

Report

Avian fauna at Mullocullop Nature Reserve

by

**Anne Bondin
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Lake Mullocullop

At the request of the City of Albany research was conducted to obtain information about the birdlife using the lake contained within Mullocullop Nature Reserve.

The lake which appears to be known by a number of different names is in this report referred to as Mullocullop Lake. It forms a fairly large part of the 115.65 ha Mullocullop Nature Reserve located off Warriup Road in the Green Range area of the City of Albany. A small part of the lake is on adjacent private property. According to a report published by the Department of Water in June 2008 the water in the lake is brackish to moderately saline with generally low nutrient levels. The report also cites a potential for toxic algae blooms to occur during summer which may have a negative effect on the lake's birdlife.

It is one of the few larger lakes within the municipal boundaries of the City of Albany providing habitat for a wide range of waterbirds. The bushland surrounding the lake contains a variety of vegetation types and is home to many species of bushbirds.

Whilst the lake is not ranked as a wetland of national importance (only 120 wetlands in WA fulfill that criteria), it is important as a local refuge for waterbirds given that only three larger lakes exist between Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve and the Pallinup River. Of the three lakes,

Mullocullop Lake hosts by far the largest number of waterbirds.

The number of bird species recorded at the reserve between 2000 – 2016 is 91, which is nearly half of all the bird species found within the Albany region. 30 of the species recorded in the reserve are classified as waterbirds and depend on the lake for their habitat requirements.

The lake is not a migratory shorebird site as it lacks the extensive mudflats those birds require for feeding. During the two surveys the lake was nearly full with almost no shoreline available for shorebirds. Over the years there was only one record of a migratory shorebird visiting the lake.

The lake also appears unsuitable for the endangered Australasian Bittern as it lacks the dense beds of reeds and rushes preferred by the species.

The surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the summer 2015/16 can only ever provide a snapshot of the birdlife of the lake.

During the early summer survey a total of 349 water birds were recorded. At the end of summer the number of waterbirds had dropped to 215. The nomadic nature of waterbirds is the most likely explanation for the drop in numbers. However, disturbance of the birds by recreational motorised watercraft used on the lake during the summer months (pers. communication Jane Jeffreys, owner of adjacent property) cannot be completely ruled out and may also have played a role in the decline. Eleven species of waterbirds were recorded in December. By February the number of different species had increased to 14.

As is the case with the majority of Australian lakes, waterbird numbers on Mullocullop Lake will show constant variations as will the number of the species present. Due to the ephemeral nature of many wetlands the majority of Australian waterbirds is highly nomadic, opportunistically seeking out habitat suitable for both feeding and breeding. Had a survey for example been conducted prior to the widespread rainfall in the region in late January, it is very likely to have provided evidence of a higher waterbird presence. Several lakes near Albany including Lake Seppings and Lake Powell recorded a significant drop in waterbird numbers in the weeks following the January rains with birds presumably having moved on to inland wetlands now containing water.

Given the limited scope of the surveys no specific searches for waterbird breeding sites were carried out. However, the lake was found to contain a number of paperbarks with cormorant nests. An active nest containing three young Little Black Cormorants was discovered during the December survey.

During the December survey the most common waterbird species recorded were Hoary-headed Grebes, Australian Shelducks, Pacific Black Ducks and Musk Ducks. During the end-of-summer survey there was a significant drop in the number of grebes and shelducks had virtually disappeared from the lake, however, both Musk Ducks and Pacific Black Ducks were still ranking amongst the most common species. Australian Wood Ducks seen on the private property at the northern end of the lake were the most common waterbird species recorded in February.

It is likely that a variety of ducks, including the Australian Shelduck, use the lake during their moult period which generally last about a month during summer, a time when the birds are flightless until their flight and tail feathers have regrown. During the February survey only a fraction of the shelducks encountered during the December survey were seen on the lake. By then the ducks had presumably completed their moult and left.

Apart from Carnaby's Black Cockatoos no threatened species were recorded at the reserve. The cockatoos were not recorded on a regular basis which indicates that they may only be passing through occasionally. No cockatoos were recorded during the surveys carried out this summer. There were also no suitable trees with nest hollows available for cockatoos.

Species list Mullocullop Nature Reserve

(based on taxonomy Christides & Boles 2008)

GALLIFORMES**Phasianidae***Coturnix ypsilophora* Brown Quail**ANSERIFORMES****Anatidae**

<i>Biziura lobata</i>	Musk Duck
<i>Cygnus atratus</i>	Black Swan
<i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>	Australian Shelduck
<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>	Australian Wood Duck
<i>Malacorhynchus membranaceus</i>	Pink-eared Duck
<i>Anas rhynchotis</i>	Australasian Shoveler
<i>Anas gracilis</i>	Grey Teal
<i>Anas castanea</i>	Chestnut Teal
<i>Anas superciliosa</i>	Pacific Black Duck
<i>Aythya australis</i>	Hardhead
<i>Oxyura australis</i>	Blue-billed Duck

PODICIPEDIFORMES / GREBES**Podicipedidae**

<i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i>	Australasian Grebe
<i>Poliiocephalus poliocephalus</i>	Hoary-headed Grebe

COLUMBIFORMES**Columbidae**

<i>Phaps chalcoptera</i>	Common Bronzewing
<i>Phaps elegans</i>	Brush Bronzewing
<i>Ocyphaps lophotes</i>	Crested Pigeon

APODIFORMES / SWIFTS**Aegothelidae**

<i>Aegotheles cristatus</i>	Australian Owlet-nightjar
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PHALACROCORACIFORMES**Phalacrocoracidae**

<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>	Little Pied Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Little Black Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>	Pied Cormorant

CICONIIFORMES**Pelecanidae**

<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican
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Ardeidae

<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>	White-faced Heron
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Threskiornithidae

Threskiornis molucca
Platalea flavipes

Australian White Ibis
Yellow-billed Spoonbill

ACCIPITRIFORMES

Accipitridae

Elanus axillaris
Lophoictinia isura
Haliastur sphenurus
Accipiter fasciatus
Accipiter cirrhocephalus
Circus approximans
Aquila audax
Hieraaetus morphnoides

Black-shouldered Kite
Square-tailed Kite
Whistling Kite
Brown Goshawk
Collared Sparrowhawk
Swamp Harrier
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Little Eagle

FALCONIFORMES

Falconidae

Falco longipennis

Australian Hobby

GRUIFORMES

Rallidae

Porphyrio porphyrio
Porzana tabuensis
Fulica atra

Purple Swamphen
Spotless Crake
Eurasian Coot

CHARADRIIFORMES

Charadriidae

Charadrius ruficapillus
Euseyonis melanops
Thinornis rubricollis
Vanellus tricolor

Red-capped Plover
Black-fronted Dotterel
Hooded Plover
Banded Lapwing

Scolopacidae

Calidris acuminata

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**

Laridae

Chlidonias hybridus

Whiskered Tern

PSITTACIFORMES

Cacatuidae

Calyptorhynchus latirostris
Eolophus roseicapillus

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo*
Galah

Psittacidae

Glossopsitta porphyrocephala
Polytelis anthopeplus
Platycercus icterotis
Barnardius zonarius
Purpureicephalus spurius
Neophema elegans

Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Regent Parrot
Western Rosella
Australian Ringneck
Red-capped Parrot
Elegant Parrot

CUCULIFORMES

Cuculidae

Chalcites lucidus
Cacomantis flabelliformis

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Fan-tailed Cuckoo

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STRIGIFORMES

Strigidae

Ninox novaeseelandiae Southern Boobook

CORACIIFORMES

Halcyonidae

Dacelo novaeguineae Laughing Kookaburra***
Todiramphus sanctus Sacred Kingfisher

PASSERIFORMES

Maluridae:

Malurus splendens Splendid Fairy-wren
Malurus elegans Red-winged Fairy-wren

Acanthizidae

Sericornis frontalis White-browed Scrubwren
Gerygone fusca Western Gerygone
Acanthiza apicalis Inland Thornbill
Acanthiza chrysorrhoa Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Pardalotidae

Pardalotus punctatus Spotted Pardalote

Meliphagidae

Acanthorhynchus superciliosus Western Spinebill
Anthochaera lunulata Western Wattlebird
Anthochaera carnunculata Red Wattlebird
Lichmera indistincta Brown Honeyeater
Phylidonyris novaehollandiae New Holland Honeyeater
Melithreptus lunatus White-naped Honeyeater

Neosittidae

Daphoenositta chrysoptera Varied Sittella

Campephagidae

Coracina novaehollandiae Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

Pachycephalidae

Pachycephala pectoralis Golden Whistler
Colluricincla harmonica Grey Shrike-thrush

Artamidae

Artamus cyanopterus Dusky Woodswallow
Cracticus torquatus Grey Butcherbird
Cracticus tibicen Australian Magpie
Strepera versicolor Grey Currawong

Ripiduridae

Rhipidura albiscapa Grey Fantail
Rhipidura leucophrys Willie Wagtail

Corvidae

Corvus coronoides Australian Raven

Monarchidae

Myiagra inquieta Restless Flycatcher
Grallina cyanoleuca Magpie-lark

Petroicidae

Petroica boodang Scarlet Robin
Eopsaltria georgiana White-breasted Robin

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Acrocephalidae

Acrocephalus stentoreus

Australian Reed-Warbler

Timaliidae

Zosterops lateralis

Silvereye

Hirundinidae

Hirundo neoxena

Welcome Swallow

Petrochelidon nigricans

Tree Martin

Estrildidae

Stagonopleura oculata

Red-eared Firetail

Motacillidae

Anthus novaeseelandiae

Australasian Pipit

Data is based on surveys carried out by members of the Albany Bird Group between 2000 – 2016.

Surveys were carried out at various times of the year, but mainly between spring and autumn. All surveys were conducted during daytime hours which may have limited the opportunity of recording species active at night.

Species listed as threatened under either state or federal legislation are marked with an asterisk

Migratory species protected under federal legislation are marked with a double asterisk

Introduced species are marked with a triple asterisk

**Taxonomic species list for Mullocullop Nature Reserve
survey date 1 December 2015**

ANSERIFORMES

Anatidae

<i>Biziura lobata</i>	Musk Duck (51)
<i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>	Australian Shelduck (44)
<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>	Australian Wood Duck (3)
<i>Anas gracilis</i>	Grey Teal (2)
<i>Anas superciliosa</i>	Pacific Black Duck (34)
<i>Oxyura australis</i>	Blue-billed Duck (2)

PODICIPEDIFORMES / GREBES

Podicipedidae

<i>Poliiocephalus poliocephalus</i>	Hoary-headed Grebe (172)
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COLUMBIFORMES

Columbidae

<i>Phaps elegans</i>	Brush Bronzewing
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PHALACROCORACIFORMES

Phalacrocoracidae

<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>	Little Pied Cormorant (13)
<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Little Black Cormorant (5)

GRUIFORMES

Rallidae

<i>Porzana tabuensis</i>	Spotless Crake (2)*
<i>Fulica atra</i>	Eurasian Coot (21)

ACCIPITRIFORMES

Accipitridae

<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>	Brown Goshawk
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PSITTACIFORMES

Cacatuidae

<i>Eolophus roseicapillus</i>	Galah
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Psittacidae

<i>Platycercus icterotis</i>	Western Rosella
<i>Barnardius zonarius</i>	Australian Ringneck

CUCULIFORMES

Cuculidae

<i>Chalcites lucidus</i>	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
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PASSERIFORMES

Maluridae:

<i>Malurus splendens</i>	Splendid Fairy-wren
<i>Malurus elegans</i>	Red-winged Fairy-wren

Acanthizidae

<i>Sericornis frontalis</i>	White-browed Scrubwren
<i>Gerygone fusca</i>	Western Gerygone
<i>Acanthiza apicalis</i>	Inland Thornbill
<i>Acanthiza chrysorrhoa</i>	Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Meliphagidae

<i>Acanthorhynchus superciliosus</i>	Western Spinebill
<i>Anthochaera lunulata</i>	Western Wattlebird
<i>Anthochaera carnunculata</i>	Red Wattlebird
<i>Phylidonyris novaehollandiae</i>	New Holland Honeyeater
<i>Melithreptus lunatus</i>	White-naped Honeyeater

Campephagidae

<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
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Pachycephalidae

<i>Pachycephala pectoralis</i>	Golden Whistler
<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>	Grey Shrike-thrush

Artamidae

<i>Cracticus tibicen</i>	Australian Magpie
<i>Strepera versicolor</i>	Grey Currawong

Ripiduridae

<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>	Grey Fantail
<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>	Willie Wagtail

Corvidae

<i>Corvus coronoides</i>	Australian Raven
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Monarchidae

<i>Myiagra inquieta</i>	Restless Flycatcher
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Acrocephalidae

<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Australian Reed-Warbler
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Timaliidae

<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>	Silvereye
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Hirundinidae

<i>Hirundo neoxena</i>	Welcome Swallow
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Estrildidae

<i>Stagonopleura oculata</i>	Red-eared Firetail
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As the survey was conducted on foot along the lake's shoreline rather than by boat, there is a possibility that a small number of waterbirds may have been missed in the count.

*Spotless Crakes, a very elusive species, were identified by their call. It is very likely that the number of crakes living at the lake is higher than what was recorded.

ANSERIFORMES	
Anatidae	<i>Bizura lobata</i>
	<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>
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	<i>Malurus elegans</i>
Splendid Fairy-wren	
Red-winged Fairy-wren	
Western Rosella	
Australian Ringneck	
Galah	
Spottess Crane (4)*	
Eurasian Coot (47)	
Australian White Ibis (5)	
White-faced Heron (2)	
Little Pied Cormorant (10)	
Little Black Cormorant (16)	
Brush Bronzewing	
Australian Grebe (1)	
Hoary-headed Grebe (32)	
Musk Duck (25)	
Australian Wood Duck (36)	
Grey Teal (8)	
Pacific Black Duck (25)	
Hardhead (2)	
Blue-billed Duck (2)	

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Acanthizidae

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