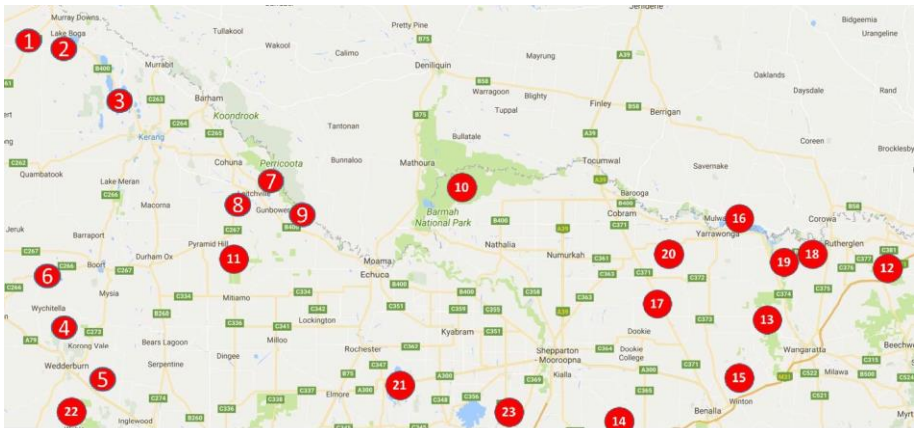


Central-North Victoria



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Goschen Bushland Reserve

This small but well-known mallee reserve is located about 350km northwest of Melbourne (20km west of Lake Boga township) on the crossroads of Ultima-Lake Boga Rd and Donald-Swan Hill Rd (C261). The Reserve is very poorly signposted, don't miss it. An old sign of Goschen Bushland Reserve is overgrown with weeds and nearly fallen. Approaching from Lake Boga, cross the intersection and on your right, find a dirt track leading into the Reserve. This circular track leads back to the road a bit further west. Alternatively, stop by the roadside of Ultima-Lake Boga Rd and take a walk through the Reserve. Tracks can be overgrown but the Reserve is small, so it can be explored on foot. A fenced-off telecommunication tower in the reserve can be used as an orientation point.

It doesn't take long to record 80+ species here. The Reserve holds a number of northern arid species that otherwise can only be found 300km further north. No wonder that the Victorian 24-hr Twitchathon usually starts here. Expect to see Black Honeyeater, Pied Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Crimson Chat, Blue Bonnet, Cockatiel, Budgerigar, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and Pied Butcherbird.

This isolated patch of mallee (next to be seen is near Mildura 250km northwest) with open grassy shrubland is regenerating at the site of a former rural hamlet of Goschen. The surrounding area is all farmland. The main food source in the reserve is long-leaf emu bush (*Eremophila longifolia*). It attracts nomadic honeyeaters such as rare Pied Honeyeater and Black Honeyeater when in bloom. In good years (after the rains) the rare species of honeyeaters may occur here in larger numbers than the common ones.

On your way from Lake Boga, check the roadside mallee vegetation and farmland for Spotted Harriers; we observed several of them hunting at the edge of the road. Brown Quails were very common, look also for Stubble Quail. Other birds of interest, such as Pied Butcherbird, Yellow-throated Miner, Rufous Songlark, Brown Songlark, Black Falcon, Blue Bonnet (yellow-vented race) and Cockatiel, can also be seen in the area.

When we arrived at the Reserve, this amazing place was simply bustling with birdlife. The most common were Brown Treecreepers and Brown Songlarks whose calls were the most dominant sounds over the Reserve. These were followed by several black and white bird varieties. Among them were: Hooded Robins, hunting from low branches, very vocal Black Honeyeaters, occupying all flowering emu bushes, White-winged Trillers, busy seeking insects among the leaves, and a pair of Pied Honeyeaters, building a nest in a mistletoe on a casuarina tree.



Brown Songlark

You will find Noisy Miner and Yellow-throated Miner side-by-side in this Reserve. Look also for other honeyeaters that congregate here *en masse*: Singing Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Striped Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and White-fronted Honeyeater. The latter is usually present here in winter but was also on site during our visit in late spring.

Hundreds of White-browed Woodswallows with some Dusky Woodswallows and Masked Woodswallows in the mix were circling around the telecommunication tower or sitting on the nearby trees. Peregrine Falcon was perched on top of the tower, swooping occasionally in an attempt to catch one. This falcon is a permanent feature of the Reserve and is regularly reported from this site.

Flocks of Cockatiels and Budgerigars were scattered throughout the Reserve. Good numbers of parrots were foraging on the ground in the grassy areas including Blue-winged Parrot, Red-rumped Parrot, Blue Bonnet, Mallee Ringneck and Eastern Rosella. Three rare Superb Parrots were mingling with Blue-winged Parrots.

Little Button-Quail flushed several times from the grass. White-browed Babblers were moving systematically from one bush to another. Black-eared Cuckoo, a highlight of the day, was calling from a treetop. While walking around the remains of a tennis court, we stumbled upon a flock of White-fronted Chats. We also flushed Australian Owlet-nightjar from its tree hollow. The area also had plentiful Rainbow Bee-eaters, sitting along the old fences. Small birds are common through the Reserve. Look for Chestnut Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Weebill, Striated Pardalote and Varied Sittella.

Other interesting species recorded in the Reserve include Crimson Chat, Common Bronzewing, Brush Bronzewing, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove, Red-backed Kingfisher, Variegated Fairy-wren, Rufous Whistler, White-winged Chough, Red-capped Robin, Australasian Pipit, Zebra Finch, Little Eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk and Black Kite.

Tesco West Bushland Reserve

The site is located 3km southeast of the Lake Boga township. To get there, from Murray Valley Hwy (B400) take Lalbert Rd in Lake Boga, pass the golf course and you are there.

Vegetation and birdlife are somewhat similar to that of Goschen Bushland Reserve located 20km to the west (see above). Species of interest include Pied Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater, Little Button-quail, Rainbow Bee-eater, Blue Bonnet, Cockatiel and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill.

A network of tracks runs through the reserve, mostly close to the lake. The best birdwatching spot is the southeast corner of the Reserve near Winery Rd. To get there, stop somewhere at the corner of Lalbert Rd and McCubbin Rd and take a walking track close to the boundary to go to the southeast corner. *Eremophila longifolia* bushes (long-leaf emu bush) are abundant here and in bloom in spring – they attract plenty of Black Honeyeaters, Pied Honeyeaters, Singing Honeyeaters, White-fronted Honeyeaters and Yellow-throated Miners. We also found the latter on a golf course outside Lake Boga.



Yellow-throated Miner

Other birds along this track include Blue Bonnet, Cockatiel, White-browed Babbler, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rufous Songlark, Red-capped Robin, Brown Treecreeper (abundant), White-browed Woodswallow and Common Bronzewing. Long grass areas may produce sightings of Little Button-quail, Zebra Finch or Budgerigar.

The saline Golf Course Lake attracts shorebirds. Look for Red-capped Plover, Red-necked Avocet, Banded Stilt, Pied Stilt and Common Greenshank. Salt marshes and shrubs around the lake may yield White-winged Fairy-wren and White-fronted Chat. Crimson Chats was also recorded. Occasionally, White-backed Swallows may be flying over the lake.

It is also worth to pop in to the golf course which is fringed with emu bushes. It may be the easiest way to see Black Honeyeater and Pied Honeyeater. Grevilleas around the golf course building are regularly visited by Blue-faced Honeyeaters. Hooded Robins are often seen perched on the protruding branches.

Check the sparrow population around the golf course. Eurasian Tree Sparrows can be found there. Other birds around the golf course include Peaceful Dove, Common Bronzewing, White-browed Woodswallow, Masked Woodswallow, Musk Lorikeet and Little Eagle.

Kerang Lakes

There is a region in north-central Victoria that could easily be called “the Lakes District of Victoria”. It is located 300km northwest of Melbourne. More than 80 lakes stretch over a 70km distance, bordered by the towns of Boort, Swan Hill, Lake Boga, Kerang and Echuca. This is the prime destination for thousands of waterbirds. The lakes have been created by the Murray River, Loddon River and Avoca River that have branched and changed their channels numerous times, leaving behind billabongs and lakes scattered over the area. Much of the water in the area is regulated. At times of natural floods, many of the ephemeral wetlands fill up. Some lakes are storage reservoirs that hold water for irrigation; these are permanent water bodies. Other lakes have environmental flows allocated to them according to various programs operated by the local councils.

Many of the Kerang Lakes hold the Ramsar status. These include wetlands such as permanent open freshwater bodies, deep freshwater marshes, tree-dominated wetlands and permanent and semi-permanent saline wetlands. Vegetation types include black box, river red gum, saltbush communities, grassland and reed beds. Tangled lignum provides shelter and a nesting substrate for thousands of Australian White Ibises and Straw-necked Ibises.

It takes a 3-4hr drive to get here from Melbourne. Take Calder Hwy (A300) to Bendigo, then Loddon Valley Hwy (B260) which joins Murray Valley Hwy (B400) just before Kerang. To help you plan your navigation and exploring the area, use Kerang Wetland Ramsar Site map included on p.12 of the Kerang Ramsar Sites Boundary Description document located here:

https://www.water.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/52823/FINAL_Kerang_Wetlands_Boundary_Description_Dec2013.pdf. Also of use may be the Kerang area birding guide from the BirdLife Echuca website, available here: http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/Kerang_Guide.pdf.

Apart from a couple of bird hides, facilities are virtually non-existing in the area. 4WD tracks, usually overgrown and of poor quality, criss-cross the lake district so a 4WD vehicle is highly recommended. As is the case with most of the Australian wetlands, water conditions change often, and it is difficult to keep track of the hot spots where birds are congregating. Usually, 6 months after the super floods, the region's birdlife is booming for the next two years. In our experience however, going there at any time of the climate cycle and checking out as many places as possible is truly worth it; you will be surprised what you may find.

Over 80 species of waterbirds and waders have been recorded in the area. The list of rare species is long and includes Australian Painted-snipe, Australasian Bittern, Freckled Duck, Orange Chat and many several rare migratory waters such as Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Ruff and Oriental Pratincole.

Fosters Swamp

Fosters Swamp is a large saline wetland located at the eastern outskirts of Kerang. From Murray Valley Hwy (B400), turn into Wellington St (C264) and then make a left turn into Park Rd past Alexandra Park. Next, turn right into Richardson St. In the mid-section of Richardson St, turn east onto a weedy levee bank and drive to the wetland. When you get to the wetland, leave the car and walk the banks. Do not drive any further in the car as the section near the adjacent sewage treatment plant is closed to vehicular traffic so the car cannot drive around the swamp. You will get into difficulties trying to turn around as the path is too narrow for reversing.

The swamp cyclically fills up during the winter rains and then partially dries out in summer. If the wetland is too dry, birds will be congregating on the sewage ponds.

We visited here in winter 2014 and found about 5,000 Grey Teals feeding in the shallow water. There were also good numbers of Pink-eared Ducks, Australian Shelducks, Hoary-headed Grebes and Pied Stilts. Small flocks of Red-necked Avocets were wading in the shallow water. There were also a few of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints.

In the surrounding bluebushes we found a beautiful male White-winged Fairy-wren. Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite and Black Kite were flying over the swamp and surrounding farmland. The area of tall rampant weeds yielded Zebra Finch, Golden-headed Cisticola, Little Grassbird and White-fronted Chat.

On the sewage ponds we found some more waterbirds including Australasian Shoveler, Freckled Duck, Australasian Grebe and Black-tailed Native-hen. A small, overgrown pond in the vicinity produced a sighting of Australian Spotted Crake.

In summer in the right condition Fosters Swamp is good for migratory waders such as Marsh Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Pacific Golden Plover. Other birds of interest in this area include Chestnut Teal, Double-banded Plover, Banded Stilt and Singing Honeyeater.

Kerang Regional Park

Kerang Regional Park comprises several wetlands scattered around the Kerang township.

Loddon Weir

The site is located north of Kerang. Take Lower Loddon Rd and after reaching Tragedy Bridge over the Pyramid Creek make a left turn onto Weir Rd. Drive past a fish ladder, then over an old wooden bridge. Park your car near the river and walk along the river bank up to the lagoon.

When we were there, Painted Honeyeaters were calling near the weir. Crested shrike-tits, Peaceful Doves and Western Gerygones were very common. We gathered a nice record of interesting birds along the river walk, having ticked off Gilbert's Whistler, Grey-crowned Babbler, Red-capped Robin, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Rainbow Bee-eater, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Brown Treecreeper and Sacred Kingfisher (nesting).

When we reached the lagoon, Little Grassbirds were calling, Black-fronted Dotterels were foraging on the mud and Latham's Snipe flushed from the sparse grass. On the water were Royal Spoonbill, Intermediate Egret, Eastern Great Egret, White-necked Heron, Australian Shelducks and Chestnut Teals with ducklings. Fifteen Nankeen Night-Herons were roosting in the gum tress.

Town Swamp

This site is also called Black Swamp. It comprises a series of wetlands located between the town and the Loddon River. It is popular with the locals who make use of the walking tracks on both sides of the river. Access to the site is from the west end of either Wyndham St or North St.

In the swamp, we found Glossy Ibis, Nankeen Night-Heron, Buff-banded Rail and White-necked Heron. Bush birds included Little Friarbird, Grey-crowned Babbler, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-winged Fairy-wren, Musk Lorikeet, Little Lorikeet (in large numbers), Black Kite and Whistling Kite.

Reedy and Middle Lakes

The site which is a three-lake complex (Reedy Lake, Middle Lake and Third Lake) is located alongside Murray Valley Hwy (B400) about 8km northwest of Kerang. A large roadside sign to the 'Reedy Lake ibis rookery' near the turnoff to Pratt Rd will direct you to a parking area. This is a popular destination for birdwatchers and nature lovers.



Reedy Lake, a view from the hide

This is a Ramsar site. A large ibis rookery which is actually located on the Middle Lake, can be observed from an excellent bird hide. Two ibis species, Australian White Ibis and Strawn-necked Ibis, inhabit the rookery. This site is regarded as the largest ibis rookery in the world, with numbers reaching 100,000 at times. Other waterbirds breed there in smaller numbers including Eastern Great Egret, Intermediate Egret and Royal Spoonbill.

A viewing tower, best used at dawn or dusk, allows watching of thousands of ibises leaving or returning to the nest. This is also a good vantage point for the raptors. A Swamp Harrier's nest was located in the reeds and we observed the parent bring food to the chick. We also saw Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Little Eagle and plenty of Black Kites.

The bird hide is also good for watching Musk Ducks, Australasian Shovelers, Red-kneed Dotterels and Whiskered Terns. We visited on a very hot day and observed a Whistling Kite that landed in the shallow water and sat there for a long time, cooling itself.

You can use Pratt Rd to drive around the Middle Lake. When you reach the northwest corner where the Middle Lake is draining into the Third Lake, look for a large Australasian Darter colony. Other cormorants and Nankeen Night-Herons breed there as well. As with any breeding colonies, birds of prey will be checking them out. We spotted Black Falcon in the vicinity of the darter colony.



A female Australasian Darter with her well-fed chicks

Channels on both sides of the Middle Lake may produce sightings of Buff-banded Rail, Baillon's Crake and Australian Spotted Crake.

Bushland and woodland around the lakes is home to Restless Flycatcher, Grey-crowned Babbler, Tree Martin (breeding colony), Blue-faced Honeyeater, Sacred Kingfisher, White-winged Triller, White-breasted Woodswallow, Masked Woodswallow, White-winged Fairy-wren and plenty of parrots including Long-billed Corella, Cockatiel and Yellow Rosella.

Rarer species including Brolga, Great Crested Grebe and Banded Stilt have occasionally been recorded at this site.

Racecourse Lake

This is a large, deep storage lake, located along Murray Valley Hwy (B400) just a few kilometres west of the Middle Lake (see previous location). We thought this was not the type of a water body where you'd expect any birdwatching of value but we were proved wrong.

We camped there and decided to drive along Kangaroo Lake Rd by the south end of the lake. At an intersection of Kangaroo Lake Rd with Murray Valley Hwy we observed a flock of White-backed Swallows hawking insects on the wing. In saltbushes by the lake we found plenty of White-winged Fairy-wrens. A pair of Banded Lapwings were standing on a sparsely grassed ground and next to them, nearly invisible, were a couple of Australian Pratincoles. Spotted Harrier was flying overhead.



Australian Pratincole, a very rare vagrant in Victoria

Then, at the southwest corner of the lake where Kangaroo Lake Rd crosses the railway line, we hit the jackpot. We stopped there to observe hundreds of Whiskered Terns flying over the reeds. Having noticed a levee running through a large patch of reeds, we took a walk along it. And then we flushed two Australasian Bitterns from the reeds! Following this rare find, we spent a couple of hours in the area and also found Australian Spotted Crake, Spotless Crake and Buff-banded Rail. Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Grassbird were calling loudly from the reeds. Swamp Harriers, Whistling Kites and Black Kites were patrolling the lake. At the paddocks around the railway line, we sighted Horsfield's Bushlark, Zebra Finch and Australasian Pipit and heard the calls of Stubble Quail.

We backed up on the same road to return to the camp where we found Purple-crowned Lorikeets in a tree over our campsite. Blue-faced Honeyeaters were feeding in the flowering bushes and a small flock of Budgerigars flew by.

Lake Tutchewop

This large, hypersaline wetland is located along Murray Valley Hwy (B400) about 30km northwest of Kerang. It is part of the Barr Creek Drainage Disposal Scheme which diverts half a million tonnes of salt away from the Murray River.

The lake is surrounded by low saline shrubland, completely flat and treeless. It is a Ramsar-listed saline wetland of international importance. It supports huge numbers of migratory waders and salt-tolerant waterbirds. The site is very popular with birdwatchers and is the star attraction in the Kerang Lakes area.

There are two entrances to the lake off Murray Valley Hwy (B400); the southern entrance is via Lake William Rd, a short 800m drive straight to the lake, and the northern entrance is via Benjeroop-Tesco Rd, a 13km route leading to the northern end of the lake.

Saltbushes around the lake are inhabited by large numbers of White-winged Fairy-wrens. Small flocks of Orange Chats appear in late spring and summer. The best place to see Orange Chats is along the track that runs at the western side of the lake, between the lake and a narrow water channel.



Orange Chat

It is a major site for regular appearances of vagrant migratory waders which then triggers serious migration of birdwatchers from both Melbourne and Sydney. The vagrant species include Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Ruff, Oriental Pratincole and Australian Pratincole.

We started exploring from the southern end of the lake. Along Lake William Rd, we found Spotted Harrier on a fence post, Brown Songlark, Australasian Pipit, Variegated Fairy-wren, Blue Bonnet, Eastern Rosella, Zebra Finch and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

The area of the lake near the inlet of a small creek was virtually covered with thousands of birds, mainly Grey Teals, Pink-eared Ducks, Hoary-headed Grebes, Banded Stilts and Red-necked Avocets. A large flock (600+) of Australian Shelducks stood in the shallow water. About 800 Whiskered Terns were bathing in the creek inlet's freshwater or flying overhead. Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Red-capped Plovers and Curlew Sandpipers were foraging in good numbers in the mud at the lake margin. There were also a few Common Greenshanks, Pacific Golden Plovers and Pectoral Sandpipers. Among Silver Gulls on the beach we found a single Gull-billed Tern and a couple of Caspian Terns. A large flock of Australian Pelicans was dozing off on the sandbar.

The drive to the northern area is quite long and runs through a treeless, saltbush-covered plain. We were looking for Orange Chats and found them in a few spots, always in the samphire and always close to the lake. The males were in their breeding plumage and shone like molten gold in the sunlight. We also found White-fronted Chat, White-winged Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Blue Bonnet, Australasian Pipit, Grey-crowned Babbler and Singing Honeyeater. In spring, Blue-winged Parrot appears here.

Unsurprisingly, the lake is a magnet for the birds of prey, 15 species have been recorded. Rarer species include Black Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Square-tailed Kite, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Little Eagle and Spotted Harrier (seen here regularly).

Round Lake

This permanent freshwater lake is located on the western side of the Lake Boga township, along Ultima-Lake Boga Rd. The site is interesting due to the continuous presence of large numbers of Blue-billed Ducks. In summer is it a reliable spot for good numbers of Marsh Sandpipers. This is a Ramsar site, protecting the endangered fish Murray hardyhead.

In Lake Boga, turn from Murray Valley Hwy (B400) into Lalbert Rd. Make a right turn into Station St then left into Marraboos St. The road will change the name to Ultima-Lake Boga Rd. The lake is about 2km out of the town centre. Stop by the roadside and scan the lake with a scope.

At times of low water levels look for Australian Spotted Crake and Spotless Crake foraging on a muddy lake margin. When we visited the area in summer, a large flock of Blue-billed Ducks was in the centre of the lake. There were also a few Musk Ducks, Chestnut Teals and Australasian Shovelers. Three species of grebe were on the lake (Great Crested, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe). Mud around the lake was occupied by good numbers of waders. We counted nearly 30 Marsh Sandpipers. There were also Common Greenshanks, Red-capped Plovers, Pied Stilts and Red-necked Avocets. Fringe vegetation yielded Little Grassbird, White-fronted Chat, Australian Reed-Warbler and Zebra Finch. About 20 Whiskered Terns were flying over the lake, among them a single White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage.

Black-eared Cuckoo was calling loudly from the power lines. It was sharing this perch with a family of White-breasted Woodswallows and a White-winged Triller.

Opposite the Round Lake, Long Lake is situated. Drive Long Lake Rd until you reach a small patch of emu bushes. If these are in bloom, they attract honeyeaters such as Black Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and Singing Honeyeater. Be on a lookout for raptors including Little Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Swamp Harrier and Whistling Kite.

Hird Swamp Reserve

This Ramsar-listed wetland is located on Kerang-Leitchville Rd (C257). Another Ramsar site, Johnson Swamp Reserve, is situated on the opposite side of this road. Water authorities alternate flooding of these swamp every two years; one has water, the other is drying out.

To get to the Hird Swamp Reserve, get on Murray Valley Hwy (B400) in Kerang and drive south, then east. Next turn right into Kerang-Macorna Rd and veer to the right to get to Kerang-Leitchville Rd (C257). About 40m before Sampsons Bridge on the Pyramid Creek, turn right onto an overgrown levee running along the creek bed in the Reserve. Leave the car in a suitable spot along the first kilometre and walk the track. Gumboots may be a good idea in this location.

The track is lined with river red gums and water is on both sides of the track. There are large patches of the cumbungi, reeds and tangled lignum. The site is well-known for the presence of Australasian Bittern, Australian Painted-snipe, Brolga, Glossy Ibis and many migratory waders including Long-toed Stint, Ruff and Wood Sandpiper.

For us, it was a magic place, particularly in the late evening, when the calls of birds and frogs came in successive waves from the foggy marshland, one sound replacing another in a beautiful chorus. First, there was squawking of Grey Teals and barking of Pied Stilts. Then, we heard clattering of Australian Reed-Warblers, Little Grassbirds and Purple Swampheens. After dark, frogs gave a deafening concert. When the frogs suddenly stopped, Australasian Bittern started booming while a constant chatter of Black Swans, Eurasian Coots and Dusky Moorhens provided a background sound. Late at night, we

heard Tawny Frogmouth hooting and Eastern Barn Owl screeching. Listening to this music was worth suffering the mosquitoes and other swamp nasties.

Earlier, just before dusk, we watched an electrifying spectacle of thousands of Straw-necked Ibises coming back from the farmland to roost in the lignum.

Earlier still, in an elongated patch of swamp covered with very shallow water and sparsely vegetated with cumbungi and bulrushes, about 50m from the entrance to the swamp, we found 100+ Red-kneed Dotterels, the numbers we rarely see. Other wader findings in the area included Black-fronted Dotterel, Pied Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Marsh Sandpiper. Little Egret was hunting fish in the shallows. Eastern Great Egrets, Intermediate Egrets and White-necked Herons spaced themselves out along the swamp margin. Three crane species were easy to find as they kept moving between clumps of cumbungi. A walk along the levee resulted in flushing of several Latham's Snipes. In taller vegetation, Little Grassbirds, Australian Reed-Warblers and Golden-headed Cisticolas were plentiful.

The water in the next section of the swamp was much deeper; there was a lot of open water and large patches of reeds and cumbungi. Water surface was coated with a thick layer of ducks, swans, coots, grebes and moorhens. The most common were Grey Teal, Hardhead, Pink-eared Duck and Eurasian Coot. Rarer species included Australasian Shoveler, Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck, Freckled Duck and Australian Shelduck. Suddenly, Australasian Bittern flew over the reeds. White-bellied Sea-Eagle was roosting in a dead tree while Swamp Harrier and Whistling Kite patrolled the area. We crossed paths with a few Brown Quails, plenty of Black-tailed Native-hens and a single Buff-banded Rail that refused to give way.



White-breasted Woodswallows

At the end of the levee you'll find a large dry area completely covered with tangled lignums interspersed with a few reed beds. In this area, we came across Zebra Finch, White-winged Fairy-wren, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, White-breasted Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Rainbow Bee-eater, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Red-rumped Parrot, Brown Falcon and Black Kite.

Johnson Swamp Reserve

As mentioned in the previous section, when the Hird Swamp receives water, Johnson Swamp is drying out and vice versa in a two-year cycle. The site is located opposite to the Hird Reserve on the other side of Kerang-Leitchville Rd (C257). To get there, turn north from Kerang-Leitchville Rd onto Day Ln and drive through the farmland until you get to the swamp. Rifle Range Tk runs on the eastern side of the swamp along the Pyramid Creek. The track is drivable in dry weather. When water is present in this swamp, its birdlife is very similar to that described for the Hird Swamp.

When we visited, the swamp was dry and overgrown with weeds and saltbushes. Only a few water pools had remained in the centre of the swamp. Generally, birds were clustered along the Pyramid Creek. Scattered on the creek banks, were groups of Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Royal Spoonbills, White-necked Herons and Intermediate Egrets. Several Latham's Snipes flushed from the fringe creek vegetation.



Saltbushes in a drying out swamp

On the wet paddocks, among Straw-necked Ibises we found a few Glossy Ibises. Weeds growing in the lake bed yielded White-winged Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-fronted Chat and Flame Robin. In the trees at the swamp edge we found White-winged Triller, Rufous Songlark, Black-faced Woodswallow, White-browed Woodswallow and a single Little Eagle.

McDonald Swamp Reserve

The site is located along Kerang-Koondrook Rd (C264), approximately 13km northeast of Kerang and 10km west of the Murray River. Access from the main road is via Lancaster Rd. While in the area, it is also good to check Craig Rd west of the swamp and McGrath Rd east of the swamp. Piccaninny-Barr drain traverses the area dissecting it into two parts: McDonald Swamp West and McDonald Swamp East. Only the western part is receiving regular environmental water flows. East swamp is usually dry.

The swamp provides a wide range of bird habitats including open water, mudflats, reed beds, river red gum forest and black box forest. In a dry phase of the swamp, the lake bed is covered with weeds and sedges. A forest of dead trees, casualties of previous floods, stands in the tangled lignum.

The swamp is madly productive for the waterbirds. It is a regular nesting site for thousands of Black Swans and Grey Teals. The hollows provide nesting lodgings for Grey Teals, Australian Wood Ducks and a variety of parrots.

Keys species for the area are Australasian Bittern (reeds in the southeast corner), Glossy Ibis (regular sightings), Australian Painted-snipe, Marsh Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper.

There was still some water in the west swamp during our visit. Waders were in good numbers on the drying mud including Pied Stilt, Red-kneed Dotterel (50+ birds), Black-fronted Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper and Common Greenshank. In the shallow water were Australian Shelducks, Hardheads, Grey Teals and a few covered in mud cormorants. Large numbers of Striated Pardalotes and Tree Martins were darting up and down dead tree trunks in the lake bed. White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Whistling Kite were gorging on dead fish scattered on the lake bed.

Eastern Great Egrets, White-necked Herons, Royal Spoonbills and Yellow-billed Spoonbills spaced themselves out along the Piccaninny-Barr drain.

In the tangled lignum around McGrath Rd we found plenty of Zebra Finches, White-winged Fairy-wrens and European Goldfinches. We also came across some Brown Quails.

Wandella Flora and Fauna Reserve

The site is located 5km west of Kerang on Kerang-Quambatook Rd (C262). Access is from Radcliffe Rd (4WD only, impassable after the rain). Limited access is also from Kerang-Quambatook Rd. There are no walking tracks or facilities in the reserve. Every 4-5 years the site is flooded during major flood events.

Vegetation is a rather uninspiring open black box forest with grassy understory and patches of tangled lignum. However, when we visited in September 2014, birding here was great. The spring forest was full of birdsong. We found enormous numbers of Brown Treecreepers working the overturned but still living trunks of black box. There was also an abundance of White-winged Trillers, Grey-crowned Babblers, Striated Pardalotes, Peaceful Doves, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills and Red-capped Robins. Two Australian Owllet-nightjars peeked out in my face from a hollow sitting about 2 metres above the ground. Buff-banded Rail was foraging in a drain by the main road. We also found Restless Flycatcher, White-browed Woodswallow and Black Kite.

Lake Elizabeth

This is a small, 94ha permanent brackish lake, filled every three years, located northwest of Wandella Flora and Fauna Reserve. Follow Radcliffe Rd past the Reserve and at the end of the road turn left onto McCurdy Rd. It will take you to the lake. These roads are 4WD only, inaccessible after the rains. Alternatively, from Kerang-Quambatook Rd (C262), take Gitsham Ln if it looks drier. Avarad Rd runs along parts of the lake edge.

The lake is surrounded by a narrow belt of black box and a wide belt of salicornia.

We came to this lake in September 2014 and found it covered with Black Swans (2,000+), Eurasian Coots (2,000+) and Grey Teals (1,000). There were also Musk Ducks (a regular species for this site), Australasian Shovelers, Australian Shelducks, Pink-eared Ducks and a single Blue-billed Duck. A good selection of waders foraged on the mud including Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and Red-capped Plover. About 20 Whiskered Terns were flying over the lake, with a single Black Tern among them.

In the low vegetation around the lake, we found White-winged Fairy-wren, White-fronted Chat and Australasian Pipit. A flock of Glossy ibises was feeding in the paddock by the lake.

Raptors around the lake included White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black Kite, Whistling Kite and Black Falcon. Two Spotted Harriers were flying over the adjacent farmland.

Lake Bael Bael

Located 16km west of Kerang, this site is worth a visit due to large numbers of waders in the wet years. To get there, take Kerang-Quambatook Rd (C262), then continue west on Lalbert-Kerang Rd. Turn right onto Charleston Rd (unpassable after rain) which will lead you to the lake. McDonald Rd runs along the eastern edge of the lake. When water is gone, a number of tracks across the bottom of the lake becomes accessible.

When water is present in the lake, it attracts masses of ducks, swans and coots. In particular, Pink-eared Ducks congregate here in large numbers. When the lake is drying out, waders appear in good numbers, including Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pied Stilt.

In September 2014, we found only a few water puddles scattered across the lake bottom. The area was overgrown with saltbushes and lignum, with plenty of standing dead tree trunks and a few patches of black box near McDonald Rd.

There were plenty of White-fronted Chats, White-winged Fairy-wrens and Australasian Pipits in the saltbushes. We also recorded Brown Treecreeper, Cockatiel, Blue Bonnet, Red-rumped Parrot and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill.

The paddock at the corner of McDonald Rd and Fairley Rd produced sightings of Brown Songlark, Stubble Quail and Spotted Harrier. Far away on the horizon, a flock of White-backed Swallows was circling over a gypsum pit.

Lake Cullen Wildlife Reserve

The site is located 20km northwest of Kerang. Access is from Murray Valley Hwy (B400). Turn west into B McCann Rd, then left onto Lake Charm-Quambatook Rd. This road runs around the lake. Alternatively, if you have just visited Lake Bael Bael, turn right onto Lake Charm-Quambatook Rd from McDonald Rd at the north-eastern corner of the lake. Continue on Lake Charm-Quambatook Rd to the Cullen Reserve.

This large, 630ha saline wetland is worth visiting because of Orange Chats that are regularly found on the dry lake bed. The wetland is usually completely dry. Take a scope to search for Orange Chat; they will shine golden on the dark background of the pan. Look also for White-backed Swallow, White-winged Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Singing Honeyeater, Stubble Quail and Spotted Harrier.

We also watched an echidna waddling through the mud at the verge of one of remaining puddles of water in the swamp bed.

Sandy Hill Lake

The site is good for Rainbow Bee-eaters both in wet and dry times. Sandy Hill Lake is located 23km west of Kerang. To get there, take Kerang-Quambatook Rd (C262), then continue west on Lalbert-Kerang Rd. The lake is situated at the corner of Lalbert-Kerang Rd and Lake Charm-Quambatook Rd.

When the lake has water, expect a variety of common waterbirds. During our visit the lake was completely dry. The Rainbow Bee-eaters were there, flying over the lake bed and the surrounding hills. We noticed that the belt of mallee along Lalbert-Kerang Rd was quite productive. Our findings there included Chestnut-rumped Thornbill Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Blue Bonnet, Peaceful Dove, Brown Treecreeper, Restless Flycatcher and Red-capped Robin.

Farmland behind the mallee yielded Spotted Harrier, Stubble Quail and Australasian Pipit.

Lake Murphy

This is one of the more important wetlands in the region. When water is present, Lake Murphy is a regular site for Brolga, Freckled Duck, Glossy Ibis, crakes and a long list of waders. Rare birds recorded here include Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Little Stint and Black-tailed Godwit.

The site is located 10km south of Kerang. Drive east from Kerang on Murray Valley Hwy (B400), then turn onto Kerang-Quambatook Rd (C262). Next, turn sharply south on Boort-Kerang Rd (B266). Lake Murphy is framed by this road, Bott Rd and Lake Murphy Rd.

Depending on the water level, the lake may form one big water body or two separate lakes; the northern part is then called Little Lake Murphy. Check both sections as each may attract different types of birds. Lake Murphy relies largely on environmental water releases. Authorities fill the lake in spring once every 2-3 years to allow birds to complete their breeding season and then allow the lake to dry out completely.

Remnants of black box forest can be found around the lake.

In February 2015, when we visited the site, there was plenty of water in the lake. Our highlight was a large flock of 70 Freckled Ducks and 15 Blue-billed Ducks. In the mass of Grey Teals and Pink-eared Ducks, there were also several Musk Ducks, Australasian Shovelers, Australian Shelducks and Plumed Whistling-Ducks.

On the drying mud, we counted about 300 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers with a few Marsh Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers and Common Greenshanks in the mix.

On a paddock near Lake Murphy Rd, a pair of Brolgas were feeding alongside a few Glossy Ibises and White-necked Herons. In vegetation at the northern end of the lake we located Australian Spotted Crake. We also got White-fronted Chat, White-breasted Woodswallow, White-winged Fairy-wren, Cockatiel, Weebill, Australasian Pipit, Little Grassbird and Whiskered Tern.

Our raptor findings included White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Whistling Kite and Australian Hobby. There are also records of Black Falcon, Peregrine Falcon and Swamp Harrier from this area.

Lake Meran

In some years, thousands of stilts such as Banded Stilts, Pied Stilts and Red-necked Avocets congregate on Lake Meran. The site is located 21km south of Kerang off Boort-Kerang Rd (B266). Turn into Condely Ln, it will take you to the lake. Lake Meran Tk runs along the western side of the lake. At its southern end it enters Leaghur State Park (see below).

Among the selection of common waterbirds on the lake look for Great Crested Grebe, Musk Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Caspian Tern. Tawny Frogmouths nest in the area; we found a family of four roosting in a tree at the junction of Condely Ln and Lake Meran Tk.

Bush birds along Lake Meran Tk included Brown Treecreeper, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-winged Chough, White-winged Triller, Sacred Kingfisher, Weebill and Musk Lorikeet.

White-bellied Sea-Eagles occasionally pay a visit to this area.

Leaghur State Park

This 2,000ha Park protects some of the most significant black box wetland and woodland in Victoria. The site is located 28km south of Kerang along Boort-Kerang Rd (B266) and just south of Lake Meran. The Park has two entrances; the main entrance is via Main Tk off Boort-Kerang Rd. The other entrance is from Lake Meran Tk if continuing from Lake Meran.

A network of roads and tracks is available in the Park as well as two picnic areas and one campsite. A map of the Park is available in the Visitor Guide that can be downloaded here: http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/313834/Park-note-Leaghur-State-Park.pdf.

The black box woodland looks very untidy, with plenty of fallen branches, hollow logs and dead tress scattered on the ground. This woodland however provides an excellent habitat for 120 bird species and a variety of other creatures. Common species include Red-capped Robin, White-fronted Chat, White-browed Woodswallow, Western

Gerygone, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Singing Honeyeater and Splendid Fairy-wren. Among the rarer species you may find Painted Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Gilbert's Whistler, Painted Button-quail, Black-eared Cuckoo, Peregrine Falcon and Black Falcon.

The picnic area with a small dam located at the main entrance to the Park proved to be a good birding spot. We sat near the dam and watched birds coming for a drink. Diamond Dove, Budgerigar, Diamond Firetail, Yellow Rosella, Blue Bonnet, Fuscous Honeyeater and Brown-headed Honeyeater all made their appearances. Around the picnic site, we found Hooded Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Singing Honeyeater, Western Gerygone and White-winged Triller.



Diamond Doves

It is worth to visit Forest Ln where Painted Honeyeater was recorded a few times. We did not get it but found instead Painted Button-quail on the track and Peregrine Falcon in the sky.

Check also the dam along Channel Tk. There, we came across Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Australian Shelduck and Australasian Grebe. We also heard the calls of Black-eared Cuckoo.

Little Lake Boort

The lake is situated in the middle of a small township named Boort, located midway between Kerang and Bendigo at the end of Boort-Kerang Rd. There are some other lakes in the area but this one is known and preferred by birdwatchers thanks to its variety of waterbirds and waders, including the rarer species.

A 4km walk around the lake features several benches for the convenience of viewing and for rest. The southeastern sector of the lake is the best for the waterbirds. Black box gums and river red gums are growing on the periphery, supporting many woodland species.

Rare species recorded here include Australasian Bittern, Pectoral Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis, Latham's Snipe, Freckled Duck, Musk Duck, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Little Eagle and Peregrine Falcon.

We spent most the time in the south-east corner of the lake which was the most productive sector in the area. On the mudflats, we found hundreds of small waders, such as Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Red-capped Plover. Black-tailed Native-hens were very common around the lake edges, running for cover when disturbed. A good flock of Pink-eared Ducks was on the water, five Nankeen Night-Herons were roosting in a tree by the water edge. Baillon's Crakes and Australian Spotted Crakes kept to the clumps of vegetation growing in the mud.

A land strip with Ring Rd between Little Lake Boort and Lake Boort (usually dry) to the east, is good for bush birds. We recorded Blue-faced Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, White-breasted Woodswallow, Restless Flycatcher, Brown Treecreeper, Sacred Kingfisher and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. River red gums were flowering; we found four lorikeet species feeding together in one tree (Purple-crowned, Little, Musk and Rainbow Lorikeet). Little Grassbirds were wailing from the wetland vegetation, we also got White-fronted Chat and Eurasian Skylark.

On the lawns in the caravan park on the northern side of the lake, we found a large flock of Long-billed Corellas. In the bush, there were families of Grey-crowned Babblers and White-winged Choughs. One of the latter was sitting on the nest by the road.

Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve

The Reserve is located between Boort and Wedderburn in central-north Victoria. It consists of 16 discrete blocks (status as of 2017) with farmland in between. There are plans for land purchases to make the property a single large entity. The Reserve is situated in the last hilly area before the endless Riverina plains. Vegetation in most of the blocks consists of box-ironbark woodland on the hills and patches of mallee in the flatter areas.

Calder Hwy (A79) runs through Wedderburn which is situated just south of the best birding blocks of the Reserve. Other blocks are scattered south of Wedderburn. The prospecting map of the area can be downloaded here:

https://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/636665/Wychitella-prospecting-map.pdf.

This is one of a few mallee areas in central Victoria where Shy Heathwren and Southern Scrub-robin can be found. This area is much more accessible from Melbourne than other mallee parks which are all located in northern Victoria, several hundred kilometres further away.

Over 130 species are on the site's birdlist. **Key species** are Malleefowl, Painted Honeyeater, Shy Heathwren and Southern Scrub-robin. Other species of interest include White-fronted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Brush Bronzewing, Gilbert's Whistler, Hooded Robin, Inland Thornbill and Diamond Firetail. The list of rarities features Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater and Blue-winged Parrot.

Korong Vale Block

This is the most visited part of the Reserve. To get there, from Wedderburn take Boort-Wedderburn Rd (C273) and in Korong Vale turn into Eucy Rd. Next, turn left into Fahey Rd and drive south to the Railway Reservoir. Birding around this reservoir is fantastic. The local tracks will take you through the mallee woodland and mallee heath.

The **key species**, Shy Heathwren, Gilbert's Whistler and Southern Scrub-robin, occur here in good numbers. In winter, when ironbarks are in bloom, masses of honeyeaters descend onto the area. These include Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater and Red Wattlebird. Even White-fronted Honeyeaters will be quite easy to find here.



Mallee vegetation in the Korong Vale Block

In summer, look for Rainbow Bee-eater, Rufous Whistler, Restless Flycatcher, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Dusky Woodswallow and White-browed Woodswallow.

Other birds in this area include Crested Bellbird, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Inland Thornbill, Brown Treecreeper and Hooded Robin. Waterbirds at the reservoir include White-necked Heron, Black-fronted Dotterel, Hoary-headed Grebe, Hardhead and Grey Teal.

Wedderburn Block

The site is located very close to Wedderburn between Old Boort Rd and Wedderburn-Wychitella Rd. Rough tracks lead through the site. Southern Scrub-robin can be found in the dense scrub on the western side of Wedderburn-Wychitella Rd. There are plenty of Variegated Fairy-wrens and Rufous Whistlers around.

Other birds here include Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Spotted Nightjar, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Crested Bellbird, Shy Heathwren, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Brush Bronzewing.

Skinner Flat Block

The site preserves the box-ironbark forest in the south part of the block and mallee in the north. Skinner Flat Block can be accessed from Calder Hwy (A79), turning into Mt Kerang Rd.

At the bottom of the block near the reservoir, look for Brown Treecreeper, Crested Bellbird, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Weebill, White-browed Babbler, Jacky Winter and White-browed Woodswallow. In the box-ironbark woodland along Woolshed Tk you may come across Crested Shrike-tit, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Weebill and Red-capped Robin.

In the mallee habitat you will find a good variety of honeyeaters such as Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater (very common here), Black-chinned Honeyeater and Fuscous Honeyeater.

Wychitella Block

Access is from Wedderburn-Wychitella Rd. The dominant vegetation type here is mallee. Wattle Tk gives good access to healthy mallee heath. The star attraction is Malleefowl, there are still a few active nests in this block.

A good birding spot is Wattle Tk which runs in the easterly direction from Wedderburn-Wychitella Rd. As it is a rough track, it is advisable to walk it rather than drive. Look for Gilbert's Whistler, Southern Scrub-robin and Shy Heathwren. In winter, when flame heath is flowering, it attracts White-fronted Honeyeater (a regular winter visitor to the Reserve), White-eared Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill. In summer, large flocks of woodswallows may be observed, mostly White-browed Woodswallows with some Masked Woodswallows in the mix.

Other birds along this track include Inland Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Variegated Fairy-wren, Dusky Woodswallow, White-browed Babbler and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

Along the section of Wedderburn-Wychitella Rd that runs through the block, look for Brush Bronzewing, Jacky Winter and Hooded Robin. Patches of dense, scrubby heath may yield Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater and Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, all feeding on the mallee flowers.

Check the farmland before the site entrance, you may encounter White-fronted Chat, Australasian Pipit, Southern Whiteface, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red-capped Robin, Brown Quail and Little Raven. On the farm dams look for Australian Shelduck and Nankeen Night-Heron. Occasionally, Peregrine Falcon hunts over the fields.

The Granites

The Granites, also known as Mt Egbert Block, is one of the most favoured sections of the Reserve. Main access is from Old Boort Rd, turning into Granite Creek Rd which runs to the summit and circuits back to the main road. The reason to visit this block is Painted Honeyeater which is often here in good numbers in spring. Other birds of interest include Gilbert's Whistler, White-backed Swallow and Diamond Firetail.

Diamond Firetails can be found in the areas of grassy box woodland which also may yield Hooded Robin, Flame Robin, Red-capped Robin, Jacky Winter, Southern Whiteface, Rufous Songlark, Zebra Finch, Brown Treecreeper, Rainbow Bee-eater and Pallid Cuckoo.

At the start of a side road running to the summit, we found White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike on the nest. At the summit, there are wattle thickets near the viewing tower. These proved to be good for Gilbert's Whistler. We also encountered Western Gerygone, Yellow Thornbill, Variegated Fairy-wren, Mistletoebird and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater.

20 honeyeater species have been recorded in The Granites. Besides the Painted Honeyeater, the rare species found here include Black Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater and Purple-gaped Honeyeater.

The block has also a good selection of raptors such as Peregrine Falcon, Spotted Harrier and Little Eagle.

Mount Korong Nature Conservation Area

This 106ha site is located southeast of Wedderburn. The characteristic feature of the Reserve is Mouth Korong with its prominent granite tor, well-visible from afar among the endless plains. The reserve protects a parcel of an old ironbark grassy woodland with the shrubby understory. This little site is fantastic for dry forest species. It is one of the best ironbark reserves in the region and birds here are in good numbers and easy to find.

Access is via Wedderburn-Serpentine Rd. A carpark and picnic area are provided, there is also a track running to the top of the mountain.

Over 120 species have been recorded here. **Key species** are Painted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Gilbert's Whistler, Hooded Robin, Diamond Firetail and Black-eared Cuckoo. Other birds of interest include Wedge-tailed Eagle, Southern Whiteface, White-browed Babbler, Dusky Woodswallow and Rainbow Bee-eater. Among the rarities are

Speckled Warbler, Turquoise Parrot, White-fronted Honeyeater, Diamond Dove, Black-tailed Native-hen and Grey-crowned Babbler.

It is good to start birding around a little dam at the base of the mountain. There should be common ducks here plus White-necked Heron, Australian Shelduck and Australasian Grebe. Peregrine Falcon likes to hunt in this area. Look for Red-capped Robin, Jacky Winter, Southern Whiteface, White-fronted Chat, Australasian Pipit and Diamond Firetail on the fences. Brown Quails forage in the fields near the dam.

Painted Honeyeaters are often found along the south track through the Reserve; the best months for them are October and November. Gilbert's Whistlers are resident in the Reserve and easy to find in the dense vegetation along the track to the summit. Along this track you may also come across White-backed Swallow, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-winged Triller, Rufous Songlark, Restless Flycatcher, Pallid Cuckoo, Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin and Brown Falcon.

16 honeyeater species have been reported from this little place. Apart from the species mentioned above, look here for Singing Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill.

Sacred Kingfisher has a nest near the picnic area. Look also for Brown Treecreeper, Crested Shrike-tit, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and White-browed Babbler.

Fire Break Tk is another good place for White-backed Swallow.

Nocturnal birds recorded in the area include Australian Owlet-nightjar, Tawny Frogmouth and Southern Boobook.

Lake Marmal Lake Reserve

Lake Marmal is located 20km west of the township of Boort on Boort-Charlton Rd (C266). To get there, turn north onto Marmal North Rd. Camping area is provided near the lake.

The lake usually holds water but from time to time may dry out completely. When water is receding, this is a well-known location for the waders including rarities such as Wood Sandpiper. At such times, Red-kneed Dotterels may concentrate in numbers reaching 200 birds.

You will find here a good selection of waterbirds including Freckled Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Australian Shelduck, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Black-tailed Native-hen (regular visitor). All three grebe species can be found on the lake, with Great Crested Grebe breeding there.

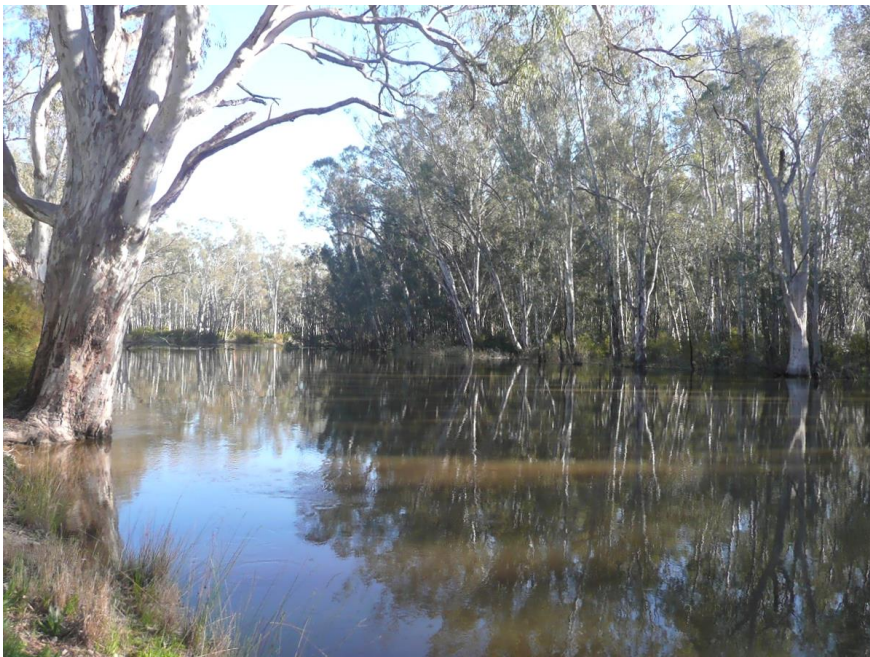
Beware of duck hunters; unfortunately, this lake is one of their favourite places so avoid the area, particularly at the start of the hunting season (it runs from March to June).

In the surrounding bushland expect to find Brown Treecreeper, Restless Flycatcher, Musk Lorikeet, White-breasted Woodswallow, Dusky Woodswallow, White-browed Woodswallow and Red-rumped Parrot. Rarer bush birds include Cockatiel and Blue-faced Honeyeater.

Gunbower Island

The site comprises 26,000ha of floodplains covered with river red gum forest and grey box-black box forest. It is located between the Murray River and Gunbower Creek, an anabranch of Murray River. This is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international significance. About a third of the island, 9,300ha, has been proclaimed the Gunbower Island National Park. Gunbower Island supports the second largest river red gum forest in Victoria (the first one is Barmah forest) and a large area of freshwater meadows which are very important to waterbirds.

Along Murray Valley Hwy (B400), you will find several access points to the island. The best are from Cohuna (west) and Gunbower (east). An extensive network of tracks, roads, picnic sites and campgrounds is provided on the island.



River red gums line the mighty Murray River

To help you plan your birding route, use the Parks Victoria map located here: http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/604106/Map_Gunbower_NP.pdf. Also, 'Gunbower Forest Walks and Drives' brochure should be of help; it is located here: https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/26341/FS0086-Gunbower-Forest-Walks-and-Drives.pdf. Lastly, BirdLife's 'Birding Spots near Cohuna and Gunbower' ([http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/GunbowerGuide\(WP\).pdf](http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/GunbowerGuide(WP).pdf)) may be useful to navigate your route in this fairly difficult area.

Over 200 species are on the site's birdlist. Every few years, environmental water flows cause large floods and create significant breeding events for the waterbirds in the area. Breeding in their thousands or hundreds of thousands are Australian White Ibis, Eastern Great Egret, White-necked Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Royal Spoonbill, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australasian Darter and Australasian Grebe. At the same time, White-bellied Sea-Eagles breed here very successfully.

These events offer fantastic birding but conditions are very challenging due to flooded or boggy tracks.

The list of rare finds in Gunbower Island includes Brolga, Glossy Ibis, Bush Stone-curlew, Superb Parrot, Gilbert's Whistler and Peregrine Falcon. The old river red gums supply breeding hollows for parrots such as Long-billed Corella, Superb Parrot and Yellow Rosella. An astonishing variety of raptors has been recorded (13 species).

Cohuna Island Road

Turn into Cohuna Island Rd at the roundabout in Cohuna. The site covers approximately 10km, from Cohuna to West Taylors Rd.

We recommend stopping soon after the turnoff (opposite Mills Rd) to check the swamp near a caravan park. There should be plenty birds on the water including Chestnut Teal, Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead, Australian Shelduck and Plumed Whistling-Duck. It is also a good place for Australian Spotted Crake, Spotless Crake and Buff-banded Rail. We observed the latter skulking through the caravan park grounds. Bushland opposite the caravan park yielded Golden Whistler, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Varied Sittella, Bassian Thrush and Blue-faced Honeyeater.

There are several good birding spots along Cohuna Island Road and on the connecting tracks to the National Park. We stopped on Fence Tk where we found Rainbow Bee-eater, Dollarbird, Pallid Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous Songlark, Crested Shrike-tit, Olive-backed Oriole, Red-capped Robin, Rufous Whistler and Yellow Rosella.

Forest Drive

This is the most popular birdwatching route in the area. It is circular; from Cohuna Island Rd turn into Rifle Butts Rd and continue on Five Sleeper Tk, River Tk, Nursery Tk and back to Cohuna Island Rd. There are also plenty of side tracks to explore.

On Rifle Butts Rd we encountered Nankeen Night-Heron, Diamond Firetail and Crested Shrike-tit.

Centre Break intersecting with Nursery Tk turned to be a very good birding spot. We found there a family of Bush Stone-curlews, Emu, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Southern Boobook and Peregrine Falcon.

There is a large river gum at an intersection of Garner Break and Chettle Tk, possibly one of the largest and oldest in the Park. East of this tree, a large cormorant/darter rookery is located. We also found several Azure Kingfishers, Whistling Kites, Black Kites and White-bellied Sea-Eagles in the vicinity of the rookery.

Our next stop was Robertson Break. The forest around this track was flooded and there were plenty of waterbirds including Australian Shelduck, Grey Teal, Hardhead, Black-tailed Native-hen and White-necked Heron. A single Brolga was feeding on a flooded clearing between the trees. Three Emus were walking on the track in front of us and didn't budge. Over the forest, a mixed flock of woodswallows was flying, comprising White-browed and Masked Woodswallow accompanied by a few Dusky Woodswallows.



River red gum forest on Gunbower Island

River Track

This is an interesting track running along the Murray River. Waterbirds may be scarce there except for Black-tailed Native-hen that can be seen darting on both sides of the river. We stopped regularly on our way to check the river red gums and their understory, looking for bush birds. Our highlight was Gilbert's Whistler which we found in a thicket by the road. We also encountered White-browed Babbler, White-winged Triller, Restless Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler, Golden Whistler, Crested Shrike-tit, Brown Treecreeper, Sacred Kingfisher, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Pallid Cuckoo and Whistling Kite.

A good birding spot is Scotty Bend. Take a short walk to the river from River Tk. This location is good for Gilbert's Whistler and Bush Stone-curlew. We also came here across Black-eared Cuckoo, Azure Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Crested Shrike-tit, Striated Thornbill, Restless Flycatcher, Red-capped Robin and Yellow Rosella.

Thompsons Weir

Thompsons Weir is another great birding spot in this area. Leave Murray Valley Hwy (B400) in Gunbower and turn into Gunbower Island Rd. After 2km, you will find a wetland turned into an ibis rookery. During our visit there were about 300 nests of Australian White Ibises, built on the tree stumps protruding from the water. Whistling Kite and Little Eagle were flying over the rookery.

Follow Gunbower Island Rd and veer left onto Thompsons Bridge Rd. Cross the creek and stop the car by a pump station. Take a walk around. Besides the common waterbirds there, we saw Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin, Emu, Varied Sittella, Restless Flycatcher, Rufous Songlark, Australian Reed-Warbler, White-browed Babbler, Brown Treecreeper and plenty of White-winged Choughs on the ground. Azure Kingfisher was perched on a branch protruding over the water. Yellow Rosellas, Eastern Rosellas and Long-billed Corellas were investigating hollows in the river red gums.

Gunbower Township

Birdwatching spots are located at the caravan park, near the creek, Fox Island Rd and Toll Rd south of town.

We observed Little Eagle circling over the caravan park. There were also Brown Treecreeper, Red-rumped Parrot, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Little Friarbird and Rufous Songlark.

Fox Island Rd will take you to a weir. You may find there a good selection of waterbirds including Great Crested Grebe, White-necked Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Australian Shelduck.

Toll Rd is a good birding area, particularly around the intersection of Toll Rd and Gunbower-Pyramid Rd. Look for White-backed Swallow, Brown Songlark, Eurasian Skylark, Australasian Pipit, Singing Honeyeater, Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Grassbird. Little Eagle and Black Kite frequent the area.

Kow Swamp

This is a large storage lake, located 6km southwest of Gunbower, with several access points off Murray Valley Hwy (B400). From Gunbower, take Gunbower-Pyramid Rd, it will lead you to the lake.

The lake resembles an inland sea, sometimes waves are generated on its surface. The circumference is 15km and the depth about 3m. There are roads running close to the lake, facilitating access and observations. A picnic site is located on the eastern bank of the lake at the mouth of Taylors Creek, where Leitchville South Rd changes name to Dehne Rd, next to Ormandy Bridge.

The lake is filled with standing trunks of dead trees and hosts thousands of nesting and roosting birds. Species of interest include Brolga, Great Crested Grebe, Azure Kingfisher, White-fronted Chat, Buff-banded Rail and a variety of raptors such as Peregrine Falcon, Black Falcon, Swamp Harrier and White-bellied Sea-Eagle.



Dead trees in permanently flooded areas provide fantastic nesting and roosting sites

Start your birdwatching with scanning the farmland where you can find Stubble Quail, Australasian Pipit, Horsfield's Bushlark and Eurasian Skylark. Flocks of parrots can often be seen feeding in the grassland. These include Budgerigar, Long-billed Corella and Red-rumped Parrot. Raptors in the area include Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel.

At the picnic area, there are plenty of White-fronted Chats. You can also get Zebra Finch, White-winged Triller, Dollarbird, White-breasted Woodswallow and Azure Kingfisher. While driving around, we were regularly stopping by the lake and found Nankeen Night-Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Royal Spoonbill, Eastern Great Egret and hundreds of Black-tailed Native-hens.

Before dusks, we observed unending flocks of Straw-necked Ibises coming from all directions to roost in the swamp for the night. It was such a lovely, soothing experience.

Torrumbarry and Surrounds

Torrumbarry is a village on Murray Valley Hwy (B400), halfway between Gunbower and Echuca. There are several good wetlands along the Murray River accessible from the village.

Torrumbarry Weir

From Murray Valley Hwy (B400) 6km northwest of Torrumbarry, turn north onto Torrumbarry Weir Rd and follow this road up to a carpark at the Visitor Centre by the Murray River. This is a good place for both birdwatching and a picnic. Birding is good around the weir and the surrounding woodland. Also, take a walk to the dam and spillway.

Birds in the gardens near the Visitor Centre included Blue-faced Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, Yellow Rosella, Brown Treecreeper and White-browed Babbler. Trees around the river produced sightings of Rainbow Bee-eater, Peaceful Dove, Sacred Kingfisher, Long-billed Corella and Nankeen Night-Heron. Around the river and on the nearby lagoon we found a wide variety of common waterbirds.

The site features a good selection of raptors. About 50 Black Kites were roosting in trees by the river during our visit. Nests of Whistling Kites and White-bellied Sea-Eagles were scattered along the river. A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles were circling above the site and Collared Sparrowhawks were flying over the river. Other birds of prey reported from this site include Square-tailed Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Brown Goshawk and Southern Boobook.



Black Kite

Richardson's Lagoon

This is regionally significant deep freshwater wetland. To get there, turn north from Murray Valley Hwy (B400) onto Baillieu Rd. This road runs through the Torrumbarry Estate for 1km before entering the wetland area. Keep left to drive to the lagoon.

If there is water in the lagoon, birding there is excellent. This is a good spot for Brolga and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. There was not too much water during our visit, but we were lucky to see Brolga. On the remaining area of the lagoon, there were a few Grey Teals, Australian Shelducks and Hardheads. A love-stricken Black Swan gander was making love to a domestic goose.

Bush birds in the area included Crested Shrike-tit (very common), Red-capped Robin, Rainbow Bee-eater, Brown Treecreeper, Common Bronzewing, Peaceful Dove and hordes of White-winged Choughs.

Barmah National Park

Barmah National Park lies along the Murray River between the towns of Barmah and Strathmerton, about 250km north of Melbourne. Access to the 12 major entrance gates is available from the Moira Lakes Road, Picola-Barmah Rd, and the Murray Valley Highway (B400). A map of the park is included in the Visitor Guide, downloadable here: http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/315732/Barmah-National-Park-

[Visitor-Guide.pdf](#). Also, the Echuca Branch of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) has prepared a very helpful guide through the Park which is available for downloading here: [http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/BarmahGuide\(WP\).pdf](http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/BarmahGuide(WP).pdf).

Pleasant camping is available along the Murray River banks and on its sandy beaches. Take your drinking water with you.

Together with the adjoining Millewa Forest in New South Wales, Barmah National Park forms the largest River Red Gum forest in the world. The Murray River and its flooding regime regulates this ecosystem, creating a diverse natural habitat for a variety of wildlife, particularly waterbirds. The forest is also located on a flight path for the migratory birds. The Millewa-Barmah area has been recognised by BirdLife International as a Ramsar site.

The Park includes several lakes, wetlands, Moira grass plains and sand hills. Red gums are dominant along the wetlands and river banks. On higher grounds, black box is the dominant tree while sand dunes are overgrown with *Callitris* pine (native cypress).

Every few years the forest is subject to flooding, due to both natural occurrences and man-made environmental releases of water. The flood time is heaven for birdwatchers as the Park attracts thousands of waterbirds that congregate here to breed. Enormous mixed colonies are formed by Eastern Great Egrets, Intermediate Egrets, Little Egret, Nankeen Night-Herons, Straw-necked Ibises, Australian White Ibises, Little Pied Cormorants, Great Cormorants and Little Black Cormorants. Other birds including Royal Spoonbills and Yellow-billed Spoonbills compete for the remaining available nesting places in the area. In these mass breeding seasons, ibises provide a free pest control service to the neighbouring farms.

Ducks and coots also take advantage of the flooded Park, breeding in huge numbers. You'll find here also the rare species such as Musk Duck, Blue-billed Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Plumed Whistling-Duck and Australian Shelduck.

During the flooding events, the less common species that can be found in the area include Australian Painted-snipe, Australasian Bittern, Australian Little Bittern, Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake, Australian Spotted Crake and Red-kneed Dotterel.

The Park is the best place in Victoria to see Superb Parrot. Over 5% of the population is breeding there, making use of hollow-bearing trees that are abundant in the Park. The parrots arrive in late winter, breed over spring and summer, and at the end of summer leave to spend the winter in NSW.

In dry conditions, the most convenient birdwatching is via signposted forest drives; most of these will be accessible to 2WD vehicles. Good drives include Sand River Rd, Picnic Point Rd, and Moira Forest Dr on the NSW side.

Ulupna Island Area

To the Ulupna end of the park, follow Goulburn Valley Hwy (A30) until you get to Strathmerton. Watch for a signposted turn off to Ulupna Island. The long drive meanders through farmland and becomes a shady avenue of eucalyptus trees, called Ulupna Bridge Rd, in the last section before the bridge over the Ulupna Creek. That last section of the road was the best place for koalas we experienced to date in the whole country! In the early morning sun, they were all active - stretching, changing trees, fidgeting to find the best sleeping position in the tree forks. There was a koala on nearly every tree, sometimes two or three of them in one tree. The Ulupna section of the National Park itself also has an oversupply of koalas; you will definitely see some there.



You just cannot snap a photo at Ulupna without a koala in it!

Just before the bridge we also saw a male King Quail and a pair of Ground Cuckoo-shrikes. Black-shouldered Kites were hovering over the pastures and Brown Falcon was perched in a dead tree.

Past the bridge turn left into a broad forest track and follow the creek bed until it joins the Murray River. There is a beautiful beach and a camping site in this location. When we arrived there, we were welcome by a raucous chorus of hundreds of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos that were frolicking along the river, playing, feeding, chomping on the small branches or bathing enthusiastically in the warm river water. This picture will stay with us forever.

We had a picnic under a gum tree. We looked up and saw a pair of Superb Parrots feeding their young in a hollow a few metres above our heads. That was magic. And then, when we thought it could not get any better, a single Blue Bonnet landed in the grass next to our picnic table.

Along the river edge we saw Dollarbird, Azure Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Dusky Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Eastern Great Egret, Pied Cormorant and Great Cormorant. Flowering gums had plenty of Little Lorikeets and Noisy Friarbirds.

As we were leaving Ulupna Island, a single Square-tailed Kite flew over our heads.

Barmah Area

Barmah township is a good place to start if you approach to the Park from the west end. To get there, take Hume Fwy (M31) north, followed by Goulburn Valley Hwy (A30). About 5km past Shepparton turn left into Barmah-Shepparton Rd (C358) which will take you to the National Park via the Barmah village.

In the river red gums lining the Murray River you may find Crested Shrike-tit, White-plumed Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher, Dollarbird and Dusky Woodswallow. Perhaps a Rainbow Bee-eater will be darting through the air, chasing insects while Pied Butcherbird sends his melodious calls across the river.

At the edges between farmland and the forest, look for Jacky Winter, Eastern Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Red-capped Robin, Scarlet Robin, Rufous Whistler, Yellow Thornbill, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and White-throated Treecreeper. We found Blue-faced Honeyeaters in the flowering grevilleas in town.

River edges may produce sightings of White-necked Heron, Black-fronted Dotterel, Azure Kingfisher, Yellow Spoonbill and flocks of Nankeen Night-Herons sitting in the branches overhanging the water. White-backed Swallows may fly over the river.

Other species of interest here include Stubble Quail, Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Swamp Harrier, Bush Stone-curlew, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove, Tawny Frogmouth, Brown Treecreeper, White-browed Babbler, White-winged Fairy-wren, Black-chinned Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater and White-fronted Chat.

Broken Creek

The site is located on the way from Barmah to Picola (Barmah Bridge Rd) past the Broken Creek. In the grassy area near the bridge you may find Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Brown Treecreeper and Western Gerygone. Scanning through the gum trees around the creek may

produce sightings of Crimson Rosellas (yellow form), Striated Thornbills, Pied Cormorants, Australasian Darters and Nankeen Night-Herons.

In summer, look for the nesting Superb Parrot. The best place is Trickey's Ln just past the creek. Watch out also for Grey-crowned Babblers nesting in this area.

We saw a small flock of budgerigars flying over the creek, flushed by a Brown Falcon.



Nankeen Night-Heron, roosting the day away high up a tree

Barmah Lake

A pleasant alternative to birdwatching from the car may be a river cruise. M.V. Kingfisher offers cruises on the Murray River starting at Barmah Lake. For details and bookings see <http://www.kingfishercruises.com.au/>.

Dharnya Centre at Barmah Lake is a good visitor area worth stopping by. Check out the waterbirds on and around the lake. Among the common species you will find rarities such as Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Chestnut Teal, Australasian Shoveler and Australian Shelduck. All three species of grebes nest on the Lake. Nankeen Night-Heron is common, visible even during the day when flying over the picnic area.

During a stroll around the lake we flushed two Australasian Bitterns and a small flock of Glossy Ibises. We also found Baillon's Crake and Pied Stilt. Black-tailed Native-hens were strutting at the water edge. The shores were punctuated

with white dots of herons and spoonbills including Little Egret and White-necked Heron. Little Grassbirds and Australian Reed-Warblers were frantically calling from the bulrushes around the water edge.

A mixed flock of woodswallows was hunting for insects from dead trees. White-browed Woodswallow and White-breasted Woodswallow were dominant but we also identified Masked Woodswallow, Black-faced Woodswallow and Dusky Woodswallow among them. A pair of Restless Flycatchers were in constant pursuit for insects, filling the air with their incessant and loud call that reminds us of a chain saw.

Swamp Harrier and Whistling Kite were carefully patrolling the wetlands. A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles was roosting in a dead tree near the picnic area.

We stumbled upon two nearly invisible Bush Stone-curlews resting in the open in dead litter at the picnic site. There is a small population of these birds at Barmah Lake. In the flowering gums, among the ubiquitous White-plumed Honeyeaters we also found Black-chinned Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Musk Lorikeet and Little Lorikeet.

Other notable species reported from this area include Painted Button-quail, Latham's Snipe, Whiskered Tern, Black-eared Cuckoo, Eastern Barn Owl, Barking Owl, Painted Honeyeater, Fairy Martin, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Southern Boobook, Black Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Long-billed Corella, Little Corella, Superb Parrot and White-winged Triller.

Take Sand Ridge Tk for about 3km to get to Hut Lake. The area is known for good numbers of Emus in the grassland surrounding the lake. The usual waterfowl is also abundant.

Terrick Terrick National Park

This Park is a Mecca for birdwatchers, a must for every person interested in birds. The presence of a very rare species, Plains-wanderer, is an irresistible magnet. Just remember, this is primarily a nocturnal bird so be prepared for some spotlighting. You may consider joining an organised birding tour to improve your chances of sighting of this notoriously elusive bird.

The most prominent feature of the National Park is Mount Terrick Terrick, a granite outcrop rising above the south part of the Park.

The Park is located 225km northwest of Melbourne. Access is via Loddon Valley Hwy (B260) to Eaglehawk where you turn right into Bendigo-Pyramid Rd (C336) which will take you to Mitiamo. The Park is located 4km north of Mitiamo via Sylvaterra-Timms Lake Rd. This road dissects the Park in half and all the tracks connect to it. If you

approach from the north, the park is located 55km west of Echuca. A useful map of the Park can be downloaded here:
http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/604103/Map_Terrick_Terrick_NP.pdf.

Vegetation in the Park comprises open grassy woodland dominated by white cypress pine and native grassland, the largest native grassland in any Victorian conservation area. The native grassland section is located in the north-eastern corner of the Park (from Davies Paddock to Bendigo Creek). Several non-continuous native grassland blocks have been purchased and added to the Park, eg. Tomara Gilgai Grassland, Meadows Grassland, Terrick East Grassland. Sheep still graze the grassland patches to help keep introduced grasses at bay and to maintain favourable conditions for the endangered Plains-wanderer.

The **key species** is naturally Plains-wanderer but the list of bird species exceeds 200 and is still growing thanks to the constant scrutiny of competent visitors. The bird selection is typical of the dry country and includes Gilbert's Whistler, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater, Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin, Brown Treecreeper and Diamond Firetail. This is a rare place where three babbler species can be found together (White-browed, Grey-crowned and Chestnut-crowned Babbler). An extraordinary selection of raptors can be found here including Black Falcon, Peregrine Falcon and Little Eagle. Many rarities, such as Brolga, Red-chested Button-quail, Inland Dotterel and Australian Pratincole, have been reported from this site.

A great help to us was a guide to the Park's birds, available at the BirdLife website here:
[http://users.mcmmedia.com.au/~stocky/TerricksGuide\(WP\).pdf](http://users.mcmmedia.com.au/~stocky/TerricksGuide(WP).pdf).

If you are starting from Mitiamo, look for Brolgas on the outskirts of the village. They are occasionally found at the oval after the heavy rains. There are also plenty of Brown Falcons around Mitiamo and sometimes Black Falcon may appear.

The first stop could be the junction of Picnic Tk and Link Tk. To get there, turn east from Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Rd onto the track signposted in the field as Picnic Tk (called Cemetery Tk on the Park's map). Stop on the Link Tk near the pamphlet box. Regular occurrences here include Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Diamond Firetail, Varied Sittella, White-winged Triller and Buff-rumped Thornbill. Large flocks of White-browed Woodswallows mixed with some Dusky Woodswallows and Masked Woodswallows can often be observed there. Western Gerygone and Mallee Ringneck have been recorded.

Old Mitiamo Cemetery

Drive alongside the boundary fence on the Cemetery Tk until you arrive at the cemetery. The area sits between the forest and farmland and is rich in birdlife. The main species to look for here is Gilbert's Whistler. To get it, walk outside the cemetery along its fence to the southeast corner until you reach a dense copse of cherry ballart. On the fence, you may see Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin and Jacky Winter. In the white cypress pines,

look for Mallee Ringneck, Peaceful Dove, Rufous Whistler, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, woodswallows and thornbills.

Mount Terrick Terrick

On your way to the site check the yellow box gums for the presence of Painted Honeyeater and Western Gerygone.

The site is a pleasant picnic and camping area at the foot of the hill. The area is brimming with birds. We observed hundreds of White-winged Choughs. Tree Martins were nesting in an old tree. There were plenty of Brown Treecreepers, Diamond Firetails (busy building a nest), Yellow-rumped Thornbills, Eastern Rosellas and Rainbow Bee-eaters. We were lucky to spot Eastern Yellow Robin; this area is the western range limit for this species in Victoria.



Brown Treecreepers

Other birds that can be encountered here include Australian Owlet-nightjar, Satin Flycatcher, Red-rumped Parrot, Common Bronzewing and White-browed Babbler.

If you take the walking track to the summit, look for Southern Whiteface, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and Painted Button-quail. You also have a chance to see Gilbert's Whistler here. From the top of the hill you will have great views across the plains, up to Pyramid Hill and Kow Swamp. Check for raptors flying over the Park such as Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black Falcon and Peregrine Falcon.

Reigels Rock

From Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Rd, turn onto Marlow Tk and follow this track for approximately 2km until you see a flat rocky formation on your right. A short walking track leads to the Reigels Rock. We came across Painted Button-quail on this track.

This site is excellent for raptors. Wedge-tailed Eagle is nesting there. Look also for Black Kite, Little Eagle, Australian Hobby, Peregrine Falcon and Black Falcon.

In the surrounding bushland we found a family of Chestnut-crowned Babblers. Along Marlow Tk we ticked off Fuscous Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Songlark, Cockatiel and White-winged Triller.

Continuing along Reigels Rd, we saw plenty of Diamond Firetails in the grassy areas, along with some Yellow-rumped Thornbills, Southern Whitefaces and Australasian Pipits. There were plenty of woodswallows around. Restless Flycatcher and Pallid Cuckoo were calling from the surrounding bushes.

Squire Track

This site is located in the northern section of the Park. From Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Rd, turn west onto the Squire Tk. Just a few hundred metres from the turnoff look for a Little Eagle's nest.

You will arrive at a small dam at an intersection of the track with Rodgers Tk. When there is water in the dam, parrots and honeyeaters pop in for a drink. We saw Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Fuscous Honeyeaters, Brown-headed Honeyeaters and Little Friarbirds, all taking a bath in the dam, darting in and out of the water.

Near the dam edge we saw a few Diamond Firetails, Budgerigars and Cockatiels.

The sparse grassy cypress pine forest around the track was full of birds including Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin, Brown Treecreeper, Rufous Songlark, Common Bronzewing, Blue Bonnet, Mallee Ringneck and Painted Button-quail.

Davies Homestead Ruins

Access is from Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Rd. The native grass paddocks along this road are particularly good for tracking down Plains-wanderer in the evening. The best chance is at the Spear Grass Paddock. If you do some spotlighting there, you may also come across Stubble Quail, Eastern Barn Owl, Little Button-quail, Australasian Pipit or Horsfield's Bushlark and, with a lot of luck, across some rare species for this area such as Red-chested Button-quail, Bush Stone-curlew or Inland Dotterel.

Another good spot is Fabian's Paddock, located northwest of Davies Homestead. It can be reached via Ferris Rd off Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Rd. Birds to be found here include Little Button-quail, Brown Songlark, Australasian Pipit, Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Southern Whiteface, Horsfield's Bushlark and occasionally Black Falcon. We found Black-faced Woodswallows and Singing Honeyeaters along Ferris Rd.

Bendigo Creek

The narrow strip along Bendigo Creek was the late addition to the Park. The creek is flowing through the grassland but is lined with grey box and river red gums with lignum understory which created a good habitat for the small birds. You can get there taking a long walk from Davies Homestead or, much easier, via Jungaburra Rd which crosses the creek northeast of the Park.

The area is particularly good for the waterbirds as water in the creek is generally permanent. Look for Black-fronted Dotterel, Australian Spotted Crake, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Australian Shelduck, White-necked Heron and Australian Pelican. We saw hundreds of Black-tailed Native-hens skulking around to take cover under the lignum bushes.

Check for Brolga around the creek; there are records of them nesting in the area. In the patches of wetland vegetation along the creek, expect to find Little Grassbird, Australian Reed-Warbler and White-fronted Chat.

Shrubby grassland within the creek zone may produce sightings of Diamond Firetail, Zebra Finch, Southern Whiteface, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Australasian Pipit. Families of Grey-crowned Babblers can be found in the lignum. Trees around the creek may yield White-winged Triller, Restless Flycatcher, Brown Treecreeper, Mallee Ringneck and Cockatiel.

Check this area for raptors; we saw two Black Falcons hunting over the paddocks and a Collared Sparrowhawk chasing a Red-rumped Parrot.

Meadows Grassland Paddock

This is one of several non-continuous paddocks in the eastern part of the Park. The block contains patches of lignum and salt marshes.

To get there, take Davies Rd from Mt Terrick Rd; you will reach the paddock on the right after just over 2km drive on this road. Davies Rd is accessible by car only in dry weather but you can walk to the paddock when it's wet.

It was wet when we arrived there. We got to the site on foot, attracted to it by a pair of Brolgas we saw landing in the salt marsh. On our way, we observed Banded Lapwings scattered on an adjoining paddock.

Parts of the paddock were flooded and under a shallow layer of water. These conditions were favourable to Australian Shelduck, Grey Teal, Australian Spotted Crake, Baillon's Crake, Buff-banded Rail, White-necked Heron and scores of Black-tailed Native-hens.

Little Grassbird and Australian Reed-Warbler were calling from the swamp. In the clumps of lignum in the drier parts of the paddock we saw a large family of White-winged Fairy-wrens. There were also White-fronted Chats, Southern Whitefaces and Singing Honeyeaters.

Swamp Harrier was circling over the swampy area. On our way back we counted five Swamp Harriers over the surrounding grassy paddocks.

Toamra Gilgai Grassland Block

Access is from Mt Terrick Rd via Monahan Rd or Marin Rd. The block is located between these two dirt roads.

At the time of our visit, the paddock was wet and covered with shallow water. We watched as the same pair of Brolgas moved here from the Meadows Grassland Paddock 1.5km away. Birds we encountered there included Hoary-headed Grebe, White-necked Heron and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. On the surrounding paddocks, there were large numbers of Horsfield's Bushlarks, Australasian Pipits and Eurasian Skylarks.

Swamp Harrier, Australian Hobby and Black Falcon were flying over the area.

Patho West Paddock

The site is located at the intersection of Balderson Rd and Gunbower-Terricks Rd. This area is frequented by Inland Dotterel. Occasionally, Banded Lapwings congregate here in large numbers.

Other birds recorded here include Australian Pratincole, Black-faced Woodswallow and Singing Honeyeater.



Banded Lapwing on a paddock

Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park

The Park protects large stands of box-ironbark which are remnants of Victorian eucalyptus forest. The Park is the only reliable location in Victoria for the star attraction - Regent Honeyeater. Several releases of hand-reared Regent Honeyeaters have been undertaken in the Park over the years to assure the survival of this species in Victoria. All released birds are banded. Look for them around Green Hill Dam, Honeyeater Picnic Area, Cyanide Dam, Bartleys Block and Magenta Mine.

The Park covers several large patches of land on both sides of Chiltern-Beechworth Rd (C377) and on both sides of Hume Hwy (M31). A detailed map of the whole Park can be downloaded here:

http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/511797/Map-Chiltern-Mt-Pilot-National-Park.pdf.

The best time to visit the Park is winter or spring when mugga ironbark, grey box and white box are in bloom. You can anticipate a spectacle of nectar feeders including Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird and Little Lorikeet. However, there is always something else to find. The birdlist for the Park includes over 230 species. **Key species** are Regent Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater, Turquoise Parrot, Swift Parrot (in winter) and Painted Button-quail.

Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park is one of the most visited birding sites in Victoria.

Chiltern Section

Chiltern section (the northern reaches of the Park) is located on both sides of Hume Hwy. It is the most popular destination in the Park as this is the area where Regent Honeyeaters are being released. Habitats are quite diverse here including woodland, a small dam, wetlands and surrounding pasture while other parts of the Park are mostly dry forest.

Turn off the highway at Chiltern. To get to the northern area turn north and drive through the Chiltern township. Turning south from the highway and immediately left into Yackandandah Rd, followed by turning right into Lancashire Gap Rd, will get you to the southern part of the Chiltern section.

Bartleys Block

The site is located 3km north of Chiltern on the left side of Howlong-Chiltern Rd. Access is via a small carpark in the north of the block, easily found. The block is 1km in diameter, easy to cover on foot. This is the most often visited site in the Park.

At this site, 18 species of honeyeaters were recorded, including Regent Honeyeater, Black Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater and Brown-headed Honeyeater. Speckled Warblers are common, usually found near a small dam. We found three groups of Speckled Warblers during one short visit. It was a pleasure to observe their bold black speckles on the white breast. The warblers were scurrying away from us, keeping close to the fence line. We also found six Turquoise Parrots near the same dam.

A good variety of other woodland species was also evident including Red-browed Babbler, Mistletoebird, Rufous Whistler, Restless Flycatcher, Leaden Flycatcher and Peaceful Dove.

In summer, you will see Western Gerygone, White-throated Gerygone, White-winged Triller and Rufous Songlark. In winter, look for robins, in particular Flame Robin. Rarer birds, such as Painted Button-quail, Swift Parrot, Purple-

crowned Lorikeet, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Little Eagle, were also reported from this site.



Male Flame Robin

Mt Pleasant Road

The road is just north of Bartleys Tk. It is a good place for Painted Honeyeater and Turquoise Parrot. Also, Swift Parrots often visit in winter.

Look also at this location for Pied Butcherbird, Little Corella and Jacky Winter.

Donchi Hill Road and Picnic Area

The site is located in the northwestern part of the Chiltern section. It is a good place for Speckled Warbler, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Painted Button-quail, Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.

During our visit, there were huge flocks of honeyeaters on the flowering mugga ironbark trees including Black-chinned Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Little Friarbird.

White-browed Woodswallow and Dusky Woodswallow are regularly seen there. At the edge of woodland and farmland look for Western Gerygone, Jacky Winter, White-browed Babbler and Rufous Songlark.

Chiltern Valley Road

Access is from Chiltern. Take McKay St that changes name to Wenkes Rd and then turn right into Chiltern Valley Rd. The most valuable birding spots are No.1 Dam and No.2 Dam. But first check the small wetlands on both sides of Wenkes Rd. These are good places for rails and crakes. We quite easily found Australian Spotted Crake, Baillon's Crake, Spotless Crake and Buff-banded Rail skulking along marsh vegetation. Lewin's Rail and Black-tailed Native-hen were also recorded here.

Chiltern Valley Rd No. 1 Dam

The dam is located 3km west of Chiltern on the Chiltern Valley Rd. This is an excellent site for the waterbirds, especially Australasian Shoveler, Pink-eared Duck, Musk Duck and Grey Teal. Occasionally, you may encounter Freckled Duck, Hoary-headed Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Latham's Snipe, White-necked Heron, Red-kneed Dotterel and Black-tailed Native-hen.

This spot is particularly good for White-breasted Woodswallows which can be found in the river gums around the dam. Birds commonly found in the surrounding woodland include Restless Flycatcher, Crested Shrike-tit, Pied Butcherbird, Tree Martin and Fairy Martin. Sometimes small flocks of Budgerigar can be seen there.

Whistling Kites are regularly hunting over the dam but look also for other raptors such as Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Australian Hobby and Peregrine Falcon.

Chiltern Valley Rd No. 2 Dam

This is an old mine dam and the largest water body in the Park. It has a nice bird hide. There are some good walking tracks, too. Most species recorded at No.1 Dam can also be seen here. The birdlist also includes Brolga, Intermediate Egret, Azure Kingfisher and Dollarbird.

On arrival, we found five Black-tailed Native-hens in the picnic area. They scurried away hastily. There were several Crested Shrike-tits around both the picnic area and the bird hide. A quick walk towards the bird hide revealed Red-capped Robins, Diamond Firetails and Jacky Winters perched on the fences. We also caught a glimpse of a red-bellied black snake sunbathing at the entrance to the bird hide. It moved away quickly at the sound of our footsteps.

From the bird hide we observed Dollarbird hawking for insects from a tall gum tree. There were good numbers of Rainbow Bee-eaters around. White-breasted Woodswallows breed near the dam; we also spotted a few Masked Woodswallows.



Dollarbird

Other birds of interest reported from this dam include Black-chinned Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Brown Treecreeper, White-browed Babbler, Turquoise Parrot, Pallid Cuckoo, Little Eagle and Swamp Harrier. Occasionally, rarities such as Blue-billed Duck, Red-backed Kingfisher and White-backed Swallow are being recorded here.

DPI Research Institute

Continuing on Chiltern Valley Rd you will get to the DPI Institute. In its grounds we found with surprise three Bush Stone-curlews, sitting on the mulch under a small tree.

Magenta Mine and Picnic Area

Get to Green Hill Rd that can be accessed from either Chiltern-Barnawartha Rd or Howlong-Chiltern Rd followed by turning into Rileys Rd. The site is a historical open cut mine; a small dam is also remaining from the old days. Regent Honeyeaters were released in this area several times; look for the banded birds.

The site is excellent for honeyeaters. Expect to find Black-chinned Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and plenty of Little Lorikeets. Occasionally, Scarlet Honeyeater, Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot (in winter) can be encountered.

It is relatively easy to find White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike; they breed near the dam. We observed a huge flock of White-browed Woodswallows and Dusky Woodswallows flying low over the water while a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles and a Square-tailed Kite soared much higher in the air.

Pipeline Track

The track leads to the Magenta Mine site but it is for 4WD only. It is not long so suitable for a walk on foot. It is a good place for Spotted Quail-thrush, Painted Button-quail and Regent Honeyeater.

In summer and autumn woodswallows (Dusky, White-browed and Masked Woodswallow) are using the area as a night roost. Seeing a spectacle of myriads of woodswallows in the air is possible at this time of the year.

We visited in autumn and encountered thousands of migrants, mostly Silvereyes. We also found good numbers of Scarlet Robins and Flame Robins and 15 honeyeater species including Black-chinned Honeyeater and the banded Regent Honeyeater.

Green Hill Dam

This is a small dam on Green Hill Rd between Magenta Mine and the Pipeline Tk. It is the last dam to dry out in the Park so in drought periods expect thousands of birds to gather on the dam for a drink of water. It is a very reliable Park area for Regent Honeyeater.

We observed huge flocks of honeyeaters feeding on the flowering mugga ironbarks. The dominant among the 12 species identified by us were Fuscous Honeyeaters, White-naped Honeyeaters, and Noisy Miners but we were surprised to see hundreds of Blue-faced Honeyeaters among them. Competing with the honeyeaters were flocks of Little Lorikeets mixed with some Purple-crowned Lorikeets.



Juvenile Blue-faced Honeyeater

Flocks of small bush birds were moving through the middle strata of the sparse forest including Buff-rumped Thornbills, Striated Thornbills, Weebills, Striated Pardalotes, Spotted Pardalotes and Grey Fantails.

Other species of interest that were reported from this site include Painted Button-quail, Restless Flycatcher, Rose Robin, Swift Parrot, Turquoise Parrot, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Peregrine Falcon.

Klotz Track

Access is from Green Hill Rd just past the Green Hill Dam. This is a good spot for Regent Honeyeater and also Painted Button-quail and Turquoise Parrot.

Bird selection is generally similar to that of the Green Hill Dam site (see above).

Ryans Road

The road runs along the northern edge of the park and borders the farmland so the habitats are diverse and the birdlife is vibrant. Access is from either Green Hill Rd or Howlong-Chiltern Rd, followed by turning into Rileys Rd.

Spotted Harriers are often seen flying over pasture near the small dams. This is a good place for robins such as Scarlet Robin, Red-capped Robin, Flame Robin and Jacky Winter.

It is also another good area for honeyeaters, particularly Black Honeyeater, White-fronted Honeyeater and, if you are lucky, Regent Honeyeater and Scarlet Honeyeater. We *were* lucky during our winter visit and counted 20 Regent Honeyeaters at this site. We also recorded Painted Button-quail, Brown Quail, Little Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Turquoise Parrot and four Yellow Rosellas (currently a subspecies of Crimson Rosella).

A family of Tawny Frogmouths were roosting in a frozen stance low in a tree by the dam and a few Hardheads and Grey Teals were on the water. Flame Robins were really common, mostly perching on the fences.

Other species recorded from this site are Restless Flycatcher, Olive-backed Oriole, Western Gerygone, Masked Woodswallow, White-browed Babbler, Crested Shrike-tit and Brown Goshawk.

Honeyeater Picnic Area and Cyanide Dam

This is one of the best birding sites in the Park. Regent Honeyeater has been recorded to be breeding here. Over 120 species of mostly woodland birds were reported from this area.

The site is located on the southern side of Hume Hwy. After turning south from the highway turn immediately left into Yackandandah Rd. Next turn right into Lancashire Gap Rd which will lead you to the picnic site and the dam.

A visit is advisable in the evening as this is a reliable site for White-spotted Nightjar. It is often seen at dusk catching insects over the Cyanide Dam. Tawny Frogmouth is nesting in a tree near the picnic site. In the still of the night you may also hear a 'woof-woof' call of the Barking Owl.

As you approach the Park, inspect the farmland fences and bushes along the road. You should get Diamond Firetail, Jacky Winter, Rufous Songlark, Flame Robin, Horsfield's Cuckoo, Pallid Cuckoo and Yellow-rumped Thornbill.

We stopped at the picnic site – it was teeming with honeyeaters. The most common were Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater and White-naped Honeyeater. We also found rarer species among them including Regent Honeyeater, Painted Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater and Scarlet Honeyeater.

Very tame Brown Treecreepers were hopping on the picnic tables. A pair of Turquoise Parrots were busy investigating a tree hollow close by. There were myriads of bush birds at the picnic site. We identified Varied Sittella, Brown Thornbill, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Weebill, Western Gerygone, White-browed Scrubwren and White-browed Babbler.

A comfortable walking track encircles the nearby dam. From there, we spotted a few White-breasted Woodswallows and Dusky Woodswallows flying over the water. Whistling Kite was resting in a tree. On the water were small numbers of Australasian Grebes and a single White-necked Heron was standing among several Australian White Ibises by the dam edge.

Our highlight of the day was to see three Gang-gang Cockatoos flying overhead.

White Box Walking Track

The track starts just north of the Honeyeater Picnic Area. It is 8.5km long but the birds can be found mostly along the first 2km of the route. Painted Button-quail are common in the area just off the entrance to the track. We saw a family with three chicks. Turquoise Parrots are easy to find here, too.

When you get higher, you will enter the Spotted Quail-thrush country. Look for them among the stones on the steep slopes. Peregrine Falcon can be observed flying over the ridge.

At the intersection with Ballarat Rd you will see stands of old ironbark trees with hollows. Barking Owls and Powerful Owls breed there. There are also plenty of lace monitors to be seen climbing up the tree trunks.

Lake Anderson and Caravan Park

This site is located in the Chiltern township and is not part of the national park. It is situated between Chiltern railway station and the main thoroughfare, Connes St. It is a nice place to stop and watch the ducks. The lake is a leftover from the mining activities and has an island which is enthusiastically used as a breeding colony by the waterbirds.

Rare duck species can be often found here (Blue-billed Duck, Freckled Duck, Australasian Shoveler and Australian Shelduck). A Blue-faced Honeyeater may be pestering you during your lunch, hopping on the picnic table as if it were a pesky Noisy Miner.

A small flock of Eurasian Tree Sparrows is resident in the parkland. Check all the sparrows there. Vegetation around the lake supports plenty of Little Grassbirds and Australian Reed-Warblers. Listen to their constant calling.

Mt Pilot Section

To get to that part of the Park turn south from Hume Hwy into Chiltern-Beechworth Rd (C377); it leads through the middle of the Park. There are several picnic sites and driving tracks around. Multiple roads lead to the park on both sides of the main road.

The vegetation is different from the Chiltern section – the granite hills are covered with black cypress pine while mugga ironbark is generally absent.

Birdwatching is good everywhere, even along the main thoroughfare Chiltern-Beechworth Rd; look for Speckled Warbler, it is common there.

Yedonba Road Picnic Area

This is the first access road to the eastern reaches of the Park coming from Hume Hwy. Turn left before Eagle Nursery and drive 2km to get to the carpark. From there, an interesting circular track at the foot of the Mt Pilot leads to the Aboriginal ochre paintings.

We experienced good birdwatching around the picnic site's carpark which is planted with silver wattle. The trees were full of small birds including White-throated Gerygone, Western Gerygone, Mistletoebird and masses of Yellow Thornbills and Buff-rumped Thornbills. There were also Striated Thornbills, Brown Thornbills and Weebills. A pair of Rose Robins were feeding in the flowering wattle.

Calls of Painted Honeyeaters and Purple-crowned Lorikeets could be heard around the picnic grounds. Satin Bowerbirds were hopping among the picnic tables.

At the entrance to the walking track we came across a pair of Bush Stone-curlews. The walking track runs through the stony ground. Climbing up and up, we encountered Painted Button-quail, Speckled Warbler, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Little Friarbird and Brown Goshawk. There were also plenty of Little Lorikeets.

Reported from Yedonba Rd Picnic Area are also White-backed Swallow, Turquoise Parrot, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin and White-throated Nightjar.

We continued along Yedonba Rd past the picnic site and found a small flock of White-fronted Chats on a wet paddock by the road.

Mt Pilot Summit

From the main road, turn east into an unsealed Old Coach Rd towards Mt Pilot summit (elevation 545m). We saw all good birds at the beginning of this road, near the Greenbreak Tk. We saw both local rarities, Regent Honeyeater (2, banded) and Turquoise Parrot (3). Flocks of honeyeaters congregated to feed on the flowering gums. We spotted Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, Little Friarbird and Noisy Friarbird. Besides the honeyeaters, the area also produced a sighting of Rose Robin, Brush Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Olive Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Australian King-Parrot, Striated Thornbill, Buff-rumped Thornbill and Varied Sittella.



Female Rufous Whistler

After reaching the Mt Pilot summit picnic are, it is a good idea to walk 300m to the summit to enjoy the 360° panoramic view. This is also an excellent vantage point for raptors. We saw Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Square-tailed Kite. There was also a flock of White-throated Needleetails flying over the hill.

Singing from the bush tops along the summit access path were numerous Flame Robins and Scarlet Robins. Spotted Quail-thrush is often seen near the summit.

There were some flowering gums at the carpark, heavy with honeyeaters including Black-chinned Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and White-naped Honeyeater. A very vocal mixed flock of Striated Thornbills, Weebills, Rufous Whistlers and Fan-tailed Cuckoos was feeding in the wattle understory around the picnic area.

McGuinness Road

This is the next road down the main road to the left (east). It runs along the southeastern border of the Park. The habitats include woodland, farmland and small dams. Birdlife comprise species preferring habitats of the forest edge. This area is good for Speckled Warbler, thornbills, Weebill and Varied Sittella. Australian Owlet-nightjar is rare in the Park but was reported a few times from this site.

We saw huge, noisy flocks of Red Wattlebirds feeding with other honeyeaters in the gum trees. There were also Fuscous Honeyeaters and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters in the mix. Rufous Whistlers' and Rufous Songlarks' calls could be heard from everywhere. Square-tailed Kite was circling over the forest edge. Australian King-Parrots and Gang-gang Cockatoos flew overhead.

Old Coach Road (west of Chiltern-Beechworth Road)

Coming for Chiltern, turn right (west) into Old Coach Rd from the main road (at the point opposite to the entry point to Mt Pilot, see above). This is a good area to search for Painted Button-quail and Chestnut-rumped Heathwren. Just at the beginning of this road, stop to check Gidleys Tk. A quick walk may reveal Black-chinned Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Dusky Woodswallow and Brown Goshawk. You may expect to see plenty of Scarlet Robins and Eastern Spinebills.

At the other end of Old Coach Rd a small wetland is located by the pasture in a valley. This is a good place for White-throated Nightjar that can often be seen at dusk hunting for insects at the forest edge. Buff-banded Rail, White-necked Heron, Jacky Winter, Brown Quail, European Goldfinch, Double-barred Finch, Red-browed Finch, Nankeen Kestrel and Whistling Kite may also put in an appearance.

Woolshed Road and Reedy Creek Road

Coming for Chiltern, turn right into Woolshed Rd from the main road. The site is good for Speckled Warbler, Turquoise Parrot and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. We located a small flock of Speckled Warblers at the Woolshed Falls, on the grass near the Historic Walk. We managed to find three groups of Turquoise Parrots; the best place was at a camp site near the turnoff to Reedy Creek Rd. The same spot also produced a sighting of Black-eared Cuckoo and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Other species, such as Crested Shrike-tit, Peaceful Dove, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella and Common Bronzewing, were also common and easy to find in the campground.

Warby-Owens National Park

The best patch of box-ironbark forest in Victoria is protected in this new National Park (created in 2010), in its northern section (Killawarra and Boweya Forests). You will find here the highest diversity of animal life that is dependent on the box-ironbark habitat. Other parts of the Park feature river red gum forest and wetlands of the unregulated Owens River and a granite substrate-based mosaic of open forest of the Warby Range dominated by Blakely's red gum, stringybark and a range of box species.

The Park is located 8km west of Wangaratta, access is either from Wangaratta via Wangaratta-Yarrawonga Rd (C374) and Wangandary Rd, or further south directly from Hume Fwy, turning into Old Hume Hwy and then to Glenrowran-Boweya Rd. There are multiple Park entries from both main roads. A detailed map of the whole Park is included in the Visitor Guide that can be downloaded here:

http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/315803/Park-note-Warby-Owens-National-Park.pdf.

The Park is home to many rare and/or threatened woodland species such as Turquoise Parrot, Swift Parrot, Speckled Warbler, Diamond Firetail, Hooded Robin, Painted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Barking Owl and Powerful Owl. If you are very lucky, you may see Regent Honeyeater – usually a visitor from the nearby Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park.

Killawarra Forest

This is the most visited and birdlife-rich section, strikingly different from the other parts of the Park. Logging in the former State Forest ceased in 2006 but the area still suffers from the damage and has a long way to go to regenerate.

Over 160 bird species are associated with the site. Look for Painted Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Painted Button-quail, White-throated Nightjar, Diamond Firetail and Barking Owl.

The Killawarra block is best entered from the south via Wangaratta-Yarrawonga Rd (C374), turning west into Boweya Rd and then north into Camp Rd. The roads inside the Killawarra block are mostly the old logging tracks and are still in good condition. Driving is usually easy in a 2WD vehicle. As in the other state forests-turned-national parks, the road condition will probably deteriorate with time.

The Forest Camp

Around this old logging camp try to locate Painted Honeyeater, Gilbert's Whistler, Hooded Robin, Little Lorikeet and Purple-crowned Lorikeet. In the night, you could hear White-throated Nightjar and may get to see Southern Boobook and Australian Owlet-nightjar.

In winter, when mugga ironbark is blooming, the place is transformed by a cacophony of sound of the nectar feeders. You will find thousands of Noisy Friarbirds and Little Friarbirds, Little Lorikeets and Musk Lorikeets. Small flocks of Swift Parrots are regularly feeding among them. We counted 21 Swift Parrots in a single tree.

The camp area is good all year round for White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Red-capped Robin, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Crested Shrike-tit and Mistletoebird.

The old oval site near the camp has a similar bird variety but is particularly good for Painted Honeyeater and Speckled Warbler. Look also for Black Honeyeater, Hooded Robin, Flame Robin and breeding White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Sometimes in summer you may witness large mixed flocks of woodswallows, tree martins and needle-tails flying over the oval – this is quite a spectacle. There may be some Rainbow Bee-eaters hawking for insects, too.

Raptors in the area include Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Australian Hobby and Brown Falcon. Sometimes even Black Falcon is found there.

Wallaby Hill Track and Selection Track

You will pass a small dam along the way. Expect to get Black-fronted Dotterel, Australasian Grebe and Little Black Cormorant there. We also found plenty of Brown Quails in the wet grass by the dam. At dusk, we observed White-throated Nightjar sweeping down low over the water to collect insects. It is regularly reported from this location.

The site is also good for Painted Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Restless Flycatcher, Red-capped Robin, Crested Shrike-tit and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.

North West Track

This site is excellent for Swift Parrot. When the gums are flowering, there will be masses of nectar feeders here including New Holland Honeyeater and Purple-crowned Lorikeet. In autumn, huge flocks of Silvereyes, Spotted Pardalotes and Striated Pardalotes descend on the area. It is also a good place for Australian Owlet-nightjar and Eastern Barn Owl.

Camp Road

Emus are resident here. Regular sightings of 8-10 birds are reported from the edge of the forest and pasture. We also heard Painted Honeyeater, calling at the top of its voice from the wattle understory.

Frost Road

Wedge-tailed Eagles are often circling over the paddocks along the road. The south end is a good spot for Grey-crowned Babbler. Look also for Emu, Australasian Pipit, Double-barred Finch, Jacky Winter and waterbirds on the dams.



Grey-crowned Babbler

Mattamia Lane

This is the most reliable location in the Park for Gilbert's Whistler. It can often be heard from the wattle at the end of Mattamia Ln. It is also a great site for Bush Stone-curlew, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Scarlet Robin, Diamond Firetail, White-throated Nightjar, Speckled Warbler, Restless Flycatcher, Crested Shrike-tit, Scarlet Honeyeater, and White-winged Triller.

A group of 20 Black Honeyeaters was foraging on the flowering mistletoes.

Boweya Forest

This is a small patch of box-ironbark forest, recently included in the National Park, located to the west of Killawarra Forest. Access is via Boweya Creek Rd.

It is an important habitat for Swift Parrot and many are congregating in this area in winter. It is also a good spot for Painted Honeyeater in spring and summer, when mistletoes are flowering.

Grey-crowned Babblers are common in the northern end of the block. Easy birding can be enjoyed along Keenan Rd, Wangaratta Rd and Derrick Tk. Most of birds can be found at the forest edge.

Keenan Road

This large dam offers a good variety of waterbirds, such as Australian Shelduck, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Eastern Great Egret, White-necked Heron and Australasian Darter. Black-fronted Dotterels breed on the gravelly paddocks near the dam.

The site is a reliable spot for Swift Parrot, Black Honeyeater and Painted Honeyeater. You may also come across Gilbert's Whistler, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Painted Button-quail, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, White-winged Triller, Masked Woodswallow and White-browed Woodswallow.

A glance over the paddocks along the road may produce sightings of Australasian Pipit, Flame Robin, Rufous Songlark, Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Red-rumped Parrot and Eastern Rosella. Also on the paddocks, you may observe large flocks of Little Ravens. Often seen flying over the paddocks near the dam are Spotted Harrier and Whistling Kite.

In autumn, you can expect birds coming down from the hills, often in high numbers. These include Crimson Rosella, Golden Whistler, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Flame Robin.

Wangaratta Road

This is a good location for Tree Martin, Southern Whiteface, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Musk Lorikeet and Purple-crowned Lorikeet. There will be plenty of small bush birds around, such as Buff-rumped Thornbill and Weebill. White-browed Babbler and Grey-crowned Babbler are very common. Listen for the calls of Gilbert's Whistler from a thick understory of the hill north of Wangaratta Rd.

Warby Range

The landscape of Warby Range comprises undulating hills, granite outcrops, heathy stringybark forest, grassy box woodland and small areas of cleared land. The best way to explore the scenery is to take a short drive starting at Ryan's Lookout. On your route stop at the Pine Gully and investigate a 1km circular nature walk, renowned for its wildflower display, continue to Black Spring that has many koalas, and finish at the Wenhams Camp, the only camping site in the Range.



Big boulders are a typical landscape feature of Warby Range

Pine Gully Picnic Area

This is a very productive birding site, particularly in late winter and in spring when the gums are in bloom. Also, the only good patch of native cypress pine can be found here. The star attraction is Turquoise Parrot but you will also see a wide variety of other woodland birds such as Western Gerygone, Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin, Diamond Firetail (very common here!), Speckled Warbler, Grey-crowned Babbler and Australian Owlet-nightjar. Peregrine Falcon and Australian Hobby are often seen flying over the area.

Black-chinned Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Little Lorikeet and Purple-crowned Lorikeet are very common. Six species of cuckoo were reported from this site including the rare Black-eared Cuckoo.

The nature walk may produce sightings of Painted Button-quail, Brown Quail and Stubble Quail. The rarities include Olive Whistler, Grey Currawong, Rose Robin and Southern Whiteface.

Wenhams Camp

The habitats around the camp comprise grassy areas surrounded by box-stringybark open woodland. Turquoise Parrots are frequent visitors to the camp and the best places to find them are the picnic area, Friends Tk (circular walk starting at the camp) and Booth Tk.

Speckled Warblers can often be observed in the shrubby vegetation below Booth Tk. In the campsite, look for Crested Shrike-tit, Restless Flycatcher, Brown Treecreeper, White-browed Babbler, Varied Sittella, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Common Bronzewing, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill and Jacky Winter. All are common here. In winter expect to find robins (Scarlet Robin, Flame Robin and Red-capped Robin).

Powerful Owl has been seen near the campsite. If you are camping overnight, you may hear the calls of Australian Owlet-nightjar.

18 species of honeyeaters were reported from the campsite including such rarities as Black Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater and Painted Honeyeater. Other rare species you may encounter here include Hooded Robin, Gilbert's Whistler, Grey Currawong and Brush Bronzewing.

Taminick Gap

This is the southernmost block of the Warby Range, closest to Hume Fwy (M31). Ridge Tk transects the area north-south and is good for birding. Try to find Turquoise Parrot and Speckled Warbler. The common resident species include White-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Restless Flycatcher, Southern Whiteface, Crimson Rosella, Diamond Firetail, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and Black-chinned Honeyeater.

Summer migrants at Taminick Gap include Rainbow Bee-eater, Sacred Kingfisher, White-throated Gerygone, Pallid Cuckoo and Black-eared Cuckoo. In winter, masses of honeyeaters descend on the area, dominated by Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill. There will be also robins, such as Flame Robin, and the birds coming down from the higher altitudes, such as Gang-gang Cockatoo.

Rarer species include Bush Stone-curlew, Square-tailed Kite, Little Eagle, Fork-tailed Swift, White-throated Needletail, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Currawong, Satin Flycatcher, Zebra Finch and Double-barred Finch.

Ovens River Section

This part of the Park provides a wildlife corridor from the Warbys to the Murray River. Main access is via Wangaratta-Yarrowonga Rd (C374) with multiple turnoffs to the Park.

The river is lined with bottlebrushes and, when in bloom, they attract plenty of honeyeaters including Scarlet Honeyeater and Blue-faced Honeyeater.

There are numerous billabongs along the river, supporting a good selection of waterbirds. Expect to see Australian Shelduck, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Australasian Shoveler, Black-fronted Dotterel and Azure Kingfisher. Good numbers of Yellow Rosellas (a subspecies of Crimson Rosella) are breeding in the river red gums.

Stop at the Parolas Bridge; you will find an interesting selection of waterbirds and woodland birds here. Look for Brown Treecreeper, Dusky Woodswallow, Crested Shrike-tit, Fairy Martin, Tree Martin and Swamp Harrier. In the dense wattles we observed plenty of the insectivores, inspecting an underside of each leaf. We identified Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, White-throated Gerygone, Western Gerygone and Golden Whistler. There was also Rose Robin and Leaden Flycatcher.

Euroa

Euroa is a small township on Hume Hwy (M31) located northeast of Seymour. This is a known stopover for Swift Parrots which are found here and in the surrounding small reserves and parks in winter. Flocks up to 40 birds have been recorded.

The birds are recorded in town on trees in Drysdale Rd, Lewis St and in the football grounds in the Euroa Public Park, Dunn St. In the park look also for Tawny Frogmouth, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Blue-faced Honeyeater.

It is worth to visit the Euroa Arboretum, located at the corner of Hume Hwy (M31) and Euroa Main Rd (C312). A wetland by a lake and a circuit track through the woodland create bird habitats worth checking. This is a good place for Diamond Firetail, Brown Treecreeper and Scarlet Robin. If grevilleas are blooming, there will be Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills, Little Friarbirds, Musk Lorikeets and Purple-crowned Lorikeets there.

Balmattum Nature Conservation Reserve

This small 220ha reserve is located at the corner of Old Euroa Rd and Mahers Rd north of Euroa. The Reserve protects plain grassy woodland dominated by grey box. This is a very important stopover for Swift Parrots when box is flowering in winter.

Other birds in this Reserve include Brown Treecreeper, Scarlet Robin, Red-capped Robin, Weebill, Eastern Rosella, Diamond Firetail, Australian Owlet-nightjar and a small, healthy population of Grey-crowned Babblers. Occasionally, you may come across a family of Bush Stone-curlews.

Winton Wetlands

This is the Australia's largest wetland restoration project, nearly 9,000ha of land with 3,000ha of water. Formerly an irrigation reservoir, known as Lake Mokoan, it was deemed unsuitable and decommissioned due to excessive evaporation. The area was then rehabilitated as a collection of shallow ponds surrounded by the river red gum and grassy box woodland. Walking and cycling paths were constructed. Local schools run environmental education programmes here.



Red-backed Kingfisher

The site boasts an impressive number of bird species; over 200 are on the birdlist. Many rare birds can be found here including Australian Painted-snipe, Brolga, Freckled Duck, Glossy Ibis, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Red-backed Kingfisher, Regent Honeyeater, Black-

chinned Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail, White-backed Swallow, Zebra Finch and Black Falcon.

Birding here is easy and rewarding – you will never be disappointed. Even if you miss out on some of the rarities, watching the large congregation of waterbirds on the ponds can be an exhilarating experience. As the wetlands are in close proximity to Warby-Ovens National Park, in drought times thousands of birds drift from the park in search of water. Birdwatching here is then a marvellous feast.

The wetlands are located by the Hume Fwy (M31) between Benalla and Wangaratta. Access is from the Hume Fwy, you can see the lake from the road. Turn off from the freeway and take either Benalla-Yarrowonga Rd (C373) or Glenrowan-Boweya Rd to get to the wetlands. A winding gravel path, often overgrown with weeds, leads through the wetlands. It has three access points. A stroll along this path will take you to a number of ephemeral and two permanent wetlands. A site map can be downloaded from here http://multiculturalarts.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/WW_Map_Jul15.pdf.

Waterbirds are the main attraction of this site. During our visit there was a congregation of some 2,500 Australian Pelicans, gorging on fish in the shallows. This was an unforgettable sight. The lakes were also full of Eurasian Coots, Grey Teals and Black Swans.

13 duck species were reported from this site including Freckled Duck, Australian Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler and Musk Duck. Look also for rails and crakes. You may find Lewin's Rail, Australian Spotted Crake and Black-tailed Native-hen.

Waders are plentiful, particularly when the ponds start drying up. Black-fronted Dotterel and Pied Stilt are always in residence while other native waders such as Red-kneed Dotterel, Red-capped Plover and Red-necked Avocet can be found sporadically. If you are lucky, you may even get Australian Painted-snipe. Summer migrants from the Northern Hemisphere arrive here in good numbers. The most common are Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pacific Golden Plover but look also for Red-necked Stint, Marsh Sandpiper and Latham's Snipe.

All three grebe species are resident in the Winton Wetlands. Silver Gulls and Whiskered Terns are common, the latter often in large numbers. We watched a flock of about 200 Whiskered Terns hunting for insect over the wetlands. Among them were also a few Gull-billed Terns and Caspian Terns and a single White-winged Black Tern.

16 raptors species have been reported from this site. We observed a good number of Whistling Kites over the wetlands. Little Eagle was circling above the old boathouse. A large female Peregrine Falcon was consuming a Crested Pigeon at the boathouse ramp. Australian Hobby was chasing Welcome Swallows. Five Wedge-tailed Eagles were soaring high in the sky. Other reports mention sightings of White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black Falcon, Spotted Harrier and Collared Sparrowhawk.

A good birding spot is the Spit, a long sand lunette with the grassy woodland extending into the wetland and allowing a great view into the wetland. When the shrubs grow higher, this view may get obstructed in this flat terrain. We saw large numbers of Yellow-billed Spoonbills, White-necked Herons, Grey Teals and Australian Pelicans from there. In the grassy areas, flocks of Diamond Firetails, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Red-rumped Parrots were foraging for seeds.

Woodland at the wetland edges provides a good habitat for Brown Treecreeper, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Shrike-tit, Rufous Whistler, Pied Butcherbird and White-browed Babbler. When the gum trees are in bloom, there are plenty of Purple-crowned Lorikeets, Little Lorikeets, Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Black-chinned Honeyeaters, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds and Little Friarbirds. During one of our visits, Blue-faced Honeyeaters were everywhere.

Rarities such as Speckled Warbler, Black-eared Cuckoo, Painted Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Brown Songlark, Hooded Robin, Scarlet Robin and White-backed Swallow can also be encountered from time to time in the woods.

In the wetland vegetation you may encounter plenty of White-fronted Chats, Australian Reed-Warblers, Golden-headed Cisticolas and very vocal Little Grassbirds.

We enjoyed watching large mixed flocks of Fairy Martins, Tree Martins, Welcome Swallows and White-throated Needletails, with a few Fork-tailed Swifts among them. We noticed that Fairy Martins were nesting in good numbers by the weir near an old keeper's house. We looked in awe as thousands of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos descended on the grass in white clouds. Stubble Quails and Brown Quails were very common, often coming out onto the paths. We listened with pleasure to their whistling calls from the grass.

Hicks Rd Wetlands, Yarrawonga

The site is a small, ephemeral wetland located along Hicks Rd approximately 6km southeast of Yarrawonga.

To get there, take Benalla-Yarrawonga Rd (C373) from Yarrawonga and then turn left (east) into Hicks Rd and drive for 1.5km. The swamp is to the south of Hicks Rd. Muckatah Creek feeds the swamp which comes to life during the floods.

Over 70 species are on the swamp's birdlist. The site is known for the regular appearance of Wood Sandpiper in summer. Other species of interest include Australasian Shoveler, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Little Grassbird. Rarer birds found occasionally here include White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Peregrine Falcon.

When we visited this site in September the swamp was drying out. A large flock of Red-kneed Dotterels (about 100 birds) was foraging on the mudflats. Among them were good numbers of Black-fronted Dotterels (20) and a couple of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. The swamp was fully overgrown with no open water. About 20 White-necked Herons spaced themselves out in the area. Little Grassbirds were wailing everywhere. Swamp Harrier was flying overhead.

On the surrounding paddocks we found Australasian Pipit, Stubble Quail, Golden-headed Cisticola, Eastern Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Nankeen Kestrel and Brown Falcon. Large flocks of parrots were foraging on stubble-fields, particularly Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Little Corellas.



Parrots on a stubble-field

Moodie Swamp Wildlife Reserve

The Reserve is located along Benalla-Tocumwal Rd (C371) near Waggarandall, southwest of Yarrawonga. This seasonal, semi-permanent, shallow (0.5m deep) freshwater swamp covers nearly 200ha and is situated within the Goulburn Broken Catchment. The swamp is surrounded by a belt of grey box gums and a sea of irrigated agricultural land. The source of irrigation is Broken Creek that flows through the Reserve.

The wetland provides the critical breeding habitat for Brolgas. Usually, 1-2 pairs breed in the swamp and after the breeding season more birds congregate here. The swamp is overgrown by cane grass which is Brolga's favourite nesting environment. To allow

Brolgas to nest successfully, environmental water flows are regularly allocated to the swamp.

To get to the site, turn from Benalla-Tocumwal Rd (C371) into McLaughlin Rd and then quickly to Moodie Rd which gives you access to the eastern side of the Reserve. Access to the western side is from the main road. Brolgas often stand in the swamp in the western section.

Over 100 bird species have been recorded at this site. The **key species** is Brolga, other notable species include White-necked Heron, Musk Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Brown Treecreeper, Western Gerygone and, in autumn, Scarlet Robin and Flame Robin. Rarities include Glossy Ibis, Marsh Sandpiper, Australian Spotted Crane, Plumed Whistling-Duck and Cockatiel.

During our visit, the swamp held a fair amount of water but cane grass was covering most of the area and the birds were well hidden in it except for the taller egrets and herons. White-necked Herons and Eastern Great Egrets were there in their hundreds. There were also a few Glossy Ibises and Yellow-billed Spoonbills. A single Brolga was standing in the northern section of the site.

The swamp was loaded with thousands of the waterbirds, with Grey Teals, Hardheads, Black Swans, Australian Pelicans, Australasian Grebes and Eurasian Coots being the most common. In this crowd, we found a couple of Australasian Shovelers and a single Musk Duck.

The list of bush birds for this area includes Brown Treecreeper, Crested Shrike-tit, White-winged Triller, Sacred Kingfisher and Rufous Songlark. In the grey box woodland in the southern corner of the site we came across Western Gerygone, White-browed Woodswallow, Red-rumped Parrot (breeding here), Brown Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Striated Pardalote and Restless Flycatcher.

Stubble Quails were calling from the cropland near the main road. A small flock of Zebra Finches flew by.

Spotted Harrier was cruising over the crops while Australian Hobby perched in a dead tree. White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Whistling Kite were circling over the swamp; both species are nesting there.

Lake Moodemere Reserve

Lake Moodemere is a picturesque freshwater lake located on the Victoria/NSW border 6km west of Rutherglen. To get there, from Murray Valley Hwy (B400) in Rutherglen turn right into Moodemere Rd, then right into Lake Rd which will take you to the western shores of the lake. This is the main entrance to the Reserve. McDonald Rd runs along the eastern side of the lake but this road is often inundated.

The lake is set amongst a flooded river red gum forest that stretches as far as the Murray River. Facilities include a boat ramp, picnic area with shelters and a network of tracks that often are muddy or flooded.



Flooded river red gums at Lake Moodemere

Over 140 species have been recorded in the Reserve. **Key species** are Great Crested Grebe, Grey-crowned Babbler, Dollarbird and Azure Kingfisher. Other notable species include Brown Treecreeper, Scarlet Robin, Western Gerygone, Rainbow Bee-eater, Blue-faced Honeyeater and Little Eagle. Among the rarities are White-backed Swallow, Musk Duck, Red-backed Kingfisher and Black Falcon.

While driving to the site, we birdwatched along Lake Rd. We found a family of Grey-crowned Babblers and a large flock (200 birds) of White-browed Woodswallows with a few Masked and Dusky Woodswallows mixed with them. Olive-backed Oriole was calling monotonously. Australian Hobby perched at the top of a tree. White-backed Swallows are often observed flying over Lake Rd.

We visited the site when there was plenty of water in the lake and the tracks were muddy so the gumboots proved very useful. We saw plenty of common waterfowl in the water as well as Musk Duck, Australian Shelduck, Great Crested Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe and Nankeen Night-Heron. White dots of egrets and spoonbills were scattered around the lake edges. We saw both Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills. Twenty more Yellow-billed Spoonbills were roosting in a dead tree. White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier were circling over the lake.

Brown Treecreepers were very common, hopping among picnic tables near the boat ramp. Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Grassbird were calling noisily for the reeds. Yellow Rosellas were plentiful, inspecting hollows in the old gum trees.

We walked the wet track leading to the north end of the lake with the flooded forest. We counted eight Dollarbirds on the way. We also got Sacred Kingfisher, Azure Kingfisher, White-winged Triller, Rainbow Bee-eater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Blue-faced Honeyeater, White-breasted Woodswallow, Rufous Songlark, Pallid Cuckoo, Jacky Winter, Restless Flycatcher, Tawny Frogmouth and Brown Goshawk. A characteristic feature of this Reserve is a large flock of white cockatoos, mostly Little Corellas, which roost in the gum trees overnight in their thousands.

During the autumn migration the reserve experiences an influx of birds in transit. You will see here flocks of Noisy Friarbirds, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Spotted Pardalotes, Grey Fantails and Golden Whistlers.

Black Swamp Wildlife Reserve

The 126ha Black Swamp Wildlife Reserve, also known as Black Dog Creek Reserve, is located near Boorhaman East, southwest of Rutherglen in northern Victoria. This freshwater ephemeral swamp has formed in a confluence of the Diddah Diddah Creek and Daddah Daddah Creek (we just love the Australian place names). You will find here an impressive river red gum woodland with rich birdlife. At least 20 waterbird species choose to nest here including Nankeen Night-Heron, Royal Spoonbill and Eastern Great Egret. There are plenty of hollows in the mature gum trees for the hollow dwellers.

To get there, use Federation Way (C375), turn west into Boorhaman-Springhurst Rd and then north onto Boorhaman East Rd that runs through the Reserve.

Over 110 bird species have been recorded in the swamp. The site became known when Australian Painted-snipe was reported from this site several times in numbers of up to 10 birds. Other species of interest include Buff-banded Rail, White-browed Babbler, Grey-crowned Babbler, Brown Treecreeper, Rainbow Bee-eater, Sacred Kingfisher and Dollarbird. Rarities encountered here include Australian Little Bittern, Musk Duck, Barking Owl and Little Eagle.

For birdwatching, walk along Boorhaman East Rd or try to traverse the swamp along a track running east. It is usually overgrown and needs gumboots.

The good time to be there is when the swamp is drying out. Red-kneed Dotterels would fossick among the exposed decaying water weeds in the wet mud. The same habitat also attracts Australian Painted-snipe. Expect to see Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Australian Shelduck and White-necked Heron.

In the surrounding bushland look for Dusky Woodswallow, Peaceful Dove, Restless Flycatcher, Little Friarbird, Apostlebird, Jacky Winter, Western Gerygone and Weebill. Thousands of parrots, mostly Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Eastern Rosellas, are often observed here. Flame Robin and Scarlet Robin appear in winter.

Burramine South Swamp

This large ephemeral swamp is situated approximately 260km north of Melbourne on both sides of Tungamah Rd just north of Telford-Tungamah Rd. It is on private land but can be easily observed from the road verge.

The site can be approached from different directions, depending on your trip plan. Main access is via Shepparton on Goulburn Valley Fwy (A39). Past Seymour, turn right into Hume Hwy (M31). At Benalla, take Midland Hwy (A300) and get to Devenish Rd. The site is located midway between Tungamah and Burramine South.

An amazing number of species, mostly waterfowl, can be found on this relatively small site. We got over 80 species. Australian Spotted Crake and Black-tailed Native-hen are common there. The main species are Glossy Ibis and Freckled Duck.

At times of high water levels thousands of ducks congregate on the swamp. When water is receding, waders appear in high numbers. Red-kneed Dotterels forage on the exposed mud while Pied Stilts and Yellow-billed Spoonbills tread in the shallows.

This a very reliable spot for Yellow-billed Spoonbill and White-necked Heron; they are always there in relatively large numbers. You are likely to find most of other herons on this site. Ducks are dominated by Grey Teals, congregating here in masses. There were 1,500 Grey Teals on the water during our visit. Among them were Freckled Ducks, Australasian Shovelers, Freckled Ducks, Chestnut Teals and Australian Shelducks. Sometimes, Plumed Whistling-Ducks appear here in impressive numbers.

The northern end of the swamp is good for Baillon's Crakes, Australian Spotted Crake and Buff-banded Rail. We saw three Australian Spotted Crakes among the sparse rushes. Glossy Ibis is regularly found in this swamp; sometimes you can even see Brolga.

There is a good variety of woodland species in the surrounding bush. Look for Restless Flycatcher, White-winged Triller, White-browed Woodswallow, Little Friarbird, White-throated Gerygone, Musk Lorikeet, Cockatiel, Tree Martin, Pied Butcherbird and Grey Butcherbird.

Check the crop fields, there is nearly a full complement of cropland birds here. We found Brown Quail, Stubble Quail, Australasian Pipit, Rufous Songlark, Brown Songlark and Horsfield's Bushlark.

Twelve raptor species have been recorded in the area. Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black Falcon and Peregrine Falcon were all present in the sky for us. Flying over canola crops was a single Spotted Harrier.

On your way to the Burramine South Swamp, take a small detour to Telford on Telford-Tungamah Rd. Look around the silos located besides the railway line. Peregrine Falcon has a nest there, gorging on the pigeons plentiful in this grain country. Black Falcon was also reported from this area a few times.

Check the recently ploughed paddocks; Banded Lapwings may be there as they are attracted to freshly turned-over soil. We also found good numbers of Rufous Songlarks and Brown Songlarks displaying over the canola fields.

Other birds in the area include Flame Robin (in winter), Zebra Finch, Tree Martin, White-necked Heron (on wet paddocks), Cockatiel and Little Raven.

Corop Wetlands

The site is located near the Corop village on Midland Hwy (A300) between Elmore and Stanhope, about 50km south of Echuca and 70km northeast of Bendigo.

Corop Wetlands are by far the most important area for Brolga in northern Victoria, with about 40 birds in residence. Some argue that the significance of these wetlands for birdlife is comparable with the internationally recognised Macquarie Marshes in NSW.

The site comprises a series of 10 wetlands that stretch for 30km from Mansfield Swamp in the north to One Tree Swamp in the south, covering the area of 1,500ha. The wetlands include Lake Cooper, Greens Lake, Wallenjoe Swamp and Gaynor Swamp. The site is part of the Goulburn River floodplain and is regularly flooded after the heavy rains.

Lake Cooper and Greens Lake have public access. The smaller, intermittent lakes and swamps are located on private properties but some of them, such as Wallenjoe Swamp and Mansfield Swamp, are accessible from Midland Hwy (A300).

Apart from Brolga, species of interest include Freckled Duck, Australasian Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Blue-billed Duck, Caspian Tern and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Over 50 species of waterbirds have been recorded here.

Greens Lake

Access is from Midland Hwy (A300). Turn into Greens Lake Rd or Irving Rd. A picnic area is accessed from Greens Lake Rd.

At the time of our visit, the lake was full of water and brimming with birdlife. Four Brolgas were wading stately in the swampy grass. The lake was filled with Black Swans, Hardheads and Eurasian Coots. Among them we identified Great Crested Grebe, Musk Duck, Pink-eared Duck and Australasian Shoveler. Whiskered Terns were roosting on the floating vegetation. Swamp Harrier and Caspian Tern flew over the lake.

Birds along Greens Lake Rd included White-winged Triller, Brown Treecreeper, Red-rumped Parrot, Tree Martin, Brown Quail and Australasian Pipit. Stubble Quails were calling from the pasture.

Wallenjoe Swamp

The site is located on the south side of Midland Hwy (A300), about 2km east of Greens Lake. You can scan the wetland from the road. The eastern part is also visible from Enders Rd when it is passable. On the opposite side of the main road Mansfield Swamp is located so check this area too.

Brolga is reported to often frequent both swamps and the adjacent paddocks if flooded. We did not find them here but were consoled with the large flocks of waterbirds, mostly Grey Teals, on the water. On the banks of a canal near open water we found a flock of Plumed Whistling-Ducks. In the swampy areas we also saw Australasian Shoveler, Australian Shelduck, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, White-necked Heron, Eastern Great Egret and Hoary-headed Grebe. Collared Sparrowhawk was carrying something to the nest.



Yellow-billed Spoonbill in breeding plumage

Other birds we came across in this area included Tree Martin, Eastern Rosella, Flame Robin, Black-tailed Native-hen and Buff-banded Rail.

Lake Cooper

This is the largest and most accessible lake in the area. From Corop on Midland Hwy (A300) take Lake Cooper Rd and drive south to explore the western shore of the lake. For the eastern side, choose Lake Rd. There are good public facilities at this site including a boat ramp and two picnic areas.

Water levels here fluctuate widely and in some years the lake may be completely dry. We visited the area in summer 2015; water was receding and large numbers of waders were attracted to the exposed mud. About 2,500 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were on the mud. Among them we identified Red-capped Plovers, Black-fronted Dotterels, Red-kneed Dotterels, and about 200 Red-necked Stints. There were about 2,000 Red-necked Avocets in the shallow water.

Online records indicate that Double-banded Plovers may appear here in winter in significant numbers.

The open water was covered thickly with ducks, mostly Grey Teals. We stopped counting at 6,000. There were also smaller numbers of Australian Shelducks, Australasian Shovelers and Pink-eared Ducks. Three grebe species were present on the lake. There was large raft of Hoary-headed Grebes and a couple of Great Crested Grebes and Australasian Grebes. Rarer ducks reported from Lake Cooper include Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck and Chestnut Teal.

We encountered a good variety of raptors in the area. White-bellied Sea-Eagle was busy terrorising a flock of Pink-eared Ducks. We also saw Australian Hobby, Swamp Harrier and Whistling Kite.

On the lawn at the picnic site by the lake, in a large flock of Galahs we found two Long-billed Corellas and several Eastern Rosellas and Red-rumped Parrots.

Other birds we found between Corop and the lake roads include White-fronted Chat (fairly common), Little Grassbird, Zebra Finch, Tree Martin, Fairy Martin, Singing Honeyeater, White-browed Woodswallow, Grey-crowned Babbler and European Goldfinch.



European Goldfinch

Rarities reported from this site include Australian Pratincole, Bush-stone Curlew, Swift Parrot, Peregrine Falcon and Powerful Owl.

Gaynor Swamp

The swamp is located south of Lake Cooper. You can observe the area from the causeway along the track through the swamp.

The birds to look for here include Baillon's Crake and Australian Spotted Crake. If there is enough water, there will be a good variety of ducks including Blue-billed Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Chestnut Teal and good numbers of Australasian Shovelers and Australian Shelducks. If the track through the swamp is not flooded, look for Brown Quail, Stubble Quail, Little Grassbird and Australian Reed-Warbler.

Bushland birds in the area include Flame Robin, Brown Treecreeper, White-throated Treecreeper and Sacred Kingfisher. Black Falcon and Swamp Harrier are often reported from this swamp.

Horseshoe Lake

The site is situated east of Lake Cooper, along Wanalta-Corop Rd.

We saw impressive numbers of waterbirds on this lake. There were about 2,000 Eurasian Coots, 500 Black Swans and a 500-strong raft of Australasian Grebes, mostly

juveniles. There were also Australian Shelducks, Red-necked Avocets and Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

We continued along Wanalta-Corop Rd past the lake in the southerly direction. We found three Brolgas on a paddock and a few Plumed Whistling-Ducks on a verge of a small dam. There were plenty Australasian Pipits in the paddocks.

One Tree Swamp Nature Reserve

The site is located east of Wanalta-Corop Rd. The One Tree Swamp Nature Reserve and the bordering Two Tree Swamp Nature Reserve (yes!) are surrounded by private land and practically inaccessible. They provide breeding habitat for Brolgas and support other threatened species such as Australasian Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Freckled Duck, Blue-billed Duck, Latham's Snipe and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. There are sporadic records of Australian Painted-snipe from this area. Large flocks of Banded Stilts occasionally visit the site.

Kooyoora State Park

The site is located 200km northwest of Melbourne and is home to Melville Caves which are very popular with tourists. If coming up from Melbourne, take Calder Hwy (A79) from Bendigo and turn left into Inglewood-Rheola Rd in Inglewood. Follow the road for about 12km. From this road, and from Wehla-Kingower Rd further down, you can take several tracks leading into the Park. The State Park comprises several blocks and is best navigated with the detailed Parks Victoria map that can be downloaded here:

http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/536176/Map-Kooyoora-SP.pdf.

The Park offers a huge diversity of landscapes and vegetation types. We admired large boulders scattered around Mount Kooyoora and enjoyed the breathtaking panorama of the valley from the lookout. Possibly the best patches of box ironbark in Victoria are protected in the Park. Some of the area resembles a pre-European forest with plenty of old trees full of nesting hollows.

Expect to find a rich selection of dry forest species such as Painted Honeyeater, Crested Bellbird, Hooded Robin, Gilbert's Whistler and Southern Whiteface. This is also a winter destination for Swift Parrot migrating from Tasmania. 23 honeyeater species are on the Park's birdlist including White-fronted Honeyeater, Purple-gaped Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and Black Honeyeater.

Mount Kooyoora Block

This section includes Melville Caves and the adjacent picnic site, the most tourist-oriented area of the Park. Vegetation consists of open grassy red gum woodland and granite hills overgrown with eucalyptus with wattle understory.

This is a good site for Speckled Warbler, Gilbert's Whistler, Scarlet Robin, Diamond Firetail and Rainbow Bee-eater.

Melville Caves Camping Area

A good birding spot is located about 400m before the camping site. Speckled Warblers are abundant there. Other birds include White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, White-browed Woodswallow, Olive-backed Oriole, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater and Black-chinned Honeyeater.



White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike on the nest

Gilbert's Whistlers are sometimes common around the picnic area of Melville Caves. Honeyeaters are abundant, particularly in winter and in the mistletoe flowering season. Fourteen species were reported from this location including Singing Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Brown-headed Honeyeater and White-naped Honeyeater.

The bush conceals an abundance of thornbills. Look for Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill (both breeding nearby), Buff-rumped Thornbill, Weebill and Western Gerygone.

Kirwan Road

The vegetation around Kirwan Rd is mostly low open scrubland on granite slopes. This is a good location for Speckled Warbler; their buzzing alarm calls can often be heard in the area. Rainbow Bee-eaters breed here. Often seen around are White-browed Woodswallows and Dusky Woodswallows. When mistletoes are flowering in the wattles, look for Black Honeyeater.

Other birds in this area include Red-capped Robin, Scarlet Robin, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Western Gerygone, Singing Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater and Fuscous Honeyeater.

Breakneck Road and Kirwan Road Intersection

This is an excellent spot for Painted Button-quail and Crested Bellbird. You can also get five robin species here including Southern Scrub-robin. This species is sought after here by the birdwatchers as it is usually found far west in the mallee country. To get this bird, follow Breakneck Rd to Western Rd (near the cemetery) and investigate clumps of wallowa wattles.

In winter, masses of Little Lorikeets, Musk Lorikeets and Purple-crowned Lorikeets appear here. Checks these flocks for Swift Parrots as they also winter in this location in small numbers.

Melville Caves Road

The site is good for Crested Shrike-tit, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Currawong, Restless Flycatcher and Mistletoebird. The thickets of wattles growing on the rocky outcrops are very good for Gilbert's Whistler.

Look for raptors; Wedge-tailed Eagle and Little Eagle may be circling overhead.

Wehla Block

This is the southern section of the Park, extending from Wehla to Bourkes Flat. Vegetation comprises mostly good quality ironbark forest. There is a choice of access from all sides, with roads in good nick. This area is important for Swift Parrots - they visit here in winter when ironbarks are flowering. Flocks of up to 30 birds can be found around O'Briens Dam Rd, Grassy Flat Tk, Bourkes Flat-Wehla Rd, Webbs Ln and Devil Range Tk.

The whole area is good for the honeyeaters; 18 species have been recorded. Black-chinned Honeyeater is common but there is also a good chance to get White-fronted Honeyeater and Painted Honeyeater here.

Grassy Flat Road

Grassy Flat Rd is one of best birding locations in the block. Swift Parrot, Painted Honeyeater and White-fronted Honeyeater are regularly found there. Three lorikeet species: Little Lorikeet, Purple-crowned Lorikeet and Musk Lorikeet can appear here in their hundreds.

Bourkes Flat-Wehla Road

Look for Swift Parrot, White-fronted Honeyeater, Crested Bellbird, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Pallid Cuckoo, Horsfield's Cuckoo and Fan-tailed Cuckoo along this road.

O'Briens Dam Road

This is the best spot for Swift Parrot. Other birds here include White-fronted Honeyeater, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black-tailed Native-hen, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Diamond Firetail and five robins including Flame Robin, Red-capped Robin and Scarlet Robin.

Webbs Lane

You can find Spotted Quail-thrush here as well as Swift Parrot, White-browed Babbler, Brush Bronzewing and Little Eagle.

Glenalbyn Block

This flat area, covered with a grey box and yellow gum woodland, is located in the northern part of the Park. Access is from Calder Hwy (A79), turning into Brenanah-Glenalbyn Rd just before Glenalbyn.

Birds here are similar to those in other parts of the Park. Look for Tawny-crowned Honeyeater in the mallee patches. Swift Parrot can be found here in winter.

Common along Brenanah-Glenalbyn Rd are Diamond Firetail, White-browed Babbler, Rufous Songlark, Restless Flycatcher, Brown Treecreeper and Long-billed Corella.

Doctors Swamp Wildlife Reserve

Doctors Swamp Wildlife Reserve is a 271ha shallow freshwater marsh located near Murchison. It is managed by Parks Victoria. It is considered to be one of most important river red gum reserves in Victoria.

The triangular-shaped site stretches along Bendigo-Murchison Rd (C345), the other two boundaries run along Willow Rd and Old Whroo Rd. The Cattnach Canal flows through the Reserve supplying freshwater to the swamp. The water flow is based on a natural regime which is a rarity in Victoria. Only about once in 10 years it needs a top-up with environmental flows from elsewhere.

West of Murchison turn into Willow Rd. Birdwatching opportunities can be found along this road, Old Whroo Rd and along the short tracks going into the Reserve. In wet weather all access roads may be under water and the site becomes inaccessible.

An information board and a picnic site are located just off Willow Rd. Murchison Sewage Ponds are located south of Old Whroo Rd along the intersecting Cassidy Rd.

This little Reserve can be a good stopover on the way to the Heathcote-Graytown National Park (see further in the text). Over 100 bird species have been recorded here. Blue-billed Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Latham's Snape, crakes and rails can be found here. The old river red gums offer a selection of hollows so the parrots flock to breed there. Rarer species reported from the swamp include Brolga, Swift Parrot, Superb Parrot, Eastern Koel, Diamond Firetail and Grey-crowned Babbler.

We visited the Reserve in spring. The gum forest was flooded and only pockets of vegetation on a higher ground were above the water. First, we stopped in Bendigo-Murchison Rd on our way, just when we reached the eastern corner of the reserve. The Stewart Murray Canal crosses the site there next to the Cattnach Canal. We found Rainbow Bee-eater, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Blue-faced Honeyeater and a couple of Azure Kingfishers there.

Next, we turned from Willow Rd into a short track leading into the Reserve just after the turnoff from Bendigo-Murchison Rd. Australian Reed-Warbler and Fan-tailed Cuckoo were calling from everywhere and pobblebonk frogs were croaking nonstop. We observed a pair of Fan-tailed Cuckoos mating on the tree branch. Other birds on the track included Buff-banded Rail, Australian Spotted Crake, Baillon's Crake, Caspian Tern and Eastern Great Egret. Three Latham's Snipes flushed from the ground vegetation as we walked.

The area along Willow Rd near the information board is the driest part of the Reserve. We found plenty of Brown Treecreepers, Fuscous Honeyeaters and Striated Pardalotes. There were also Rufous Songlark, Peaceful Dove and Jacky Winter. A family of Grey-crowned Babblers were foraging on the ground.

Old Whroo Rd was very wet. The flooded vegetation along the road was full of herons including Eastern Great Egret, White-necked Heron and White-faced Heron. We also found Buff-banded Rail, Latham's Snipe and Baillon's Crake.

Along Cassidy Rd the sewage ponds were filled with the waterbirds, mostly Grey Teals, Eurasian Coots and masses of Purple Swamphens. Rarer species among them included Musk Duck, Blue-billed Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Australasian Shoveler and Australian Shelduck. Little Grassbirds were calling from the rushes. Wet vegetation also attracted White-fronted Chats, Golden-headed Cisticolas and European Goldfinches. In the surrounding scrub we found Brown Treecreeper, Golden Whistler, White-breasted Woodswallow, Southern Whiteface and Pallid Cuckoo. On the causeway between the ponds, a large flock of Royal Spoonbills with a couple of Yellow-billed Spoonbills were roosting. Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier were circling over the ponds. There are records of other raptors visiting this area which include Peregrine Falcon, Brown Falcon and White-bellied Sea-Eagle.