



Immature Nankeen Night-Heron. Photo: Danny Fog.



Male Australian Wood (or Maned) Duck, showing off a fine mane. Photo: Danny Fog.



Little Pied Cormorant. Photo: Danny Fog.



Breeding Dusky Moorhen. Photo: Susan Carden.

Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve bird survey 8 February 2025

We started this survey at 7.15 am with 13 observers, including 2 photographers. There was a light breeze, but the morning was warm, with a temperature of 19 C, and the sky was heavily clouded.

A temporary wire fence remained along the south side of the creek and pond, slightly impeding our view on that side. Grass to the south of the fence was dying off due to steaming and spraying in preparation for new landscaping. The Chain of Ponds remained about 50% dry; 4 ponds were completely dry while the southernmost pond was substantially reduced.

Our total bird count of 455 was towards the higher end of recent counts. (In the current fiscal year, they have ranged from 296 in September to 497 December 2024). Bird numbers were boosted by overhead flocks of lorikeets, Silver Gulls, Australian Wood Ducks and Welcome Swallows and a high teal count on the canal (Area G).

We recorded a species total of 32, 3 higher than in January, Immediately after the surveys another 2 species were spotted in Area A: a Baillon's Crake in the lake and 2 Galahs roosting in a tall eucalypt. The species break-up was 16 wetland species, 12 terrestrial and 4 pest/feral.

We had excellent diversity (23 species) and numbers (122) in Area A, with an immature Nankeen Night Heron flying in to start the count and landing in Area E. (Note the remnant juvenile spots on the wing coverts and faded breast streaks in Danny's photo.) There were good numbers of waterbirds (89) and a high number of Welcome Swallows (18), although they may have been gathering in preparation for the migratory ones to head north, leaving a few sedentary birds behind for the winter. Only one pest bird—a single Noisy Miner—was recorded in A.

Eurasian Coots (6) were found only on the Area A lake. Other Area A wetland birds included 9 Little Black Cormorants and one Little Pied Cormorant, a White-faced Heron that circulated to Areas B and F, 2 Australasian Grebes in full breeding plumage, 3 Pacific Black Ducks, 5 Dusky Moorhen, 7 Purple Swampheens, 7 Chestnut Teal, 6 Grey Teal and 4 Little Grassbirds.



White-faced Heron. Photo: Susan Carden.



Juvenile Red Wattlebird. Photo: Danny Fog.



Male Magpie-lark after preening. Photo: Susan Carden.

Due to lack of water, Areas E and F species counts were lower than usual with only 3 and 7 wetland species respectively. They consisted mostly of Dusky Moorhens, Purple Swamphens and Chestnut Teal. Three areas (C, D, F) recorded species diversity of 14, while E had 13 species, B had 12 and G, 11.

There were a few Musk Lorikeets feeding in a flowering eucalypt near the meeting location but most flowering in the southern section appeared to be outside of the reserve, so lorikeets were mostly seen flying through. The total Musk Lorikeet count (44) outnumbered Rainbow Lorikeets by more than 2:1.

Red Wattlebirds were actually observed in trees in Area B rather than overhead as has been the case in recent months. Their total count of 9 across the reserve was considerably lower than the December high of 23.

Little Wattlebirds have only been recorded intermittently and mostly singly in the reserve. None were recorded in January 2025 so the appearance of 5 Little Wattlebirds flying and perching low together in Area E was a cause for excitement. Our record was higher only near the start of the surveys, in December 2019, when 7 were observed in Area C. Another 3 Little Wattlebirds were seen in Area F. They appear to have been feeding on eucalypt flowers and the seeds of some groundcover plants.

A Common Myna was chased by a Noisy Miner from the Bent Avenue fence line in Area C into the reserve, and a calling Grey Butcherbird flew up into a cypress to pose for us. Up to 2 Grey Butcherbirds were recorded in 4 areas.

Circulating terrestrial birds included 5 Little Corellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos (maximum of 11 in G), Australian Magpie families (total 12), Magpie-larks (total 19) and Crested Pigeons (total 16). Each of these species showed a slight increase in numbers since January but Little Raven numbers were again very low (4). A single Pied Currawong was recorded in Area D.

The high tide was due at 10.17am so there was plenty of water at the Glen Huntly Road bridge, giving us 2 Pacific Black Ducks, 24 Chestnut Teal and 7 Grey Teal at the bridge along with a single Silver Gull. Five Chestnut Teal were also recorded in the channel near the St Kilda Street bridge. A flock of 11 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were a raucous finish to the count, with one appearing



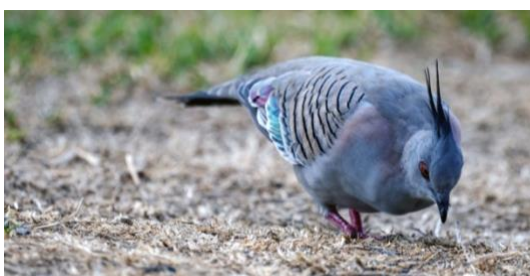
Grey Butcherbirds. Photo: Susan Carden.



Pied Currawong. Photo: Danny Fog.



Galah. Photo: Susan Carden.



Crested Pigeon. Photo: Danny Fog.

to be excavating a new nest hollow in a tree not far from the existing nest hollow, but on the other side of the ford. This tree has also had some branches lopped off but the chewing of the bark in the fork was fairly obvious.

The 4 feral/pest species included 28 Noisy Miners (a surprisingly low total count), 5 Rock Doves in Area G, the previously mentioned Common Myna and 13 Common Starlings (across Areas E and F).

No Red-rumped Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Buff-banded Rails, Masked Lapwings, Willie Wagtails or Australian Reed-Warblers were sighted or heard on this occasion.

Report: Sue Forster and Tania Ireton

Photos: Danny Fog and Susan Carden

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

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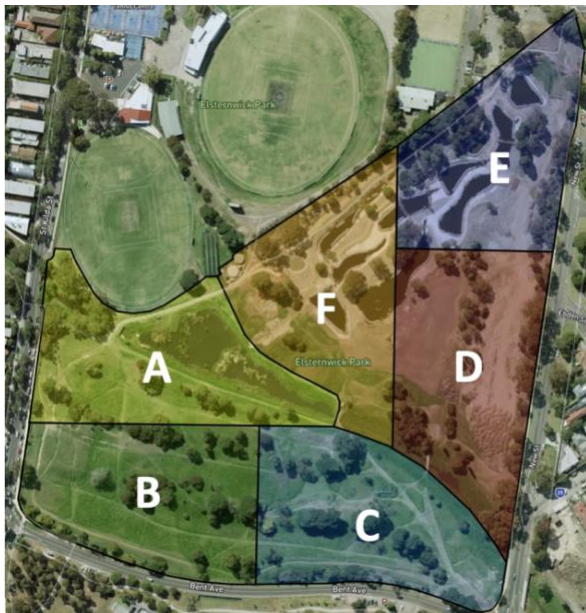
The surveys are led by BirdLife Bayside president Tania Ireton. Start times are between 7.15 and 8.00 am, depending on sunrise. Seven sections (including Elster Canal) are surveyed in two groups, for 20 minutes each; both groups complete Area A together around the main pond. The process generally takes one hour and thirty minutes per group.



Nankeen-Night-heron detail. Photo: Danny Fog.

To view the survey records for all seven sites, go to Birddata website, select the Shared Sites tab and type Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve in the filter*: <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au>

*Birddata's Explore function is now up to date, reflecting the reserve's name change from Elsterwick Park to Yalukit Willam.



Bird survey areas excluding Area G, Elster Canal



Pondage in Areas E and F (by Gio Fitzpatrick).