

Westgate Park Bird Count

By: Peter Parrington, Rob Youl, Lyn Griffen, John McRae, Chris Lester, Elke Link, Ursula Dutkiewicz, Misja Carbo		Date: Monday 4 August 2025
Weather: - Cirrus forming, becoming overcast, light breeze		10° Cel
Coverage: Entire survey route completed		Time: 0840 - 1345

Species	Number seen	Species	Number seen
<i>Brown Quail</i>		<i>Galah</i>	
Black Swan	2 + 2*	<i>Long-billed Corella</i>	3
Australian Shelduck		<i>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</i>	
Australian Wood Duck		<i>Rainbow Lorikeet</i>	40
Pink-eared Duck		<i>Budgerigar</i>	
Musk Duck	1	<i>Musk Lorikeet</i>	
Grey Teal	52	<i>Little Lorikeet</i>	
Chestnut Teal	90	<i>Purple-crowned Lorikeet</i>	
Pacific Black Duck	6	<i>Eastern Rosella</i>	
Hardhead	14	<i>Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo</i>	
Australasian Grebe		<i>Fan-tailed Cuckoo</i>	
Hoary-headed Grebe	15	<i>Southern Boobook</i>	
Great Crested Grebe		<i>Barn Owl</i>	
<i>Rock Dove</i>	8	<i>Sacred Kingfisher</i>	
<i>Spotted Turtle-Dove</i>	8	<i>Superb Fairy-wren</i>	38 (incl 9 blue)
<i>Common Bronzewing</i>		<i>White-browed Scrubwren</i>	4
<i>Crested Pigeon</i>	6	<i>Brown Thornbill</i>	5
Darter		<i>Spotted Pardalote</i>	1
Little Pied Cormorant	3*	<i>White-plumed Honeyeater</i>	37
Great Cormorant	7*	<i>Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater</i>	
Little Black Cormorant	2*	<i>Little Wattlebird</i>	2 + 2*
Pied Cormorant	1*	<i>Red Wattlebird</i>	33 + 2*
Australian Pelican	2	<i>New Holland Honeyeater</i>	23
Eastern Great Egret		<i>White-naped Honeyeater</i>	
White-faced Heron		<i>Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike</i>	
Nankeen Night-Heron		<i>White-winged Triller</i>	
Australian White Ibis	15 + 2*	<i>Golden Whistler</i>	1♀
Straw-necked Ibis		<i>Grey Shrike-thrush</i>	
Royal Spoonbill		<i>Grey Butcherbird</i>	1
Black-shouldered Kite	1	<i>Australian Magpie</i>	9 + 1*
Whistling Kite		<i>Pied Currawong</i>	7
Australian Hobby		<i>Grey fantail</i>	
Little Eagle		<i>Willie Wagtail</i>	5
Nankeen Kestrel		<i>Little Raven</i>	10 + 1*
Brown Falcon		<i>Satin Flycatcher</i>	
Powerful Owl	1	<i>Magpie-lark</i>	19
Peregrine Falcon	1	<i>Flame Robin</i>	
Purple Swamphen	14	<i>Golden-headed Cisticola</i>	

Buff-banded Rail		Australian Reed-Warbler	
Baillon's Crake		Little Grassbird	1
Australian Spotted Crake		Silvereye	
Black-tailed Native-hen		Welcome Swallow	20
Dusky Moorhen	21	Tree Martin	
Eurasian Coot	21 + 1*	Common Blackbird	6
Pied Stilt		Common Starling	70
Black-fronted Dotterel		Common Myna	4
Red-kneed Dotterel		Red-browed Finch	14
Masked Lapwing		House Sparrow	9
Latham's Snipe		Australasian Pipit	
Crested Tern	3*	European Greenfinch	3
Pacific Gull	2*	European Goldfinch	
Silver Gull	15 + 100*	Noisy Miner	3 Todd Road + 4 CFMEU + nil * + 2 park
Pied Oystercatcher			
Number of Bird Species - Wetland dependent & Raptors...23 Land based ...28...Total			51 species
Other animals:			

* seen at/along Yarra River only

Saltwater lake: 0.5 m (same as on July 7)

Freshwater lake: 0.4 m (up from 0.3 m on July 7)

CFMEU These are added to the park tally

Silver Gull	3	Willie Wagtail	1
White-Plumed Honeyeater	2	Magpie-lark	1
Red Wattlebird	6	Welcome Swallow	1
Noisy Miner	4	Australian Magpie	2

Recent rains have re-invigorated the park, with recent monthly surveys registering 60 bird species or more, but for today and over July the total has dropped slightly to 58. Today's survey revealed some notable sightings including the Powerful Owl still present in the park now making it a total of two and a half months after the initial sighting on 19 May, two raptor species – a Black-shouldered Kite and Peregrine Falcon, and finally at least three Crested Tern in flight over the river feeding on small fish.

Whereas possum numbers are under pressure thanks to the presence of the Powerful Owl (or owls), it is heartening to note a reported sighting of a **Rakali** *Hydromys chrysogaster*, spotted by Mark Heath a park volunteer, and of various reptiles – this month a **Weasel Skink** *Saproscincus mustelinus*. Rakali are a beautiful aquatic rodent frequently seen in the vicinity of St Kilda pier, but have also been spotted in Albert Park Lake, Elwood Canal and Hobsons Bay foreshore from Port Melbourne to Elwood.

Two images taken in the 1980's recently brought to our attention show what Westgate Park looked like over forty years ago – a treeless wasteland. They clearly indicate what can be achieved in three to four decades to create a natural landscape consisting of lakes and indigenous vegetation that now provides habitat for over 170 recorded bird species (still increasing!) just 5 kilometers from Melbourne's CBD.



Emma in Rob's Ute

The first image taken in 1983 or 84 by John Stirling of Emma working with John dumping a ute-load of clean fill obtained during excavations for their wine cellar – good quality fill contributing to the final landscape in the park we enjoy today!



This second image was taken by Peter Parrington 40 years ago in July 1985 when the park was newly established with formed lakes and first plantings of trees and shrubs consisting of natives including some from Western Australia, but none were indigenous as they are today.

Opportunistic Sightings – Interesting or unusual sightings reported between surveys			
Date	Species	Number seen	Observer
11 July	^Powerful Owl	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
11 July	Buff-banded Rail	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
23 July	^Powerful Owl	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
26 July	Australian Wood Duck	2	Ruth Bird (eBird)
26 July	Nankeen Kestrel	1	Ruth Bird (eBird)
26 July	Musk Lorikeet	2	Ruth Bird (eBird)
28 July	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
2 Aug	European Goldfinch	2	Ursula Dutkiewicz
4 Aug	Australasian Grebe	1	Elke Link (eBird)
Sub-Total			7 Species
Total number of species – Survey + Opportunistic Sightings			<u>58 Species</u>

^ This species was also seen on today's bird count or recorded more than once in Opportunistic Sightings above

Unless specified otherwise all photographs in this report by Ursula Dutkiewicz



Pair of Black Swans that recently lost all six of their cygnets suspected to a Red Fox which is known to be present in the park



The male Powerful Owl which has been in the park since 19 May, and recent prey a headless Common Brushtail Possum on the ground beneath the owl's roosting branch.

Powerful Owls almost always consume their prey head first, then hold the body minus the head while roosting during the day under one of its feet to be consumed later. In this case only the flesh around the head and brain appear to be eaten, and the rest of the body rejected. No doubt it will be found later to be consumed by Ravens or a Red Fox.



New Holland Honeyeater stretching its wings



Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike seen on 28/07



Female Golden Whistler seen today



European Goldfinchs seen on 28/07. They are becoming a less frequent sight in the park.



Five of the twelve Red-browed Finches seen on 1/08



One of three Crested Terns seen over the Yarra River today



A Weasel Skink *Saproscincus mustelinus*. They are a species of Shadescink, a genus that is both diurnal and crepuscular (active in twilight). They typically seek shady habitats with dappled sunlight during the day. – Photo by Mars Reid.