

HFNC Lake Linlithgow & associated wetlands excursion – report for 21 February 2016

Rod Bird

There were 3 people present (Rod, Diane & Peter). This season all the natural local wetlands except Yatmerone were dry. This prompted HFNC to visit the coastal wetlands that are being restored (see report for 20 Feb. 2016). The visit to Lake Linlithgow and allied wetlands was not the main focus of members. However, to maintain the continuity of annual reports since 1983 a brief visit was made by a few members but concentrating on Yatmerone Swamp where there was some water present.

Lake Linlithgow: we met at 7.30 am at The Point and surveyed the dry lake surface. It had been dry since at least 16 Oct 2015 when last visited. The rainfall for 2015 was 471 mm, similar to that of 2014 – the long-term mean is 680 mm. The rainfall from Aug-Dec was only 139 mm. Other big wetlands – Brians Swamp, Bradys Swamp, Lake Buninjon & Lake Muirhead – were dry from November or earlier.

In the last 18 summers (Feb. 1999-Feb. 2016) the lake has been dry in 11 of those February visits. The most water seen in February of those 18 years was 80 cm in 2011, following 126 mm of rain in late December 2010 and 125 mm in January 2011. For those 18 years the average water depth in February was 0.128 m (range 0-0.8 m), compared with the previous run of 15-years (Feb. 1984 to Feb. 1998) when the average depth was 1.583 m (range 1.26-2.45 m), with no dry period in that run of years.

Lake Bullrush: on 16 Oct. 2015 this wetland had about 20% of its surface covered with water; on 4 Nov. the surface was soft mud with many waders present. Birds present on 16 Oct were: 300 Red-necked Stint, 700 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, about 2000 ducks (mostly Grey Teal) and a few dozen Black Swan. On 4 Nov. JH saw 280 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 20 Red-capped Plover, 40 Whiskered Tern, 5 Red-necked Stint and 20 Red-capped Plover. Parts of the lake were covered with grass in February.

Harnath Swamp: this wetlands was dry on 16 Oct., or earlier.

Soldiers Swamp: dry by 11 Nov., except for a little water in the central drain and dam in the SW corner.

Lake Kennedy & Krauses Swamp: the wetlands had about 80% cover on 16 Oct. 2015. Lake Kennedy had 440 Banded Stilts, 20 Silver Gull, 400 Shelduck, 50 Pacific Black Duck and 500 Grey Teal on 16 Oct. 2015. It was dry on 4 Nov. On 11 Nov. JH saw 127 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 13 Red-capped Plover, 2 Brolga & 74 Whiskered Tern on Krauses Swamp that had a 5 mm skim of water on 60% area.

Yatmerone Swamp: at 8.30 am we drove on to Penshurst to survey the birds there. We walked around the path on the east side and then along the southern edge to the far west fence and found the wetland had about 25% cover of water, but very shallow, with exposed bed in many parts. The SE area and much of the southern side and far western tip was completely dry.

Lake Hamilton and the Hamilton Grange Wetland continue to hold water and have sustained high numbers of Eurasian Coot, Pacific Black Duck and other waterbirds.

We were impressed with the growth of the trees and shrubs planted at Yatmerone up to 6 years ago. There were no trees present on this part of the reserve in 2010.



Entry to Yatmerone Wildlife Reserve



Trees & shrub restoration on East side



Yatmerone Swp view from NE looking west



N side of Yatmerone Swp view from south

Birds seen included 'new' species in Wood Sandpiper, Black-fronted Dotterel and Collared Sparrowhawk. Other species seen are listed in the table below.



Black-fronted Dotterel

Waterbirds & Raptors of Lake Linlithgow & adjacent wetlands Feb. 2016							
Wetland	LLinlit	LKene	Krause	Bullru	Harna	Soldie	Yatm
Observer	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB
Survey date	4Feb	8Feb	4Feb	4Feb	4Feb	4Feb	21Feb
Water depth (max.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	v.low
Water % cover of area	0	0		70	0	0	25
Any waterbirds/shorebirds?	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
WATERBIRDS							
Australasian Shelduck						1	
Australian White Ibis							37
Black Swan							1
Grey Teal							70
Pacific Black Duck							25
Purple Swamphen							26
White-faced Heron							22
White-necked Heron							2
Yellow-billed Spoonbill							2
SHOREBIRDS/WADERS							
Black-fronted Dotterel							4
Black-winged Stilt							2
Latham's Snipe							1
Masked Lapwing		2				45	70
Wood Sandpiper							1
RAPTORS							
Brown Falcon				6			
Collared Sparrowhawk							1
Nankeen Kestrel				2			
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1						
Whistling Kite							1



Wood Sandpiper