



Pair of Grey Teal. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Adult Pacific Black Duck with ducklings. Photo: Danny Fog.



Adult Pacific Black Duck with ducklings. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey, 13 August 2022

Since our last bird survey, Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve has had an official name change in recognition of Traditional Owners of the land. Our surveys will now take place in Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve, although you may need to continue to use 'Elsternwick Park' to find and record surveys on Birddata until otherwise notified.

With our coordinator, Bob, and recorder, Alyson, overseas, a slightly reduced group of 8 observers met at 7.45 am on Saturday 13 August. Luckily, Stephen Machet was available as chief observer for Areas D, E and F, while I recorded. Despite a dreary weather forecast, the early mist turned into a lovely sunny morning, and the temperature rose rapidly from 8 to 12 C.

We saw 27 species in total, boosted by sightings of Grey Teal (8), which had been absent since February, and a rarely observed Spotted Dove. Wetland birds made up 40%, and a further 20% were 'pest and feral birds': mostly Noisy Miners (total 43, distributed across all sections) with Rock Doves (17 in G, Elster Canal) and the Spotted Dove (also in G). The remainder were 'terrestrial' birds requiring grassy, shrubby or woodland habitat.

The water level was high on ponds and the creek. As usual, Area A had the most species (17), comprising 53 wetland birds, 13 terrestrial and 4 pest/feral (all Noisy Miners). This was followed by G (the biggest section) with 12 species and 47 birds, all terrestrial except for 1 Chestnut Teal— it was a very low tide when the survey was conducted, leaving only mud at the Glen Huntly Road bridge. Area B (grassy woodland) attracted 44 birds, boosted by 24 Rainbow Lorikeets, however Area D (currently being landscaped) had more species (13 compared to 9 in B) comprising 16 wetland, 16 terrestrial and 4 pest/feral birds. Area C (south-east corner) had fewest species (7).

Our leader, Tania Ireton, noted that it was a fairly quiet morning with the following highlights:

- Area A – 2 adult Pacific Black Ducks with 10 ducklings that would have been less than a week old. [Two adults and 10 ducklings (possibly the same) were also observed in Area E at around 9.15 am, but Danny Fog's 11.53 am Facebook photo shows a Purple Swamphen with a dead duckling in its bill, so their numbers were already reduced within hours of being recorded].



Purple Swamphen on reed platform. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Male Hardhead. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Australasian Grebe. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Male and female Australian Wood Ducks. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.

A pair of Chestnut Teal were copulating, as were a pair of Dusky Moorhen.

- Area B – the ironbark had nearly finished flowering, but 6 Rainbow Lorikeets were busy feeding on it.
- Area C – Australian Wood Ducks, Purple Swamphens and Pacific Black Ducks were all feeding along the grassy paths.
- Area G – a pair of Little Ravens chased a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo away from the tree in which their nest was located. One of 2 Grey Butcherbirds was feeding on a small ball of mince that had come from a nearby house.

Other highlights in Area A were a solitary Australasian Grebe that spent more time underwater than on it, and 3 Hardhead ducks, including one highly visible male with contrasting white eyes. Dusky Moorhens and Purple Swamphens (11) were checking out storm damaged reeds for nesting platforms. Dusky Moorhens (8) and Eurasian Coots (3) were back in greater numbers, joined by 3 Little Pied Cormorants, 3 Chestnut Teal, one Grey Teal and one Australian Wood Duck.

Area E's (northern Chain of Ponds) 29 wetland birds comprised 17 Pacific Black Ducks, 4 Australian Wood Ducks, 4 Grey Teal, 2 Masked Lapwings and 2 Welcome Swallows. Welcome Swallows were more evenly distributed than in July, with a maximum of 6 in Area D, and further presence in A, C, E and F (southern Chain of Ponds).

Among the parrots, a pair of Eastern Rosellas were inspecting nest boxes in F and one had nesting material in its bill. Their presence was noted in B, D, E, F and G, with a maximum of 4 observed in F. A fleeting glimpse was caught of a Red-rumped Parrot in A, and Galahs (5) were sighted in D and F. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (5) were present in B and G, and Rainbow Lorikeets were once again recorded in high numbers (39 across all areas except E).

The large flock of Little Ravens seen earlier in adjoining playing fields had dispersed; a maximum of 7 were observed in G, with others flying over A, B and F. Other terrestrial birds included Grey Butcherbird (one each in B and E and 2 in G), Australian Magpie (one each in A, B, E and G), Pied Currawong (one in D and 2 in E), Magpie-lark (11 distributed across all sections except B and C), and Crested Pigeon (11, with 7 ground-feeding in D).



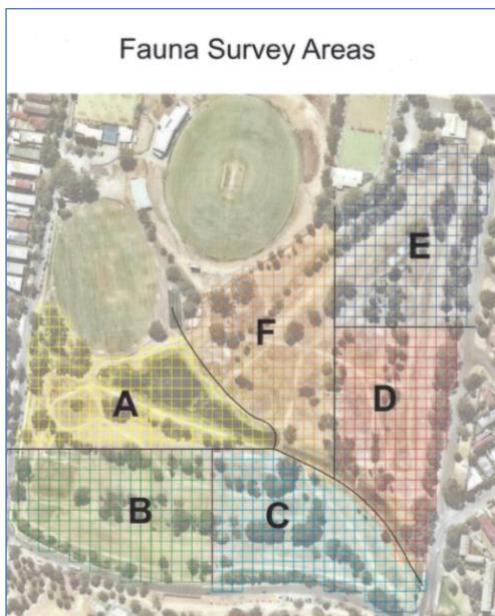
Rainbow Lorikeet. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Grey Butcherbird eating mince. Photo: Fran Pfeiffer.



Tawny Frogmouth nest. Photo: Danny Fog.



We were unable to locate the pair of Tawny Frogmouths usually found in F, but a nest in the fork of a eucalypt near their common roosting trees, is evidence of their recent activity.

Report: Sue Forster

Photos: Fran Pfeiffer and Danny Fog

Description of current vegetation and habitat by section:

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, 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>