

Birds along the Merri in true spring

Our bird surveys in November 2014 recorded a total of 78 species across ten sites. The most common species were Red Wattlebird (198), Rainbow Lorikeet (140), Common Myna (124) and Common Starling (110). Australian Magpies, Common Blackbirds and Common Mynas were recorded at every site. Pacific Black Ducks, Spotted Doves, Red Wattlebirds, Little Ravens, Magpie-larks, Welcome Swallows, and Common Starlings were recorded at nine survey sites. On the other hand, 23 species were each recorded at only one site. The Australian Reed-Warbler is one of our vocal spring-summer migrants, and was reported at 7 sites.

In 2013, the mild weather through spring encouraged a prolonged breeding season, and seven species were recorded as nesting. In 2014 only two species were reported as nesting. White-faced Herons were nesting in a tall gum tree north of Coburg Lake, and Willie Wagtails had two young in a nest over the Merri in East Brunswick (see photo).

A Willie Wagtail feeds nestlings over Merri Creek between East Brunswick and Northcote Golf Course. Photo: Bruce McGregor.



This tortoise was seen near the Willie Wagtails' nest on 12-11-14, three days after the November bird survey. The nesting Willie Wagtails came over to chase the tortoise away. Photo: Bruce McGregor.

The site with the greatest number of species was Galgi Ngarrk / Craigieburn Grasslands (38), with 33 species at Coburg Lake Reserve and Blyth Street-Moreland Road East Brunswick, and 32 at Edwardes Lake. In Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill, the most numerous species was Noisy Miner. Their predominance is a likely reason for the relatively low species diversity at this site (21 species).

A possible Spotted Crake was heard at Galgi Ngarrk, but the identification was not certain. Native grassland flowers including Chocolate Lily, Veronica and Blushing Bindweed were appreciated at Galgi Ngarrk. Two Growling Grass Frogs were also recorded there.

At Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Road Fawkner), a quiet Rufous Songlark was flushed from the ground, probably a female. A male has a loud territorial display song, which has not been heard at this site so far this season.

A female Ringtail Possum with two young were seen on the East Coburg-West Preston survey.

Ann McGregor Birdwatch Coordinator

First Merri Birdwatch survey for 2015

Bird surveys will be held from 8.45-10.30am at ten sites along Merri Creek as listed below. Beginners welcome, BYO binoculars if possible, but no dogs please, as they reduce the number and variety of birds to be seen. The contact for all Birdwatch events is Ann McGregor 0429 386 102.

Free leaflets on Merri Birds (normally \$2) are available for all participants

Surveys at the following nine sites are on 15 February and 17 May

- Bababi Djinanang (Jukes Rd Grasslands), Fawkner:** Meet on the Merri Path at the end of Jukes Road, Fawkner (Melway 18 A2).
- Egan Reserve – Harding Street – Strettle Reserve – Normanby Avenue:** Meet at the bluestone steps at the end of The Grove, East Coburg (Melway 30 A3).
- Coburg Lake Reserve:** Meet near the car park, Lake Grove, Coburg (Melway 17 H10).
- Edwardes Lake:** Meet at the playground adjacent to Griffiths Street, Reservoir (Melway 18 E5).

CERES – Moreland Road: Meet at the seats on the Merri Path at rear of CERES, East Brunswick (Melway 30 B7).

Merri Park and Phillips Reserve: Meet at the end of Victoria Street, East Brunswick, at the BBQ shelter (Melway 30 B8).

Hall Reserve – Yarra Bend Park: Meet at the Rotunda, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill (Melway 2D D1).

Galgi Ngaark (Craigieburn Grasslands): Meet at O'Herns Road gate off Hume Highway, Somerton (Melway 180 E6).

Galada Tamboore: Meet at the end of Hatty Court, Campbellfield (Melway 7 K6).

Surveys at Bababi Marning (Cooper St Grasslands) are on 22 February and 24 May

Meet near the Istrian Club, Cooper Street, Campbellfield (Melway 180 K10).