

February 2017 BirdWatch report

The mild summer conditions have meant that many birds have continued to breed this year. There were many juvenile Dusky Moorhens and Eurasian Coots at Coburg Lake, and young were being fed by White-plumed Honeyeaters at Bababi Marning (Cooper Street Grassland), by Little Ravens and Noisy Miners at Edwardes Lake, and Little Ravens were nesting in East Coburg/West Preston.

It was unofficially the 'Day of the Cormorant' at Edwardes Lake: 12 Little Pied, 1 Great, and 40 Little Black Cormorants were recorded.

The Zebra Finches at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grassland), first recorded in February last year, have built up their numbers to sixteen.

There was a noticeable shortage of smaller birds in Merri Park, Northcote and East Brunswick (Sumner Park to Moreland Road – two survey areas). Aggressive species like Red Wattlebirds, Noisy and Bell Miners and Common Mynas were plentiful and could be displacing them. Avian predators were also recorded in these surveys: Grey Butcherbird, Little Raven, Pied Currawong and the highlight of the CERES-Moreland Road survey, an Australian Hobby. The Hobby is a small falcon that "flies down birds like starlings, swallows, pipits, with lashing wingbeats; soars at dusk for flying insects" (*The Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, 1997). It was heralded by alarm calls from several species as it flew swiftly over CERES and disappeared from sight.

An overall total of 72 bird species was recorded in our February surveys at nine sites. There were 53 observers. The most common species were Silver Gull, Rock Dove, Red Wattlebird and Common Myna. Australian Magpie, Little Raven and Magpie-lark were recorded at every site. The sites with the highest diversity were Edwardes Lake (37 species), Galgi Ngarrk (33), Coburg Lake (32) and Blyth St-Moreland Rd E Brunswick (31). Coburg Lake Reserve again had the most individual birds, an estimate of 520.

It's good to have families joining our surveys, and children can be very sharp-eyed observers. Moreland Council is encouraging youngsters to identify the birds they can see in bushland along the Merri with photos of common species in the hide in the new children's bush playground in Kirkdale Park, East Brunswick (see photo).

Grateful thanks are due to our volunteer survey leaders, including those who have been with us since we started surveys in 2008, and those who have taken on leadership roles more recently. We are still short of one leader so only survey 9 of 10 sites each round; and it would be good to have an 'emergency' leader who can fill in when one of the regulars is unavailable. Please contact me if you know anyone willing and able to help us as a bird survey leader.

Ann McGregor
Co-ordinator, Merri BirdWatch



Youngsters enjoying the bird hide in the Kirkdale Park playground, East Brunswick.
Photo: A. McGregor