

# HFNC Excursion to Lake Linlithgow area wetlands on 22 Feb. 2026

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**Participants:** D Luhrs & R Bird, Y Ingeme & R Zollinger.

We gathered at Lake Linlithgow at 8 am, at The Point (off Chatsworth Rd). The morning was grey, with some slight rain. A walk revealed a dry lake bed, marked with many vehicle wheel tracks. A Whistling Kite flew over the pines and cypress and a pair of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos crossed the lake.

Water depth (cm) & Rainfall (mm)		
Year	Depth in Feb#	Rainfall
1982	-	436
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	672
2018	110	565
2019	107	510
2020	34	676
2021	53	558
2022	15	756
2023	90	647
2024	90	494
2025	24	554
2026	0	

The table has annual rainfall data (*Hamilton Spectator* list) and max. lake water depth in Feb. from the year we began annual surveys here.

# The annual rainfall is taken at the end of Dec., whereas lake water depth is for Feb. of the next year. So, check the current Feb. water depth with the previous year rainfall.

No water is pumped from this lake and it rarely overflows (the last time was in 1956), so it acts as a crude rain gauge for the catchment

Annual rainfall in 16 years (1982-97 inclusive) was 436-870 mm (ave. 651 mm) and the lake was dry only once in February. The max. depth of water in mid-Feb. 1983-98 inclusive was 0-245 cm (ave. 148 cm).

Annual rainfall in 28 years (1998-2025 inclusive) was 428-838 mm (ave. 581 mm) and the lake was dry in 12 years. The maximum depth of water in mid-Feb. 1999-2026 was 0-114 cm (ave. 32.5 cm).

A fairly small difference (70 mm) in the average rainfall has a large impact (115 cm) on the average summer water level. Thus, a fall of about 10 mm in the rainfall may result in a fall of about 16 cm in the February water level. The incidence of the rainfall and spring-summer temperatures will also have impacts on water storage and loss.

We proceeded then to **Lake Bulrush** for a short walk on the lake bed to view the scene of hundreds of dead Short-finned Eels on the dry surface.

The lake when full is probably not more than a metre deep. At times more than a hundred Black Swan nests have been seen on it.

Despite that lack of depth it is unusual to find it completely dry (it receives winter drainage from Krause). We have not previously seen evidence of eels in Bulrush. This water body appears to be a death trap for eels when it does dry so completely because there is no near place for the eels to retreat to (Krause Swamp is the nearest but that was dry).



Lake Bulrush – dry in Feb. 2026 <sup>DL</sup>



Dead Short-finned Eel – Feb. 2026 <sup>RB</sup>



An area of Lake Bulrush with dead eels <sup>RB</sup>



Scavengers have opened up some eels <sup>RB</sup>



Snail shells in the mud at Lake Bulrush <sup>DL</sup>

We noted that very few of the dead eels had been scavenged – some bodies had been opened to extract entrails but most were untouched when first sighted on the 10 Feb. We speculated that the eels died at about 01 February, when the last of the water had probably evaporated from shallow pools.

The surface of this bed has a grey clay that dries to a blocky, crumbly structure. There were patches of snail shells within it.

On the 10 Feb. 11 Red-capped Plover were seen by the western shore and 25 unidentified medium-sized waders near the N end. None were seen today.

We left Lake Bulrush after about 30 minutes and drove to Boonawah Ck at Lake Linlithgow. A survey 2 weeks earlier had found that Lake Kennedy, Harnath Swamp and Krause Swamp were dry and no waterbirds were seen there so, there being no rain since then, we did not stop this time. A Whistling Kite and a Brown Falcon were seen as we passed Krause Swamp.

The only waterbird seen at Lake Linlithgow was a lone White-faced Heron, flying over. We expected to see some dead eels on the lake bed but there were none. At one period in the 1970s (and perhaps more recently?) a commercial enterprise, ‘Skipton Eels’, had a permit to stock the lake and harvest the eels.



Rubbish dumped on the dry bed of Lake Linlithgow <sup>RB</sup>

After morning tea at Boonawah Ck we drove to North Lake Rd and the old boat ramp area there. We had a good telescopic view of a pile of rubbish that someone dumped towards the middle of the lake (on a direct line from the concrete boat ramp to The Point). Telephotos show 2 pianos, 3 lounge suites, 7 toilet pedestals, a sink and other junk. A large vehicle would have been needed to convey that load and the lake would have to be almost dry to allow it to be done. We have informed Victoria Police, Parks Victoria and the EPA and trust that this eyesore can be removed before rain makes it impossible to do so.



Another view of the furniture dump <sup>DL</sup>

At around 10.45 am we left the lake and drove back to Hamilton, for a visit to **Lake Hamilton**. There we hoped to find some crakes and rails. We parked near the playground on the east side and took a walk NE towards the footbridge over the Grange Burn.

No comprehensive bird survey was done on this brief visit (a detailed survey had been done on 03 Feb. and that may be seen on our website) but some notes were made. Waterbirds seen on the present occasion but not on the 03 Feb. were Australian Spotted Crake, Spotless Crake and Red-kneed Dotterel. A rail (perhaps Buff-banded Rail or Lewin's Rail) was seen briefly but not identified.

Birds seen on 03 Feb. but not today included Baillon's Crake, Black-tailed Native-hen & Great Crested Grebe.



Australian Spotted Crake; note white undertail & reddish mark on the nose <sup>DL, RB</sup>



Spotless Crake <sup>DL, RB</sup>

Partial bird list on 22 Feb 2026 for Lake Hamilton from Playground NE to the bend before the footbridge:

- |                                 |                        |                             |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Australian Shoveler          | 8. Grey Teal           | 15. Purple Swamphen         |
| 2. Australian Spotted Crake (3) | 9. Hoary-headed Grebe  | 16. Red-kneed Dotterel (2)  |
| 3. Australian Wood Duck         | 10. Latham's Snipe (2) | 17. Spotless Crake (2)      |
| 4. Black Swan                   | 11. Little Grassbird   | 18. Welcome Swallow         |
| 5. Dusky Moorhen                | 12. Masked Lapwing     | 19. White-plumed Honeyeater |
| 6. Eurasian Coot                | 13. Musk Duck          | 20. Yellow-billed Spoonbill |
| 7. Great Cormorant              | 14. Pacific Black Duck | 21. Yellow-faced Honeyeater |

The day-flying native Grapevine Moth (*Phalaenoides glycinae*) was seen on the vegetated margin of Lake Hamilton. Its caterpillars feed on more than grapevine leaves.



Grapevine Moth *Phalaenoides glyciniae* <sup>DL</sup>

**2026 Shorebird summer surveys of Lake Kennedy, Jenawarra (Lake Linlithgow), Lake Bulrush, Krause Swamp, Harnath Swamp & Soldiers Swamp**

WETLAND	LKEN	JENAWARRA	LBULR	KRAU	HARN	SOL		
Observer	RB	RB	HFNC	RB	HFNC	RB	RB	RB
Survey date	10/02	10/02	22/02	10/02	22/02	10/02	10/02	04/02
Time started	0845	1025	0800	0920	0830	1000	0905	0925
Duration survey (mins)	15	120	90	30	20	20	5	15
Water depth (max., cm)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	vlow
Water % cover on bed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Shorebirds &amp; Waders</b>								
Masked Lapwing								65
Red-capped Plover				11				
Unidentified med. wader				25				
<b>Other Waterbirds</b>								
Australian Shelduck								20
Grey Teal								20
Pacific Black Duck								30
White-faced Heron			1					1
<b>Raptors</b>								
Nankeen Kestrel		1						
Whistling Kite			1					
<b>Other Birds Associated With Wetlands</b>								

LKEN Lake Kennedy, JENAWARRA Lake Linlithgow, LBULR Lake Bulrush, KRAU Krause Swamp, HARN Harnath Swamp, SOL Soldiers Swamp.



Yellow-faced Honeyeater <sup>RB</sup>

We ended the walk at Lake Hamilton at about 12 noon, just short of our objective (the pedestrian bridge over the Grange Burn), as light rain began to fall.

Despite the lack of birds in the Linlithgow area there had been much of interest to see. We were also pleased to see the crakes at Lake Hamilton.