

May 2015 BirdWatch report

The calm, sunny weather was very pleasant for birding on 17 May when surveys were undertaken at nine sites, and likewise at Bababi Marning on 24 May.

A highlight for the day was a flock of eight Swift Parrots, flying north above the Merri during the East Brunswick-Northcote survey. These fast-flying, smallish green and red parrots breed in Tasmania's mature eucalypt forests, and cross Bass Strait in late autumn to forage in flowering eucalypts in Victoria, NSW and even Queensland. There are only an estimated 1,000 pairs left, and the Swift Parrot "*is on track to extinction at a faster rate than almost any other Australian bird*" according to Birdlife Australia¹. Logging in Tasmania is the main threat, and is continuing in the Parrot's breeding habitat.

It is the season for Flame Robins to descend from the mountains and move into open grasslands. Six were seen at Galada Tamboore, and five at Bababi Djinanang. A male Scarlet Robin was hanging around with three female Flame Robins at Galgi Ngarrk, which is a bit unusual. A Red-capped Robin was a notable sighting at Bababi Marning.

The birds were very active at Galgi Ngarrk, possibly in response to good weather after a sustained period of adverse weather. The Skylarks were doing a lot of displaying. Also seen were an estimated 400 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a few butterflies notably Meadow Argus, two cocoons of praying mantis and a native bee in Yam Daisy. Curly Sedge Ck had no water but about 20 Common Froglets were in the vicinity of the creek. A Mistletoebird that was seen twice in different locations so may have been two birds. Of note also were two huge flocks of Red Wattlebirds, and a generally larger population of a lot of species than would be expected at this time of year. Euan had another possible sighting of a Horsfield's Bushlark, but as in February, was not confident enough to record it. This species was first added to our survey list in February at Bababi Marning.

There were large numbers of Silvereyes at Bababi Djinanang, attracted to the Tree Violets which have retained a large crop of berries this year. Also noteworthy were a Female Scarlet Robin and male GoldenWhistler. Both species have been staying around the area in recent months

At Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill, leaders Ruth and Des Shiel commented on the continuing absence of small birds – probably due to the increasing numbers of aggressive Noisy Miners. There were plenty of Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets in the profusely flowering Eucalypts, but only one Red Wattlebird and no smaller honeyeaters. Edwardes Lake Reserve is another site where Noisy Miners appear to be dominating and evicting smaller birds.

A total of 79 bird species was seen across the ten sites surveyed in May. The Magpie was the only species recorded at every site. Red Wattlebird was by far the most numerous species with 345 individuals recorded.

The sites with the most diversity were Galgi Ngarrk (39 species), East Brunswick-Northcote (32), and Edwardes Lake (30). Galgi Ngarrk had the most individual birds, an estimate of 466.

¹ S. Vine, 'A swift exit.' *Australian Birdlife*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 2015.

A domestic cat was spotted in the gully at Galada Tamboore, well away from houses. The two feral goats there have had a kid.

There were Southern Brown Tree-frogs calling from Merri Park wetland, about 20 Common Froglets in the vicinity of the dry Curly Sedge Creek and more at Edwardes Lake, and Spotted Marsh Frogs calling at Bababi Marning.



Swift Parrot. Photo: Nicole Spillane