

OVERVIEW

In this short report we review previous data on woodlands bird species observed around Belmont Lagoon in June and consider if/what it might tell us about its role in the annual south-eastern 'honeyeater migration'.

WOODLAND BIRDS SEEN AROUND THE PARK

April-May is usually an exciting time for birdwatching in this Park. One main reason is the sudden influx of thousands of honeyeaters¹ that migrate annually, from as far south as Tasmania. Major weather events can and do play havoc with all woodlands species caught up in this annual process. Last year for example, it was a sudden cold snap in April on the southern highlands, although many still made it along the Megalong Valley in the Blue Mountains². This year a series of torrential coastal rainstorms seem to have delayed or extended the period taken by these species to reach or pass through the Hunter Region³.

Coastal pathways taken include mature native forests flowering prolifically (Coastal Paperbark, Coastal Banksia and Swamp Mahogany) at this time⁴. This 549 ha Park and Belmont Lagoon may allow them to 'rest and refuel' (R&R) before moving on.

A review of *woodlands bird* data for observations in June from 2021-2024 shows a slow but progressive increase from 14-23 species whereas for *wetlands bird* species it is much more variable (6, 10, 13, 9). Numbers for woodlands bird species also shows sudden increases and decreases over monthly surveys (as they move on or disperse locally). Predominant in the 23 woodlands species (noted on a 1-hour survey, 5/6/24) are Red-browed Finch (54), White-cheeked Honeyeater (35), Silveryeye (30) and Rainbow Lorikeet (12).

Red-browed Finch is a seed-eater; there is an abundance of Casuarina and grass seeds at this time. Rainbow Lorikeet eat nectar as a primary source but can survive on other foods⁵.

In the Park, systematic replanting and maturation of coastal forest trees and shrubs attracts and sustains small bush bird populations (Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Lewin's Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Scarlet Honeyeater, as well as wattlebirds, spinebills, friarbirds, and silvereyes).

¹ *Honeyeaters* are a diverse group of Australian birds. One of their features is a brush-tipped tongue so they can extract nectar from flowers. Other species with this feature (Eastern Spinebills) are not *named* honeyeater.

²https://www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/environment/bushland_and_biodiversity/stories_of_local_biodiversity/w_hat-lives-where-in-woollahra

³ Great honeyeater migration. <https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/6732539/the-great-honeyeater-migration-flies-in-to-find-winter-food/>

⁴ Tim Low. <https://timlow.com/where-song-began/>

⁵ Rainbow Lorikeet https://www.casalaparrot.biz/resources/New_website_content/.pdf