



Musk Lorikeets on Norfolk Island Hibiscus. Photos: Danny Fog.



Rainbow Lorikeet on Norfolk Island Hibiscus. Photo: Danny Fog.



Noisy Miner on Norfolk Island Hibiscus. Photo: Danny Fog.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey report 14 January 2023

Despite an early 7.15 am start, 11 observers turned up for our first bird survey of 2023. We were happy to welcome 3 new faces: David, Leonardo and Claudia.

The morning was warm (20° C) with a high maximum forecast of 35° C. Dense grey cloud cover eventually dispersed by 8.45 am, leaving a glorious sunny blue sky.

Since our last December 2022 survey there had been little rain although vegetation growth remained abundant in some areas and pink-flowering Slender Knotweed was rapidly closing over upper parts of the creek. Many of the nets had been removed in the Chain of Ponds, leaving plantings more exposed.

Our total species count was 28, comprising 13 wetland species, 11 'terrestrial' and 4 pest or feral. (This was also our average total species count in 2022.)

It was exciting to observe large flocks of Musk Lorikeets (total 82) in most areas, attracted by summer-flowering trees. They outnumbered Rainbow Lorikeets—often our most numerous species in the reserve—by 2:1. In flight, smaller Musk Lorikeets can be differentiated from Rainbow Lorikeets by their shorter tails and higher pitched calls. Close up, the differences are obvious: Musk Lorikeets have a distinctive red forehead and red patch behind each eye contrasting with plumage that is mostly shades of green with patches of turquoise on the head and yellow under the wing.

We also saw many birds with second broods. Most were ducks: Chestnut Teal had the highest number (total 84; 73 counted in Area G, Elster Canal, alone), although many Pacific Black Ducks (total 32) were also seen with young. In Area E, a new fluffy white chick was just visible under its nesting Tawny Frogmouth father. The mother and two (now adult) siblings from their earlier brood were not seen.

After surveying Area A (the original pond) together, we divided up into two groups to survey the remaining 6 areas, led by Tania Ireton (Areas B, C, G) and Bob Tammick (Areas, D, E, F).

Tania's highlights were:

Area A: 3 Little Grassbirds heard in the reedbeds; one had a quiet rasping voice



Tawny Frogmouth on nest with one new chick visible (second brood). Photos: Danny Fog.



Pacific Black ducklings and adult. Photos: Danny Fog.

and may have been an immature trying to learn the call. A flowering Norfolk Island Hibiscus attracted a large number of Musk Lorikeets and a few Rainbow Lorikeets. A Pacific Black Duck had 2 ducklings and there were 3 adult Dusky Moorhens, 3 juveniles and 2 immatures. Later, when we were passing back through Area A to get to Area G, we saw a single Grey Teal and 2 Grey Butcherbirds (one a juvenile).

Area B: Large numbers of Musk Lorikeets mostly flying overhead and a recently fledged Australian Magpie was feeding whilst an adult stood watch in a dead tree. The previously flooded area was now completely dry.

Area C: A male Crested Pigeon was displaying to a female and 3 White-faced Herons flew over (also observed in Area D), in addition to 2 Little Black Cormorants.

Area G: At the far end (Glen Huntly Road bridge), right on high tide, we were greeted by 2 Australian Wood Ducks, a Pacific Black Duck with 2 ducklings, 5 Grey Teal and 40 adult Chestnut Teal with 15 immatures (a brood of 8 and a brood of 7) and 18 ducklings (3 broods of 6).

Five young Pacific Black Ducks were also observed in broods of 2 and 3 accompanied by 3 adults in E, and 3 young were seen in F with 4 adults.

Other wetland birds recorded were Australian Wood Ducks (A:3, E:1, G:2), a pair of Masked Lapwings in both D and F (likely to be the same birds), and at least 6 cormorants: 4 Little Pied Cormorants in A and 2 Little Black Cormorants in C, with a further sighting of a Little Pied in B.

Magpie-larks and Australian Magpies were well-represented, often with juveniles. Magpie-larks were found in every area (total 23; A:3, B:1, C:3, D:3, E:1, F: 3, G:9) and 2 separate juveniles were observed in G. Australian Magpies were found in 5 areas (A:2, B:2, C:6, D:6, F:3) with 4 adults training 2 grey-backed immatures to vocalise in D.

There was a low count for Welcome Swallows (A:3, C:1, D:2, G:1), Little Ravens (B:1, C:2, F:1, G:1) and Crested Pigeons (C:2).

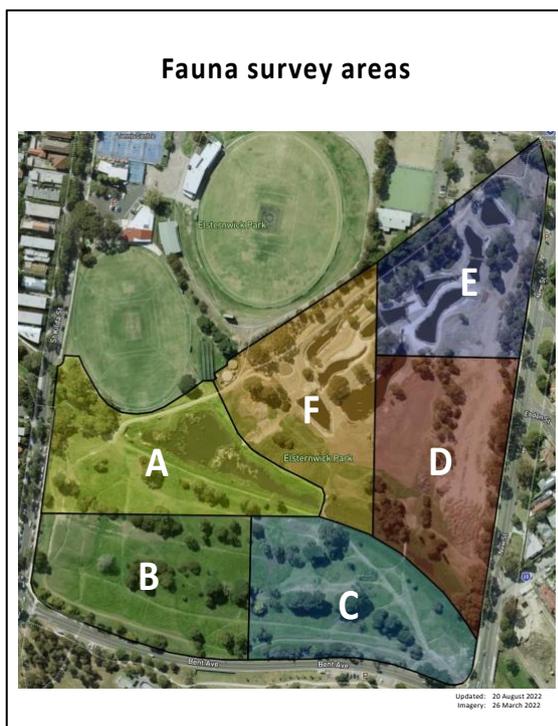
Single entries were recorded for Eastern Rosella (in F but a pair were seen in the same area after the survey ended), Long-billed Corella (G), Grey



Immature Australian Magpie vocalising. Photo: Danny Fog.



Eastern Rosella. Photo: Danny Fog.



Butcherbird (D and G), Purple Swamphen (A, B, F — an unusually low count) and Silver Gull (A).

As usual, Noisy Miners and Rainbow Lorikeets were observed in every area. The Noisy Miner was the only honeyeater species present, and there was also evidence of recent breeding activity: an adult was recorded with 2 fledglings in D. The other 3 'feral' species seen were Rock Doves (A:2, B:1, C:13, F:13, G:8), Common Starling (A:1, F:1, G:7) and Common Myna (C:1, D:1, F:1).

Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton

Photos: 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. 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>