

AT BELMONT LAGOON

Two bird surveys were done this month (12/6 and 26/6). Comparing them told the story well. The first recorded 35 species and 350 birds; 63% of species were woodland birds; many Silvereye and Yellow-cheeked Honeyeater passing through at the tail end of the annual 'southern honeyeater migration'. Their flying pattern, from tree to tree or through the low-level scrub (lantana and bitou bush), had urgency and direction. Nectar-eating species move on quickly, since fewer native trees are in bloom here and the climate is warmer north. Small woodland birds (passerines like Silvereye¹) forage insects, fruit, nectar or seeds in winter.

Birds in the latter survey (26/6) show a different profile. Only 22 species and 215 birds were recorded. This time 55% (12/22) were water bird species – swans, ducks, pelicans, egrets, cormorants; and herons – and a pair of Black-winged Stilts feeding in the shallow north-eastern section. Observing these different species foraging at the Lagoon indicates its abundance and wide range of food sources at present – a different story six months ago.

It is always inspiring to watch bird groups feeding behaviour at this time of season. Black Swans appear in their hundreds on the Lagoon, spread out to graze on lake grass. Pelicans and cormorants congregate and feed on fishlings in the shallow water. As shown here, they start to form a loose circle then steadily close in, using their wings and bodies to entrap their prey.



AROUND THE PARK



Rangers and volunteers at BWSP are often surprised by what they see at the Park. After the recent run of cold weather on early mornings, seeing this small Common Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*) was quite unexpected! This little beauty (~15cm) was seen on the hind dunes. It wasn't very lively but it is highly venomous, so we left it alone after the photo-shoot. Snakes, in fact all reptiles are *poikilothermic*; they have a variable body temperature that tends to

fluctuate with and is similar to or slightly higher than the temperature of its environment. In other words, as the day warms up, the faster they can move².

SHOREBIRD SIGHTINGS AT 9-MILE BEACH

BWSP Rangers reported seeing Red-capped Plovers on the foredunes in the past fortnight. These wary little birds are now in full breeding plumage, as their name describes. Also observed over the past month are Pied Oystercatchers near the shoreline. 4WD owners are reminded to be aware of these species which, unfortunately, like to rest in wheel ruts!

Bird-watching brochures, walking trails and related information can be found on BWSP's website (<https://www.belmontwetlands.com.au/>). Or join the Hunter Bird Observers Club³ Comments? Contact BWSP Rangers or Grahame Feletti gfeletti@hotmail.com 27jun23

¹ Silvereye omnivorous diet <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Zosterops-lateralis>

² Google poikilotherm. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poikilotherm>

³ Hunter Bird Observers Club meets every 2nd Wednesday of the month, except in January, at Shortland Wetlands Centre. Further details may be found via the website <https://www.hboc.org.au/>