exactly one year since our last Hardhead record. Juvenile Hardheads resemble the females in colouring with a mid-brown colour and a dark eye, but the juvenile has more white on the throat and buff patches in the feathers (see photo). Males have a darker mahogany head and neck and a startling white eye; both genders have a bicoloured bill. They are well-adapted for diving and this bird spent much of its time under water.

Twenty-four Pacific Black Ducks were also on the pond. Our leader, Tania Ireton, noted that their behaviour 'was suggestive of breeding activity—birds were displaying and chasing one another'. Her morning 'highlights were the juvenile Hardhead..., the large numbers of ducks, a Little Wattlebird being pursued by 2 Noisy Miners in Area B (the first time I've seen one in the reserve), 15 Rainbow Lorikeets feeding on flowering eucalypts in B, an adult White-faced Heron in full breeding plumage with lovely nuptial plumes in Area G [Elster Canal] as well as 11 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos feeding along the grassy edges of the bluestone-lined creek with a twelfth bird up in a tree as lookout.' Little Wattlebirds have been previously recorded in EPN by other observers during January 2020 and from June to December 2021.

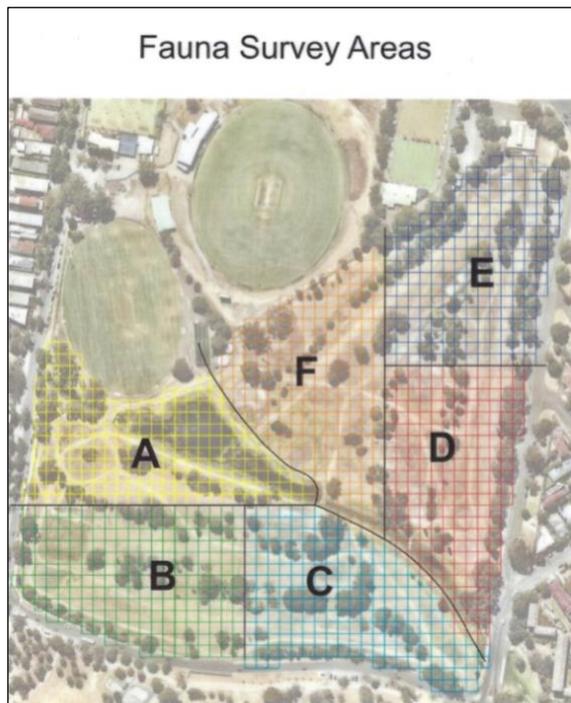
In total, we observed 26 species in and above Elsternwick Nature Park and Elster Canal, two fewer than May. As usual, Area A had the greatest species diversity (17), and it also had the greatest number of birds (90). Area D,



Tawny Frogmouths (male and female) (Area E).



Eastern Rosella inspecting a nest box (Area F).



bordering new Street, had the fewest species (8) and least number of birds (25). It is still undergoing extensive landscaping and is piled high with woodchips. All sections except A and G had slightly fewer birds recorded than in May. Unfortunately, recent construction of larger plant nets in the Chain of Ponds makes it more difficult for observers outside the fence to view birds in the middle ponds.

The most numerous birds on this occasion were Pacific Blacks (59), which, like Noisy Miners (37), were in all seven sections. Rainbow Lorikeets (41) were only absent in Area A. Chestnut Teal numbers had grown (up from 3 in May to 19 in June), but we saw fewer Australian Wood Ducks (down from 26 in May to 9 in June). Welcome Swallows had also dispersed (down from 44 in May to 8 in June) as had Red Wattlebirds (we counted 2), but both of these species have migratory populations.

Red-rumped Parrots and Little Corellas have not been seen since May, and just two Musk Lorikeets were found in Area C. However, this species is nomadic, following the flowering eucalypts, and many may be in central Victoria if the ironbarks are flowering. Several commonly observed species—Pied Currawongs, Grey Butcherbirds and Common Starlings—were also absent from this survey; so too was the Little Grassbird, a regular among the reeds in Area A. However, a solitary Eurasian Coot and up to 6 Galahs had reappeared. These two species (seen in Areas A and F, Chain of Ponds) had been absent from the reserve for several months.

Thanks to Laura’s well-honed eyes, EPN’s resident pair of Tawny Frogmouths were spotted hunkered down together in a new eucalypt roost (see photo), still close to the intersection of New and Huntley Streets adjoining Area E. With their feathers fluffed out, they looked warmer than we felt.

Other resident species continue to be consistently recorded on each survey: Eastern Rosellas (seen in Areas B and E, and inspecting a nest box in F), Australian Magpies (A, C, E, F,

G), Magpie-larks (A, D, E, F, G), Purple Swamphens (A, D, F) and a pair of Masked Lapwings (A). The balance of species for June was made up by Dusky Moorhens (A, D, G), Little Pied Cormorants (A, E), Crested Pigeons (B, E, F), feral Rock Doves (A, G), Silver Gulls (B, E, G) and Little Ravens (A, B, C, F, G). An unusually large flock of over 50 Little Ravens was foraging outside the survey area on the sports field to the north of section F. Flocks of this size are an uncommon sight in Bayside, but Little Ravens are known to form large flocks in late autumn and winter.

One of our observers also saw a small raptor hovering to the north of the survey area, thought at the time to be a Nankeen Kestrel. Since then, I have heard that a Black-shouldered Kite was seen in the area on Friday, so maybe this was the same bird?

If you are interested in joining the monthly bird survey, please contact Bob Tammick: bob_alyson@aapt.net.au The surveys are led by BirdLife Bayside president Tania Ireton, who also contributed comments for this narrative. 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 surveys 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>