

February 2015 BirdWatch report

Black Kite and Horsfield's Bushlark are the latest species to be added to our survey lists, when they were recorded in our February surveys. The Black Kite is a familiar scavenger in inland Australia, especially in the north and east, where it wheels and soars over towns and fires. Euan Fothergill recorded it at Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands), and commented that he has been seeing it increasingly in a few locations around Melbourne. It is a relatively recent colonizer here and seems to be on the increase – another indication of climate change? Six raptor species were recorded across our sites, including a Peregrine Falcon hunting Rock Doves above Moreland Road bridge.

Formerly known as Singing Bushlark, Horsfield's Bushlark is an uncommon streaked brown bird of grasslands, slightly smaller than a Pipit or Eurasian Skylark. It has white edges to the tail (like the other two species) and bold rufous wing margins. Being a lark, it sings while hovering high, but also in low undulating flight and when perched. Stuart Dashper and the other observers at Bababi Marning had a good view of the perched bird, and saw its deep finch-like bill that is fairly diagnostic and separates it from Pipit and Songlarks. It had no crest at all so was not a Skylark. Euan had a possible sighting at Galgi Ngarrk, but not enough for a positive identification.

A total of 78 bird species was seen across the ten sites surveyed in February. Most widespread (occurring at every site) were Spotted Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, and Magpie. At the other end of the spectrum, 24 species were each recorded at only one site. The most numerous species were Common Myna, Silver Gull, Rainbow Lorikeet, Pacific Black Duck and Red Wattlebird.

The sites with the most diversity were Bababi Djinanang and Blyth Street-Moreland Road East Brunswick, with 34 species each. Coburg Lake Reserve had the most individual birds, an estimate of 468.

There were 26 Eastern Grey Kangaroos at Bababi Marning, and at Galgi Ngarrk the 'roo count was 137, with two Swamp Wallabies.

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