

Westgate Park Bird Count

By: <i>Peter Parrington, Rob Youl, Ursula Dutkiewicz, Peter Petinatos, Elke Link, John McRae</i>		Date: Monday 1 December 2025
Weather: Overcast, variable, light NW winds, showery		12° Cel
Coverage: Entire survey route completed		Time: 0840 - 1315

Species	Number seen	Species	Number seen
<i>Brown Quail</i>		Galah	
Black Swan	1	Little Corella	
Australian Wood Duck		Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
Pink-eared Duck		Rainbow Lorikeet	11 + 2*
Musk Duck		Budgerigar	
Grey Teal	3	Musk Lorikeet	
Chestnut Teal	20 + 1*	Little Lorikeet	
Pacific Black Duck	5 + 7 DY	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	
Hardhead	5	Eastern Rosella	
Australasian Grebe	2	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	
Hoary-headed Grebe	11	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	
Great Crested Grebe		Southern Boobook	
<i>Rock Dove</i>	1	Barn Owl	
<i>Spotted Turtle-Dove</i>	9	Sacred Kingfisher	
<i>Common Bronzewing</i>		Superb Fairy-wren	40 + 5* (22 blue)
<i>Crested Pigeon</i>	3	White-browed Scrubwren	5
Darter		Brown Thornbill	
Little Pied Cormorant	2 + 5*	Spotted Pardalote	
Great Cormorant		Eastern Spinebill	
Little Black Cormorant	2*	White-plumed Honeyeater	7
Pied Cormorant		Noisy Miner	4 Todd Rd + 8 park
Australian Pelican		Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	
Eastern Great Egret		Little Wattlebird	2
White-faced Heron	1	Red Wattlebird	37 + 3*
Nankeen Night-Heron		New Holland Honeyeater	14
Australian White Ibis	75 incl 1 on ground + 12*	White-naped Honeyeater	
Straw-necked Ibis		Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	
Royal Spoonbill		White-winged Triller	
Black-shouldered Kite		Golden Whistler	
Whistling Kite		Grey Butcherbird	2
Brown Goshawk		Australian Magpie	2
Little Eagle		Pied Currawong	
Nankeen Kestrel	1	Rufous Fantail	
Brown Falcon		Grey fantail	
Australian Hobby		Willie Wagtail	8 (nest on edge Freshwater Lake)
Peregrine Falcon		Little Raven	12

Purple Swamphen	4 + 1 DY	Magpie-lark	16 (nest on edge Horseshoe Lake)
Buff-banded Rail		Flame Robin	
Australian Spotted Crane		Australian Reed-Warbler	5
Dusky Moorhen	7 + DY	Little Grassbird	1
Eurasian Coot	22	Silvereye	
Pied Stilt	5	Welcome Swallow	75
Black-fronted Dotterel		Common Blackbird	3
Red-kneed Dotterel		Common Starling	70 + 10*
Masked Lapwing	1	Common Myna	3
Latham's Snipe		Red-browed Finch	
Crested Tern	3*	House Sparrow	6 + 1*
Pacific Gull		European Greenfinch	2
Silver Gull	60 + 30*	European Goldfinch	
Number of Bird Species - Wetland dependent & Raptors - 21 ... Land based - 22 Total			43 species
Other animals: Brush-tailed Possum – absent usual hollow. Long-necked Turtles have left the water to possibly lay eggs over the last week. Common Froglet in freshwater bodies. Two young Ringtail Possums with mother in drey above carpark. Dead Australian White Ibis edge of Railway Dam – fox predation?			

* seen at/along Yarra River only

Saltwater Lake level: 1.1 m; Freshwater Lake level: 0.58 m

CFMEU These are added to the park tally

- ABANDONED THIS MONTH ON ACCOUNT OF POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS

Although unseasonal weather suppressed bird activity during this survey, leading to a lower than usual species count, there were some interesting observations. The number of Welcome Swallows is significantly higher than all recent surveys since February 2024 with an estimated 80 counted. Moreover, half the male Superb Fairy-wrens counted were blue, most of which would be young males supporting a family group. This indicates favorable habitat conditions no doubt due to abundant food such as insects and other invertebrates. These young males rapidly revert to brown 'eclipse' plumage when conditions become harder with less food available.

Water levels in both main lakes are very high. From observations on the large freshwater lake both grebe species have indicated breeding intentions but cannot find anywhere suitable for nesting due to the rising water level covering almost all the protruding grass stumps and other semi submerged vegetation. The images below nicely capture the grebes and their behavior in response to these conditions.

The male Powerful Owl, first seen in the June survey and last seen on 21 November appears to be continuing its presence in the park. It is reassuring to have an image of a Common Ringtail Possum with two young in a drey, indicating that Westgate Park's possum population is breeding thus providing a reliable supply of food for the Powerful Owl.

Clearing the HWT site next door has encouraged an increased number of Noisy Miners to move in, but they remain confined to the park's boundary with that site. The planned data centre however, reportedly proposed to be eight stories high, could be detrimental for bird activity in the north-east corner of the park. Currently the site usually hosts a big population of Silver Gulls.

Opportunistic Sightings – Interesting or unusual sightings reported between surveys

Date	Species	Number seen	Observer
12 Nov	Powerful Owl	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
12 Nov	Red-browed Finch	2	Ursula Dutkiewicz
15 Nov	^Red-browed Finch	3	Steven Castan (eBird)
17 Nov	^White-faced Heron	2	Xavier Shay (eBird)
17 Nov	Brown Quail – Calling each other	2	Ursula Dutkiewicz
17 Nov	Brown Thornbill	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
19 Nov	White-winged Triller	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
19 Nov	Peregrine Falcon	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
21 Nov	^Powerful Owl	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
26 Nov	Sacred Kingfisher	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
26 Nov	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	2	Ursula Dutkiewicz
28 Nov	^White-faced Heron	1	Ursula Dutkiewicz
Sub-Total			8 Species
Total number of species – Survey + Opportunistic Sightings			<u>51 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



A male White-winged Triller that briefly visited the park on 19 November. This is the second sighting this year, the first was during the October survey



This male Powerful Owl has been appearing regularly in Westgate Park since 2 June. A female appeared once on 19 May this year (refer to the June survey report for details).



A Common Ringtail Possum on its drey with two young. A portion of the second offspring's ear can just be seen in the left of the image



Almost all the Australian White Ibis seen today were in flight. This was the only one on the ground



**Grey Teal are almost always present in the park, but in very low numbers
Photos this page by Peter Petinatos**



Australasian Grebe versus Hoary-headed Grebe – the A Grebe was checking potential nesting spots attempting to utilize protruding grass stumps almost completely submerged by the high-water level. After visiting a second one the HH Grebe was not impressed and let the A Grebe know once it got off and then proceeded to try it out for itself. It could well be with high water levels there are less opportunities and suitable sites for the grebes to nest.



An unusual image of a Hoary-headed Grebe diving off an exposed stump of a dead tussock, which was possibly checked out as a nest site. It is uncommon for them to come out of the water other than take flight to another location.



26/11/2025- Hoary-headed Grebes displayed trial mating behaviour but did not mate on this occasion. Today we have noted that the water level has risen further, now covering all these protruding grass stumps.



Purple Swamphen and chick on 17 Nov, and two weeks later now a juvenile with traces of red showing on the bill - they grow rapidly



Two of five Pied Stilts counted today and a Masked Lapwing – Photo by Peter Petinatos



Sacred Kingfisher (26/11) above and gathering of New Holland Honeyeaters on a heavily flowering Callistemon



No Red-browed Finches were seen today and sightings have been low recently. This pair was recorded on 12 November.



Eastern Snake-necked Turtles were seen in the water on 15 November. Later, on the 26th they were out on land looking for suitable locations to lay eggs. Three were encountered that day, including one well away from water climbing the Lookout Hill with the big tree.



Dusky Moorhen with two of an estimated four dependent young



Mosquito Fish are very plentiful at the moment



Common Grass-Blue *Zizina otis*



Robber Fly - Genus *Cerdistusa*



Gynoplistia bellaa - member of Limoniid Crane Flies



Empty dragonfly nymph shell

These are just some of the insects Ursula has observed in Westgate Park over the past few weeks. This indicates the park has a healthy diversity of insects and other invertebrates, which help support many bird species we love to watch, including Superb Fairy-wrens and several species of honeyeaters.



A lovely image of a male Superb Fairy-wren with prey which is almost certainly a Common Halfband *Melangyna viridiceps* hoverfly, which are abundant at this time of the year.

– Photo by Peter Petinatos