

## Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey report

11 February 2023



February mist at sunrise. Photo: Danny Fog.



Bird observers led by Tania Ireton (3<sup>rd</sup> left) in Area C.



Pacific Black Duck. Photo: Danny Fog.



Little Pied Cormorant (left) and Little Black Cormorant (right) sharing a log over the pond in Area A. Photo: Danny Fog.

14 observers met at 7.15 am on a glorious warm (17° C) February morning, with golden mist rising across the parks. At first, the low sun made it hard to see, but by 7.30 am the sun had risen and the mist dispersed, and birds, like their observers, were on the move. Around the original pond (Area A) the rushes were standing tall again, now completely recovered from their flood inundation last January.

Our total species count was 24, 3 less than in January. Unusually, Area F produced both the highest species count (17, followed closely by A with 16) and the highest bird numbers (106), swelled by flocks of Little Corellas (16), Musk Lorikeets (13) and feral Common Starlings (27) and Rock Doves (18). The fewest species (8) were recorded in Area D, but the lowest count was in B.

Following our usual routine, the whole group surveyed Area A together and then split up into 2 groups, each surveying 3 different areas. We found 6 species of wetland bird on Area A pond: 12 Black Pacific Ducks, 4 Chestnut Teals, 9 Dusky Moorhens, 4 Purple Swamphens and a Little Pied Cormorant and Little Black Cormorant perched on a log, drying their wings. These two cormorants moved around the reserve throughout the surveys and a second Little Black was spotted in Area E. Australian Wood Ducks were absent from Area A pond but were found in B (5), C (2) and F (7).

Our leader, Tania Ireton, noted: 'Whilst we were surveying Area A, 10 White-faced Herons were seen flying east, probably just over the other side of Bent Avenue. As 3 White-faced Herons later flew over Area C, they may have split up.' Three White-faced Herons were also recorded in Area D, presumably the same birds; the same number were observed in the same locations in our January survey (maybe a family?).

Flocks of Little Corellas, Musk Lorikeets and Rainbow Lorikeets were noisily present in most areas, including A. Our total recorded sightings were: 45 Little Corellas, with most circulating over Areas B and F; 26 Musk Lorikeets, again, strongly recorded in Area F; and 40 Rainbow Lorikeets, with most observed flying between eucalypts in Areas D and E.

Tania summarised her group's survey of Areas B, C, and G as:

'Species numbers were good, but things were fairly quiet overall. We did have a Crested Pigeon building a nest in one of the cypresses in



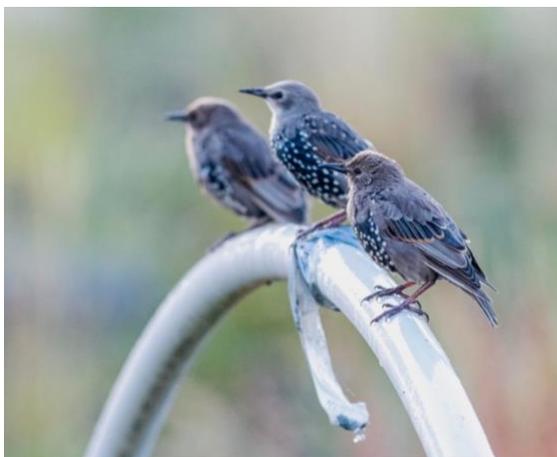
Little Corellas. Photo: Danny Fog.



Rainbow Lorikeet. Photo: Danny Fog.



Juvenile Magpie-larks (female at left). Photo: Danny Fog.



Common Starlings. Photo: Danny Fog.

Area C. It was flying into some of the tree along the Bent Avenue fence-line and then flying back with a twig to add to the nest. The 7 Australian Magpies in Areas A and B and the 3 in C were probably all the same birds, just moving around. With the benefit of a high tide at Point Ormond at 0739 we had enough water at the Glen Huntly Road bridge for the ducks to be in the survey area. Just in that area alone, we had 4 Pacific Black Ducks, 28 Chestnut Teal (including 2 adults with 3 ducklings and at least 10 immature birds from earlier in the season), 3 Silver Gulls, a White-faced Heron, 2 Rock Doves and 2 Musk Lorikeets feeding in a flowering eucalypt.'

Surprisingly, no Welcome Swallows were recorded in Areas A, B, C or G, but a solitary Swallow was seen in F. Little Ravens were only recorded in Areas A and G (total 6), and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (2) were only present in Area G. At least 2 Grey Butcherbirds were found inside the reserve (Areas A, B and F) and another was sighted along the canal (Area G). Solitary Red Wattlebirds were recorded in Areas A, B and G, an improvement over January when none were observed and the only honeyeaters present were Noisy Miners.

Magpie-larks were recorded in every survey area, with the largest numbers in E (6) and G (5). Two fluffy fledglings, a male and female, were photographed on a branch in Area D. Along with these siblings and Chestnut Teal ducklings and immatures in Area G (see above), evidence of breeding activity could be seen in a Pacific Black Duck family, with just one duckling, and an immature Australian Magpie in Area F (Chain of Ponds). In Area D, this season's second, well-documented brood of 2 Tawny Frogmouth chicks were still in their nest, with one parent keeping guard in a nearby tree and another apparently in the nest but well-hidden from view.

A Pink-eared Duck that had been photographed on Pond A during the week had, unfortunately, moved on, and other regularly seen species such as Eastern Rosellas, Red-rumped Parrots, Eurasian Coots, Masked Lapwings and Little Grassbirds were also absent.

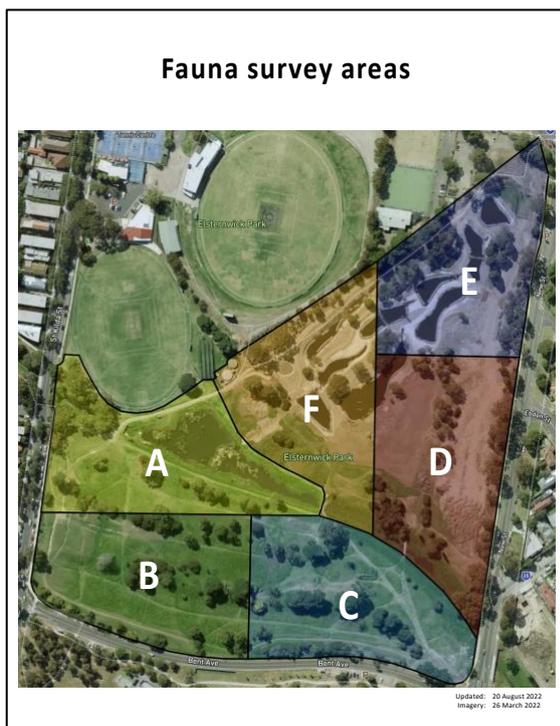
There were large numbers of feral and pest birds on this occasion. Many of the 37 Common Starlings recorded in A, B, D and F were immature birds and likely to be seasonally migratory. However, pest Noisy Miner observations had risen again, from 38 in January to 54 this month (the majority in E and G, with high numbers also in B and D), and, as usual,



Tawny Frogmouth adult. Photo: Danny Fog.



Tawny Frogmouth chick in nest. Photo: Danny Fog.



Miners were seen in every survey area. Thirty-five Rock Doves were recorded across Areas B, C, D, F and G, with half found in F.

**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](mailto: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>