

## Merri BirdWatch November 2016 surveys

Our bird surveys in November recorded a total of 67 species at nine sites. This compares with 78 species over 10 sites in November 2014 and 2015. Forty observers tallied a total of 1,525 individual birds.

At Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Road grassland, Fawkner), the group had a great chance to observe a Golden-headed Cisticola (male) calling from the top of a Tree Violet (*Meliccytus dentatus*). The female was foraging nearby. Galada Tamboore continued as a favoured hangout for Grey Fantails: 20 were recorded there in September, and 13 in November.

At Coburg and Edwardes Lakes, the waterbird numbers were well down. Coburg Lake leader Alister Campbell reported “There were way fewer Pacific Black Ducks and Chestnut Teals than usual, and there were absolutely no Eurasian Coots or cormorants of any kind. Our hypothesis on the day was that the wet spring had meant waterbirds could disperse to more ephemeral waterbodies, but of course we have no proof!”

An indicator of the continuing good conditions for bird breeding were the five species seen feeding young at Edwardes Lake: Dusky Moorhen, Galah, Noisy Miner, Little Raven and Magpie-lark. A Collared Sparrowhawk nest was observed. Only two raptors were recorded across the surveys: a Collared Sparrowhawk at Edwardes Lake, and a Whistling Kite at Galada Tamboore.

A Blue-tongue Lizard was spotted during the Clifton Hill survey.

Overall, Common Starling was the most numerous species (156), followed by Rainbow Lorikeet (140) and Red Wattlebird (139). The site with greatest diversity was Blyth St-Moreland Rd, E Brunswick (33 species), with 31 species recorded at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands). Common Blackbird and Common Myna (both non-native) were the only species recorded at all nine sites.

Ann McGregor  
BirdWatch co-ordinator

[Photo caption:] Whistling Kites usually live near swamps and rivers. They hunt small live prey including insects, fish, birds and mammals, by swooping while soaring. Whistling Kites defend territories, and pairs usually remain together for life.

Photographer: Heath Warwick, courtesy Museums Victoria

<http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/species/8148>