

HFNC Lake Linlithgow Excursion - report for 06 February 2010

Rod Bird

At 7 am, prior to the meeting at LLIN, RB & DL stopped at Lake Kennedy which was almost dry. The highlight was 4 Brolga dancing on the eastern part of the lake. Other birds are listed in the Table. It was a cool, cloudless morning, enjoyed also by a Hare on the foreshore and a Fox in the grass.

Seven members then met at 7.30 am at The Point, near the entrance of Lake Linlithgow, off Chatsworth Road. The lake had been dry for a little more than a month. In late December 2009 JH reported about 4,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers on the drying flats, reminiscent of a similar event in summer 2007/08 when an estimated 5,000 birds were seen. In February 2010 there were no waterbirds. A Black Wallaby was seen in the HFNC tree block on the eastern bank. Boonawah Creek was completely dry.

Over the last 12 summers LLIN has been dry on 9 occasions during our excursions in February. LLIN has been dry at this time in each of the last 6 years. The most water seen was 45 cm in Feb. 2002, 42 cm in 1999 and 14 cm depth in 2004 at The Point marker. Contrast that with a 15-year run from Feb. 1984 to 1998 when the range was 0.85 m (1998) to 2.45 m (1993) and the average 1.58 m depth.

Krauses Swamp provided a few waterbirds and 2 Black-shouldered Kites and 2 Nankeen Kestrels in the dead tree nearby. The swamp was about 75% full but had few waterbirds on it (see Table).

Bullrush Swamp was dry and green, as was Harnath Swamp - we did not see any waterbirds at either. On 8 January 2010 RB noted 15 Brolga and a week later DM saw 17 on the drying Harnath Swamp (see Table for list).

This year we did not go to Tabor Swamp. Visits by RB and JH in Jan. 2010 found little water, except for some in the central channel. Birds present then are given in the Table and it was notable for the absence of sandpipers, plovers and dotterels. Instead of Tabor we elected to visit the "new" Yatmerone Swamp, 1 km west of Peshurst, which we did at 8.30 am.

Yatmerone Swamp (see photo) is found by taking the Macarthur Rd out of Peshurst, turning left at Hutton St then right at the T junction near "Cheviot Hills" and driving along that lane for 400 m. Our members had grown to 9 at this stage and we were joined by Mary Johnson of GHCMA and 2 other members of the local committee. We circumnavigated the swamp, making a cursory list of native species and noting waterbirds present. The irregular shaped swamp of about 8 ha sits in a lava flow system and the water level has been elevated somewhat by an old earth embankment on a discharge point to the NW. A long history of grazing by cattle (and still present) has resulted in weed dominance on the edges and very little sedge, rush or reeds in the swamp. Elms and a few old *P. radiata* dominate a short section on the south bank, near the former station buildings. Hawthorn and Broom infest parts of the SE area. A modern post and rail fence juts into and across the NW corner.

The dry basalt ridges contain quite a few native species, including:

Acacia mearnsii (1 or 2 plants)

A. melanoxylon (1 or 2 plants)

Austrodanthonia spp.

Austrostipa sp.

Carex appressa (a single plant)

Einadia nutans

Elymus sp.

Eleocharis pusilla

Eleocharis acuta

Geranium spp.

Lachnograstis avenacea

Lobelia pratioides (?)

Microlaena stipoides

Myriophyllum sp.

Oxalis perenans

Poa labillardierei (a stand in one depression)

Solanum laciniatum (on banks at a few places)

Themeda triandra

Triglochin procera

Viola sp.

Wahlenbergia spp.

Wilsonia backhousei (?) in the swamp

We concluded the morning at Soldiers Swamp, West Boundary Rd, leaving at 12 30 pm. There we found the swamp virtually dry except for a little water in the drain and in the dam to the SW. Sheep infested the swamp and had eaten off most of the cover since RB visited on 9 January 2010. There were many waterbirds still present, incl. 2 Brolga (see Table).



**Some Bird Surveys from 8 Wetlands in the Hamilton-Penshurst area in summer 2009/2010
by Jane Hayes (JH), Rod Bird (RB) and HFNC club excursion on 6 Feb. 2010 (hfnc)**

	Bird Numbers Surveyed in Summer (Dec 2009-Feb2010) in the Hamilton-Penshurst area															
	LLIN		LKEN		KRAUSE		BULLR		HARNATH		TABOR		YATMERO		SOLDIERS	
Observer	JH	hfnc	RB	hfnc	RB	hfnc	JH	hfnc	JH	RB	RB	JH	RB	hfnc	RB	hfnc
Date	28Dec	6Feb	8Jan	6Feb	8 Jan	6Feb		6Feb	28Dec	8 Jan	9 Jan	10Jan	27Jan	6Feb	9 Jan	6Feb
Water depth	vlow	nil	vlow	~nil	mod	Mod		~nil	low	vlow	~nil	~nil	<20cm	<15cm	<5cm	~nil
Water % cover	<10	0	70	<5	80	75		0	90	75	chanl	chanl	75	60	50	5
Hoary-headed grebe																
Little pied cormorant												2	20	7	12	3
White-necked heron											1		10	9	27	9
White-faced heron										12	20	20	24	30	12	49
Great egret						1				1						
Australian white ibis						1						30	10	25	4	12
Straw-necked ibis				70							10		50	10	3	270
Yellow-billed spoonbill						2						2			1	1
Black swan				8	5									17	6+8j	17
Australian shelduck			8000	130	10	20				270					20	80
Pacific black duck											1	3	20	10	50	10
Grey teal			25		230	10		900	700				10	20	1450	1350
Chestnut teal																
Australasian shoveller					5	23				15						
Pink-eared duck					5					17						
Hardhead					2	5				10						
Purple swamphen													20	20+	25+	120
Eurasian coot					40								10			
Brolga				4				2	15						2	2
Masked lapwing			120	2	45					20	14			10	85	160
Red-capped plovers	45															
Black-winged stilt									??	230					20	
Red-necked avocet						5										
Latham's snipe													2			
Sharp-tailed sandpiper	4000+									40					50	
Wood sandpiper	1								1							
Red-necked stint	150															
Silver gull			25			3				14						2
Whiskered tern															40	
Black-shouldered kite						3										
Whistling kite													1	1		
Wedge-tailed eagle						1							1			
Swamp harrier																
Brown falcon		5			1								2	1		
Nankeen kestrel						2										
Cisticola						1										
White-fronted chat				2								1				