

Westgate Park Bird Count

By: <i>Peter Parrington, Rob Youl & John McRae</i>		Date: 31 January 2022
Weather: Humid, cloudy, 22-28° Cel		
Coverage: Entire survey route completed		Times: 0830 - 1315

Species	Number seen	Species	Number seen
Brown Quail	1 (<i>D Gilmore, today</i>)	<i>Galah</i>	
Black Swan	2 + 6 juv + 7*	<i>Long-billed Corella</i>	
Australian Shelduck		<i>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</i>	
Australian Wood Duck		<i>Rainbow Lorikeet</i>	6 + 2*
Pink-eared Duck		<i>Musk Lorikeet</i>	
Australasian Shoveler		<i>Little Lorikeet</i>	
Grey Teal	7	<i>Purple-crowned Lorikeet</i>	
Chestnut Teal	55 + 6 juv	<i>Eastern Rosella</i>	
Pacific Black Duck	3	<i>Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo</i>	1 DY fed by fairy-wrens
Hardhead	2 + 3 DY	<i>Fan-tailed Cuckoo</i>	
Australasian Grebe	3	<i>Southern Boobook</i>	
Hoary-headed Grebe		<i>Barn Owl</i>	
<i>Rock Dove</i>	8 + 1*	<i>Sacred Kingfisher</i>	
<i>Spotted Turtle-Dove</i>	12	<i>Superb Fairy-wren</i>	95 + 3* (incl 29 blue)
<i>Common Bronzewing</i>		<i>White-browed Scrubwren</i>	6
<i>Crested Pigeon</i>	4	<i>Brown Thornbill</i>	2
Darter	1	<i>Spotted Pardalote</i>	
Little Pied Cormorant	1 + 2*	<i>White-plumed Honeyeater</i>	28 + 3*
Great Cormorant		<i>Noisy Miner</i>	2 (Todd Road)
Little Black Cormorant	1 + 3*	<i>Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater</i>	
Pied Cormorant	1	<i>Little Wattlebird</i>	1*
Australian Pelican		<i>Red Wattlebird</i>	15 + 7*
Eastern Great Egret		<i>New Holland Honeyeater</i>	7 + 2*
White-faced Heron		<i>White-naped Honeyeater</i>	
Nankeen Night-Heron		<i>Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike</i>	
Australian White Ibis	4	<i>White-winged Triller</i>	
Straw-necked Ibis		<i>Golden Whistler</i>	
Royal Spoonbill		<i>Grey Shrike-thrush</i>	
Black-shouldered Kite		<i>Grey Butcherbird</i>	1
Whistling Kite		<i>Australian Magpie</i>	10
Brown Goshawk		<i>Pied Currawong</i>	3 + 1*
Little Eagle		<i>Grey fantail</i>	
Nankeen Kestrel		<i>Willie Wagtail</i>	15
Brown Falcon		<i>Little Raven</i>	3
Australian Hobby		<i>Satin Flycatcher</i>	
Peregrine Falcon		<i>Magpie-lark</i>	5
Purple Swamphen	2	<i>Flame Robin</i>	

Buff-banded Rail		<i>Rose Robin</i>	
Baillon's Crake		<i>Eurasian Skylark</i>	
Australian Spotted Crake		Golden-headed Cisticola	
Black-tailed Native-hen		Australian Reed-Warbler	17
Dusky Moorhen	42 + 3 juv	Little Grassbird	
Eurasian Coot	13	<i>Silvereye</i>	
Black-winged Stilt	12	<i>Welcome Swallow</i>	
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	<i>Tree Martin</i>	
Red-kneed Dotterel		<i>Common Blackbird</i>	4
Masked Lapwing	4 + 2*	<i>Common Starling</i>	16 + 2*
Latham's Snipe		<i>Common Myna</i>	2
Crested Tern	1	<i>Red-browed Finch</i>	
Pacific Gull		<i>House Sparrow</i>	32
Silver Gull	10 + 30*	<i>Australasian Pipit</i>	
Pied Oystercatcher		<i>European Greenfinch</i>	
		<i>European Goldfinch</i>	
Number of Bird Species - Wetland dependent & Raptors...20 <i>Land based</i> 24..... Total			44 Species
Other animals: Numerous dragonflies and damselflies			

* seen at/along Yarra River only.

DY– dependent young

Salt Lake level. 0.77 m

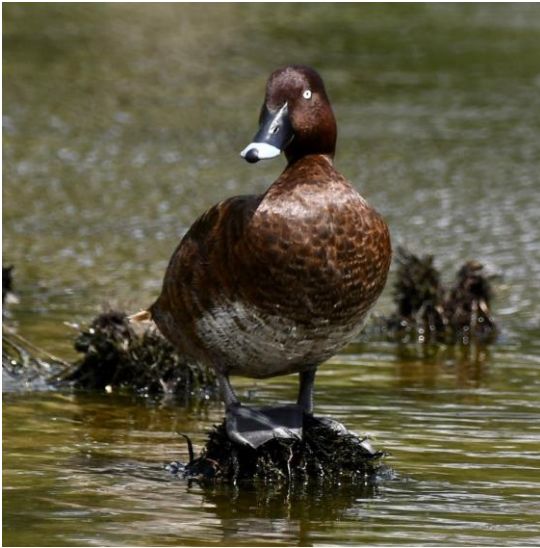
Lake levels are still very high, and the park is a pleasure to explore. Interesting species this month were an Australian Darter, a Brown Quail and a Budgerigar, the first for the park and apparently a wild bird rather than an aviary escapee, which unfortunately cannot be confirmed (Thanks, Daniel Gilmore). The absence of Welcome Swallows is concerning. Moreover, the absence of frog calls is surprising.

Moreover, Silver Gulls were low in number. On the other hand, the surveyors had the impression of abundant insect life including damselflies and spectacular turquoise and yellow dragonflies.

They also watched a small group of Superb Fairy Wrens feeding a Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo near the barbecue.

Regarding Superb Fairy Wrens, today's count has recorded the most ever at 98 in the park. This indicates the habitat must be in optimal condition with the vegetation supporting an abundance of small insects and other invertebrates on which the wrens depend as a food resource.

Opportunistic Sightings – Interesting or unusual sightings reported between surveys			
Date	Species	Number seen	Observer
20 January	White-faced Heron	2	Tom May (eBird)
29 January	Pallid Cuckoo	1	Daniel Gilmore
29 January	Budgerigar	1	Daniel Gilmore (eBird)
29 January	Australian Hobby	1	Daniel Gilmore
Sub-Total			4 Species
Total number of species – Survey + Opportunistic Sightings			<u>48 Species</u>



One of three Hardhead dependent young seen today, and an adult male, presumably the father in a defensive posture.
Photos by Daniel Gilmore



Black-fronted Dotterel and Australian White Ibis. photos by Ursula Dutkiewicz



A small group of Superb Fairy Wrens were feeding a young Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo near the barbecue today. Photos by Ursula Dutkiewicz



The juvenile male Budgerigar in Westgate Park. Whether it is a wild bird or aviary escapee cannot be confirmed. Photo by Daniel Gilmore

Daniel Gilmore prepared some notes for eBird about his observations of the Budgerigar, which provide some more information about this significant observation:

"Two days ago, I found a juvenile male wild-type Budgerigar at Westgate Park in Port Melbourne.

I returned to Westgate Park this afternoon to see if I could locate the Budgerigar again. Sure enough, he was still there and foraging on native wallaby grasses (Rytidosperma sp.) - I'm not sure of which species.

The bird was much more furtive today than two days ago, flushing off the ground if I approached too closely. I did manage to get some video footage of the bird feeding, using recorded Budgie calls broadcast through another iPhone to "settle" the bird.

An Australian Hobby flew overhead while I was observing the bird and the budgie instantly responded and took off like a rocket and landed in a Yellow Box tree.

Interestingly, there are historical records of wild Budgies from Fisherman's Bend. HANZAB notes "sporadic historical records on plains west of Melbourne.... Small flocks recorded at Fishermen's Bend and Laverton in 1948 and 1951 respectively (Wheeler 1950; Watson 1955)."

This bird is very small compared to the domesticated Budgies I bred in my childhood, but is it a truly wild Budgie? It's survived at least two days at Westgate Park and behaves as you would expect a wild Budgie would.

There is no way of knowing with certainty, but it will be interesting to see if other records show up in the near future near Melbourne (e.g., at the You Yangs."



The Brown Quail in Westgate Park. This species rarely visits Westgate Park, the last sighting being in November 2018. Photos by Daniel Gilmore

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