

HFNC Excursion to Lake Linlithgow area wetlands on 19 February 2017

Rod Bird

Participants: Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, Peter Hocking, Yvonne Ingeme, John & Glenys Cayley and Janeen Samuel. Arriving a little early, Rod & Diane looked for waterbirds on Lake Linlithgow from the bank on the SW corner, 200 m north around from the Habel Cypress grove on Chatsworth Rd. A slashed track now provides convenient access there, where one has the best view of the SW part of the bay.

At 7.30 am we met Peter and Yvonne at The Point, off Chatsworth Rd. The wind was strong and visibility was not good, with showers starting. We made a count of birds from that vantage and then drove around the east bank to the plantations there planted as far back as 1975. We noted that Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos had been busy chewing cones off the Yatchaw provenance of Silver Banksia that we had planted and also those that John Harris (PV) and we had planted from 2004. We also saw 13 Crested Pigeons (new arrivals at the lake), 2 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, 4 Black Wallabies and a fox.

Since the track down to Boonawah Ck was deeply rutted by 4WDs we drove down in only one vehicle and made a count on the lakeside. The highlight was seeing 11 Freckled Duck roosting near the eastern shore. We viewed the birds through a spotting scope and then took some long distance photos. We met Janeen, Glenys and John back in the shelter of the HFNC plantation, for morning tea.



We back-tracked along the track to the entrance at Chatsworth Rd and visited Harnath Swamp where the main species were Hoary-headed Grebe and Pacific Black Duck.

Bird numbers at Lake Bullrush were also low, mainly Grey Teal, Hoary-headed Grebe and Black Duck.

Krause Swamp had a number of Australian Shoveler and Pacific Black Duck but overall few birds.

We drove around Lake Linlithgow on North Lake Rd and West Lake Rd. Amid showers we saw a number of Blue-billed Duck when we viewed the lake from the parking area mid-way along the West Lake Rd. Visibility was quite poor. On the 22 Jan. 2017 Rod counted 83 Blue-bills from this place. This is a threatened species in Victoria. We informed DELWP of the presence of the ducks here and hope that the water will be closed to duck hunting this year when the season opens on 18 March.

Year	Depth	Rain
1983	0	864
1984	158	704
1985	176	711
1986	164	689
1987	220	598
1988	174	595
1989	122	622
1990	138	634
1991	126	660
1992	126	870
1993	245	644
1994	209	512
1995	153	701
1996	133	696
1997	145	496
1998	85	629
1999	42	568
2000	0	592
2001	0	727
2002	45	532
2003	0	719
2004	14	687
2005	0	428
2006	0	434
2007	0	685
2008	0	540
2009	0	564
2010	0	737
2011	80	713
2012	46	553
2013	30	562
2014	16	488
2015	0	471
2016	0	838
2017	114	
Long term		680

Our final stop was at Lake Kennedy and it was there that the most waterbirds were seen, particularly Black Swan and Grey Teal. This lake was full.

Lake Linlithgow was full, the marker at the point showed 2.44 m (a max. water depth of 114 cm). The water extended to within a few metres of the rise in the bank at The Point. The estimated area of lake bed covered was 90%.

The rainfall at Hamilton for May-Sept. was 103, 68, 136, 73 & 158 mm – a total of 538 mm cf. long-term average of 361 mm. The annual rainfall for 2016 was 838 mm, cf. long-term average of 680 mm.

The table lists the annual rainfall data (mm) and maximum lake water depth in February from the year we began our annual surveys here. Note that for each line in the table the annual rainfall is read at the end of December whereas the entry for lake water depth is that in February of that year.

The period of 16 years from 1983 to 1998 shows annual rainfall of 664.1 mm (range 496-864 mm) and the lake was not dry in February in any year. The max. depth of water in mid-Feb. 1984-1999 was 126-245 cm (ave. 151.0 cm).

The period of 18 years from 1999 to 2017 shows annual rainfall of 602.1 mm (range 428-838 mm) and the lake was dry in 11 of those years. The max. depth of water in mid-Feb. 1999-2017 was 0-114 cm (ave. 19.2 cm).

These data show the episodic nature of our climate. The lake is a sink for water falling on the catchment; the changes in water level reflect changes in rainfall. However, a fairly small change in average rainfall (62 mm) has a large impact on the average summer water level (a difference of 132 cm).

Waterbirds & Raptors seen on the wetlands on 19 Feb. 2017

	Kennedy	Linlithgow	Bullrush	Krauses	Harnath
Black-winged Stilt	2				
Masked Lapwing	30	22		6	2
Aust Shoveler	8	6	2	22	
Aust Shelduck		15			
Aust Wood Duck		2			
Black Swan	835	67		3	
Blue-billed Duck		36			
Chestnut Teal	10				
Freckled Duck		11			
Grey Teal	1670	215	175	3	
Hardhead		20			
Hoary-headed Grebe	35	75	44		24
Musk Duck		8			
Pacific Black Duck	100	120	55	48	19
Pink-eared Duck		28			
Eurasian Coot	180	53	64		27
Straw-necked Ibis		8		3	1
White-faced Heron		1		3	6
White-necked Heron		1			
Silver Gull	95	29		1	
Brown Falcon		1			
Wedge-tailed Eagle		1			
Whistling Kite			2		