

## 2019 Friends of Merri Creek BirdWatch Report

A total of 104 species of birds was recorded in 2019, from the ten sites we survey. There were 36 surveys, in February, May, September and November. The most common species (numbers are estimates) were:

Rainbow Lorikeet	803
Silver Gull	616
Red Wattlebird	572
Common Myna <sup>1</sup>	511
Rock Dove	441
Pacific Black Duck	433
Common Starling	427



Red Wattlebird was one of the most common birds recorded in 2019 surveys.

Photo: P. Mollison

Rainbow Lorikeets, Red Wattlebirds and Common Mynas were mostly seen in the inner urban locations (Coburg Lake, Egan Reserve, Blyth St-Moreland Rd, Kirkdale - Merri Parks and Hall Reserve -Yarra Bend Park), indicating that they have adapted well to living amongst people. Other birds that have adapted to the inner urban lifestyle are Grey Butcherbirds, Pied Currawongs, Kookaburras and Brown Goshawks. Collared Sparrowhawks were found at Egan Reserve and Kirkdale Park - Merri Park, as well as at Galada Tamboore.

Silver Gulls were mostly found at the Coburg and Edwardes Lakes (particularly Coburg Lake where over 60% of the total were counted). Unsurprisingly these two sites were where most of the ducks, moorhens, coots, swans and cormorants were found. Although found at most sites, more than half of the Rock Doves were recorded at Coburg Lake.

The northern sites, Bababi Djinanang, Galgi Ngarrk, Galada Tamboore and Bababi Marning, which are mainly open grasslands, had the highest counts of Wedge-tailed Eagles, Brown Falcons and Nankeen Kestrels. These birds probably prefer the open grasslands for hunting. Australasian Pipits and the various finches are also inhabitants of open grasslands. The Pipits chase insects while the finches feed on grass seeds. Starlings, though found at most sites, were seen in large numbers at Galgi Ngarrk and Galada Tamboore.

Total number of species recorded at each site:

Bababi Djinanang/Jukes Rd Fawkner	39
Edwardes Lake Reservoir	47
Coburg Lake Reserve	49
Egan Res. E Coburg - Strettle Res.	33
Blyth St - Moreland Rd E Brunswick	43
Kirkdale St Park E Bruns - Merri Park Northcote	43
Hall Reserve Clifton Hill - Yarra Bend Park	36
Galgi Ngarrk/Craigieburn Grasslands	57
Bababi Marning/Cooper Street Grasslands	43
Galada Tamboore	50

Are Noisy Miners multiplying and spreading into new areas along the Creek? It appears that they are. These birds have a habit of aggressively displacing other species. A review of the

<sup>1</sup> Common Myna, Rock Dove and Common Starling are non-native species.

data for the past five years shows that they are prevalent in all six of the inner city sites and that their numbers have fluctuated over that time, but with a generally upward trend. The greatest increases have been at Coburg Lake, where the numbers have gone from 4 in 2015 to 47 in 2019; and Kirkdale Park - Merri Park increasing from 17 in 2016, to 51 in 2019. If we go back to 2009, a total of 114 was recorded across five sites. This compares with the 2019 total of 358 birds across seven sites.



Noisy Miner

Photo: A. McGregor

Tawny Frogmouths were most often seen at the Egan Reserve (East Coburg) site. The data for the past five years confirmed this as a general trend.

From 2015 to 2019 there were 44 recorded at Egan Reserve, while a total of 39 was recorded at the other five inner city sites. There is either something about this site that attracts them, or else their roosting sites in this area are better known to the observers and they are therefore more likely to be spotted during our surveys.

White-winged Trillers and Rufous Songlarks were seen in some of the northern sites in the last two (spring) surveys. These are migratory species that come down from northern Australia to nest in the spring and return in autumn. We also recorded the Triller in 2017, and the Songlark in 2015, 2017 and 2018. Of concern is the lack of sightings during our 2019 surveys of Sacred Kingfisher, another spring-summer migrant to southern Australia.



Eastern Whipbird in Merri Park.

Photo: A. Johnson

In contrast to the frequently-seen species, 20 species were recorded only once across the ten sites and 36 surveys. These include mobile, nomadic species such as Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and Southern Whiteface.

A highly unusual species for Merri Creek is Eastern Whipbird, normally a resident of wet forests of the eastern ranges. A solitary male lived in Merri Park, Northcote in January for at least seven months – an endorsement of the quality of the habitat with dense shrubby understorey that has been created in Merri Park since the 1980s.

We gratefully acknowledge our volunteer survey leaders, and thank all the participants who joined in the 2019 surveys.

Full results for 2019 follow in two tables.

*Report compiled by Trevor Hausler and Ann McGregor*

# MERRI BIRDWATCH SURVEY RECORD 2019

Site 1. Bababi Djinanang/Jukes Rd Fawkner

Site 2. Edwardes Lake Reservoir

Site 3. Coburg Lake Reserve

Site 4. Egan Res. E Coburg - Strettle Reserve.

Site 5. Blyth St - Moreland Rd E Brunswick

	Site 1					Site 2					Site 3					Site 4					Site 5				
	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total
Greylag Goose*					0					0		1			1					0					0
Black Swan					0		4	2		6		1	1		2					0					0
Australian Shelduck					0					0					0					0					0
Australian Wood Duck					0	25	11	13	6	55	7	7	8	7	29	2				2	11		7	11	29
Pacific Black Duck				2	2	50	66	20	25	161	58	41	30	38	167	10	2	4	1	17	2	2	7	7	18
Northern Mallard*					0	2	2	2	2	8			5	2	7					0					0
Grey Teal					0	6	5	5	2	18			4	5	9					0					0
Chestnut Teal					0	3			12	15	12	13	6	12	43					0	2	4	1		7
Hardhead					0	7	1	5	17	30	2		1	10	13					0					0
Brown Quail					0					0					0					0					0
Australasian Grebe					0	2	14			16		2			2					0					0
Hoary-headed Grebe					0		6	7	6	19					0					0					0
Rock Dove*		10		8	18					0	76	52	53	68	249	2	8	1	2	13	25	25	6	27	83
Spotted (Turtle)Dove*		1		6	7	5	1	2	6	14	4		6		10	15		7	10	32	18	12	12	10	52
Common Bronzewing					0					0					0					0					0
Crested Pigeon					0	8	14	24	20	66	10			1	11	3	13	20	3	39	6	7	2	9	24
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo					0					0					0					0					0
Pallid Cuckoo					0					0					0					0					0
Tawny Frogmouth					0	4				4					0		1	2	5	8					0
Dusky Moorhen				1	1	20	25	21	14	80	17	18	19	38	92	4	1			5	8	5	7	3	23
Eurasian Coot					0	19	32	61	70	182	39	47	33	37	156					0					0
Purple Swamphen					0	11	24	12	16	63					0	5				5					0
Masked Lapwing					0		1			1					0					0	2				2
Silver Gull					0	44	28	23	75	170	110	68	61	96	335					0				1	1
Australasian Darter					0	2				2		1			1					0					0
Little Pied Cormorant					0	6				6	4	1	7	16	28	2				2	1				1
Great Cormorant					0					0		1			1					0					0
Little Black Cormorant					0	2	1			3		9	1		10					0		1	1		2
Pied Cormorant					0					0			3		3					0		1			1
White-necked Heron					0					0					0					0					0

White-faced Heron		1	1		1	1	1	3	1		1		2				0				0
Nankeen Night-Heron			0		1			1		2	1	1	4				0				0
Australian White Ibis	3	2	5	2	11		9	22	10	7	54	73	144		1	5	6		3		3
Straw-necked Ibis	5		5					0		1			1				0				0
Black-shouldered Kite			0					0					0				0				0
Wedge-tailed Eagle			0					0					0				0				0
Brown Goshawk	1		1	1				1		2			2		2		2				0
Collared Sparrowhawk			0					0					0	2	1		3				0
Whistling Kite			0					0					0				0				0
Laughing Kookaburra			0					0					0	1		2	3		2	2	4
Sacred Kingfisher			0					0					0				0				0
Nankeen Kestrel			0					0					0				0				0
Brown Falcon			0					0					0				0				0
Peregrine Falcon			0					0					0				0	1			1
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo			0					0		6			6				0				0
Galah		4	4	3	9	4	12	28	2		2	5	9				0				0
Long-billed Corella			0				4	4					0				0				0
Little Corella			0	2	2		7	11					0				0	3			3
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo			0					0	5				5				0				0
Crimson Rosella			0					0					0				0				0
Eastern Rosella			0					0					0				0				1
Red-rumped Parrot			0					0				3	3				0		7	8	1
Musk Lorikeet			0	7	4			11	8	2			10		5		5		4		4
Rainbow Lorikeet	25	4	29	21	10	15	12	58	42	45	45	20	152	42	25	24	15	106	19	37	22
Superb Fairy-wren		7	7					0					0				0				0
Eastern Spinebill	2		2					0					0				0		3		3
Yellow-faced Honeyeater			0					0					0				0				1
Bell Miner			0					0					0				0	1			1
Noisy Miner	2		2	11	11	16	38	76	5	14	19	9	47	7	5	2	17	31	8	21	24
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	2		2					0					0				0				0
Little Wattlebird			0					0		1		2	3			2	1	3			2
Red Wattlebird	5	21	26		3	5	10	18	2	44	31	28	105	7	31	68	38	144	1	25	20
White-plumed Honeyeater	3	7	10					0	1	1		1	3	2		2	4	1	1		2
New Holland Honeyeater	11	22	33					0					0	1			1				0
Spotted Pardalote	6	5	11	2	1			3	3	8	1	4	16	8			8	6	5	1	1
Striated Pardalote			0	4				4					0		1		1				0
White-browed Scrubwren	1	2	3	2	1	1		4		2	1		3		2		2	3	1	4	3
Brown Thornbill		6	6					0	12			3	15	4		1	4	9	3	5	3
Yellow-rumped Thornbill			0					0					0				0				0
Striated Thornbill			0					0					0				0				0
Southern Whiteface	6		6					0					0				0				0

Grey Butcherbird	1	1	2	4	2	1	7	1	1	3	4	9	2	4	1	4	11	1	3	2	3	9	
Australian Magpie	7	5	12	4	2	4	12	22	30	12	5	7	54	10	7	9	8	34	4	10	5	7	26
Pied Currawong			0					0	11	12	7		30	2	4	2	4	12	2	4	4	4	14
Grey Currawong			0		1			1					0					0					0
Eastern Whipbird																							
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike			0					0					0					0					0
White-winged Triller																							
Grey Shrike-thrush			0					0					0					0					0
Golden Whistler	1		1					0					0					0					0
Rufous Whistler		1	1					0					0					0					0
Willie Wagtail	3		3	4	1	2	2	9	3		1	3	7			2	2	2	2	1	1		6
Grey Fantail	2	3	5					0			7		7					0		2			2
Magpie-lark	4	2	6	6	5	8	6	25	1	8	10	9	28	3	6	2	6	17	7	6	8	8	29
Little Raven	4	6	10		6	4	5	15	8	6	5	6	25	7	8		5	20	2	6	3	5	16
Scarlet Robin			0	2				2					0					0					0
Flame Robin	1		1					0					0					0		1			1
Eurasian Skylark*		1	1					0					0					0					0
Welcome Swallow			0	2	13	4	10	29		15	4		19					0	6	1	1		8
Tree Martin			0					0					0					0	2				2
Fairy Martin			0			11		11					0					0					0
Australian Reed-Warbler			0	1			2	3					0					0					0
Brown Songlark			0					0					0					0					0
Golden-headed Cisticola			0					0					0					0					0
Rufous Songlark																							
Silvereye	10	3	13					0					0			1	1	4	3				7
Common Blackbird*	1	5	6	1		1	1	3	4	3	3	5	15	3	4	2	3	12	1	6	4	3	14
Common Starling *	16	14	30		3		15	18		4	1	7	12				0	2	17	5	2		26
Common Myna*	8	26	34	22	6	6	5	39	17	15	8	28	68	30	10	20	16	76	24	35	12	27	98
Australasian Pipit	1	1	2					0					0					0					0
Common Greenfinch*			0					0					0					0					0
European Goldfinch*		2	2					0					0					0					0
House Sparrow*	4	20	24					0					0					0					0
Eurasian Tree Sparrow*			0					0					0					0					0
Red-browed Finch		3	3					0					0					0					0
Zebra Finch			0					0					0					0					0
ANNUAL TOTALS			39					47					49					33					43

Site 6. Kirkdale St Park E Bruns - Merri Park Northcote

Site 7. Hall Reserve Clifton Hill - Yarra Bend Park

Site 8. Galgi Ngarrk/Craigieburn Grasslands

Site 9. Bababi Marning/Cooper Street Grasslands

Site 10. Galada Tamboore

	Site 6					Site 7					Site 8					Site 9					Site 10					Annual 10 sites
	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Feb	May	Sep	Nov	Total	Total
Greylag Goose*					0					0					0					0					0	1
Black Swan					0					0					0					0					0	8
Australian Shelduck					0					0					0					0					0	0
Australian Wood Duck					0					0	8	2	4	2	16					0					0	131
Pacific Black Duck	4	4	6	6	20	6	4	4	20	34	4	2	5	1	12					0			2		2	433
Northern Mallard*					0					0					0					0					0	15
Grey Teal					0					0					0					0					0	27
Chestnut Teal		1		8	9	2	4		3	9				2	2					0					0	85
Hardhead					0					0					0					0					0	43
Brown Quail					0					0			8	2	10					0					0	10
Australasian Grebe					0					0					0					0					0	18
Hoary-headed Grebe					0					0					0					0					0	19
Rock Dove*			2		2	3	22		12	37	18	1	3		22	2		9		11	2	4			6	441
Spotted (Turtle)Dove*	6	13	5	10	34		3		1	4		19			19	2		4		6	16	8	3	5	32	210
Common Bronzewing					0					0			1		1					0					0	1
Crested Pigeon				4	4	5	2		3	10	2			4	6	4				4				6	6	170
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo					0					0					0			2		2					0	2
Pallid Cuckoo					0					0				1	1			1		1					0	2
Tawny Frogmouth					0			1		1					0					0					0	13
Dusky Moorhen		3	1	1	5	2	3	2	2	9					0					0					0	215
Eurasian Coot					0					0					0					0					0	338
Purple Swamphen					0					0		1			1					0				1	1	70
Masked Lapwing					0					0					0	3		4		7					0	10
Silver Gull				10	10		1			1	3	30	1		34			39		39		20	6		26	616
Australasian Darter					0					0					0					0					0	3
Little Pied Cormorant	1				1	1	1			2	2	1	1		4			1		1			1		1	46
Great Cormorant					0					0					0					0					0	1
Little Black Cormorant					0					0					0					0					0	15
Pied Cormorant					0					0					0					0				1	1	5
White-necked Heron					0					0				1	1					0			3		3	4
White-faced Heron		1			1	1				1	1	1	1		3					0			1	3	4	15

Nankeen Night-Heron					0					0	1			1						0			1	1	7
Australian White Ibis					0			4	4	1		4	17	22		38	38	7		3	6	16	260		
Straw-necked Ibis					0				0					0						5	5	11			
Black-shouldered Kite					0				0	1				1							0	1			
Wedge-tailed Eagle					0				0	1	2	3	2	8		2	2				0	10			
Brown Goshawk	2				2				0					0							0	8			
Collared Sparrowhawk			1		1				0					0				1	1	1	3	7			
Whistling Kite					0				0					0						1	1	1			
Laughing Kookaburra			2		2	2	2		4					0							0	13			
Sacred Kingfisher					0				0					0							0	0			
Nankeen Kestrel					0				0	1				1							0	1			
Brown Falcon					0				0			1		1		1			1	1	3				
Peregrine Falcon					0				0					0							0	1			
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo					0			1	1					0							0	7			
Galah			1		1				0	6	4		3	13		9	9				0	64			
Long-billed Corella					0				0		2	2	9	13							0	17			
Little Corella					0		12	5	17	1	4	2		7							0	38			
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo					0				0	2	4	1	1	8						3	3	16			
Crimson Rosella					0			4	4					0							0	4			
Eastern Rosella					0	3	3	6	12	3		2		5	1		1				0	19			
Red-rumped Parrot					0	2	12	5	19	38				0							0	57			
Musk Lorikeet	7				7				0					0							8	45			
Rainbow Lorikeet	48	45	35	54	182	24	10	22	31	87	2	5	2	7	16	6	9	15	8	8	6	13	35	803	
Superb Fairy-wren	6	1		1	8				1	1	25	15	10	19	69	11	11	22	5	20	3	5	33	140	
Eastern Spinebill	1				1		1		1					0								0	7		
Yellow-faced Honeyeater			1	2	3																		3		
Bell Miner	5				5				0					0								0	6		
Noisy Miner	3	21	4	23	51	5	5	41	18	69				0							0	358			
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater					0				0					0								0	2		
Little Wattlebird	2		2	4	8				0					0								0	16		
Red Wattlebird	12	24	31	64	131		5	3	4	12	10	13	3	3	29		11	11	2	6	2	13	23	572	
White-plumed Honeyeater	2	2	3	4	11				0				1		1	8	6	14	1	6	4	2	13	58	
New Holland Honeyeater			2	1	3				0	6		3	7	16	5	4	9	2	1	2	7	12	74		
Spotted Pardalote	3	5	2	2	12	2		1	3					0						10	2	12	78		
Striated Pardalote					0				0					0								0	5		
White-browed Scrubwren	1	1	1	1	4				1	1	3			3	2	4	6	2			4	6	43		
Brown Thornbill	3	3	1	5	12	4		1	4	9	4	1	1	5	11		2	2	3	1	1	5	82		
Yellow-rumped Thornbill					0				0	3	6	4	18	31	25	2	27			10	1	10	21	79	
Striated Thornbill					0				0					0	2		2					0	2		

Southern Whiteface				0					0											0	6			
Grey Butcherbird	3		1	4	2	5	4	4	15					0						0	57			
Australian Magpie	2	2	8	6	18	3	4	5	11	23	13	8	45	11	77	5	5	10	7	6	2	6	21	297
Pied Currawong	5	8	2	4	19		1	1	1	3													0	78
Grey Currawong					0					0													0	1
Eastern Whipbird		1			1																			1
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike		6			6																	3	3	9
White-winged Triller												2	1	3		2								5
Grey Shrike-thrush					0					0											1		1	1
Golden Whistler		1			1					0			1	1		2		2		1			1	6
Rufous Whistler					0					0													0	1
Willie Wagtail	2		1	7	10	2	3			5		3		1	4	7	3	10	1	2		5	8	64
Grey Fantail	4	2	3		9		2			2	7	2	7		16	3	10	13	3	9	2	1	15	69
Magpie-lark	1	3	4	8	16	6	7	6	6	25	4	1	2	1	8	4	3	7	1		1	4	6	167
Little Raven	1	11	6	6	24	1	5	4	1	11	5	67	35	25	132	15	11	26	4	17	20	16	57	336
Scarlet Robin					0					0													0	2
Flame Robin					0					0		6			6								0	8
Eurasian Skylark*					0					0	13	30	5		48		2	2		4		2	6	57
Welcome Swallow			3	2	5		1	5	7	13	6	2		1	9	3		3	1	2	4		7	93
Tree Martin					0					0													0	2
Fairy Martin					0					0					0	8	38	46					0	57
Australian Reed-Warbler					0					0				1	1	3	1	4				3	3	11
Brown Songlark					0					0	3				3								0	3
Golden-headed Cisticola					0					0	1			1	2	2		2		1		3	4	8
Rufous Songlark														2	2			2				1	1	5
Silvereye		15	10	1	26					0	5	6			11		2	0	3	8	1		12	70
Common Blackbird*	2	4	3	7	16				1	1	4	3	4	4	15	1	5	6	3	11	1	6	21	109
Common Starling *	8	11	1	2	22		10		4	14	4	30	15	65	114	5	26	31			10	150	160	427
Common Myna*	19	25	8	13	65	5	1			6	2	3	4	4	13	11	9	20	40		2	50	92	511
Australasian Pipit					0					0		1		2	3	4	4	8			1		1	14
Common Greenfinch*					0					0	5	42		4	51		7	7		1	2	6	9	67
European Goldfinch*					0					0	22	22	6	21	71	8	6	14	1		1		2	89
House Sparrow*					0					0	10	1			11	16	2	18	10	6		10	26	79
Eurasian Tree Sparrow*					0					0					0			0	3				3	3
Red-browed Finch		5		4	9					0	4	8	12	2	26	2	3	5	5				5	48
Zebra Finch					0					0	16	4		4	24			0					0	24
<b>ANNUAL TOTALS (species)</b>					<b>43</b>					<b>36</b>					<b>57</b>			<b>43</b>				<b>50</b>	<b>104</b>	



### Noisy Miners for Past 5 Years

	<b>Site 2 Edwardes Lake</b>	<b>Site 3 Coburg Lake</b>	<b>Site 4 East Coburg</b>	<b>Site 5 Blyth- Moreland</b>	<b>Site 6 Kirkdale- Merri Pk</b>	<b>Site 7 Clifton Hill</b>
2015	72	4	17	61	14	102
2016	75	0	14	69	17	89
2017	63	11	65	94	38	76
2018	52	22	43	82	50	96
2019	38	47	31	82	51	69

### Tawny Frogmouths for Past 5 Years

	<b>Site 2</b>	<b>Site 3</b>	<b>Site 4</b>	<b>Site 5</b>	<b>Site 6</b>	<b>Site 7</b>
2015			9	6		1
2016			5	6	2	
2017			13		3	1
2018		6	9	4		5
2019	4		8		1	
Totals	4	6	44	16	6	7