

BELMONT WETLANDS STATE PARK BIRD REPORT SEPTEMBER 2024

Thankfully, spring is in full swing! September's bird activity was up on the same month last year. Floral abundance¹ has returned ("she's such a joy to have around!"). Intermittent, cold southerly storms and short periods of summer-like temperatures have accompanied prolific flowering of coastal trees, shrubs² and ground cover plants all over the Park. Unfortunately, the storms soon destroy the blossom that birds and insects also depend on.

NINE-MILE BEACH shorebird sightings by Park Rangers were limited this past month. Storm weather has made beach driving hazardous by substantially changing the shape and sand density on fore dunes. Small flocks (10-20) Silver Gull and 30 Crested Tern were noted (3/9) plus 2-3 Masked Lapwings near 3rd Creek. Eastern Osprey were seen at 3rd Creek (26/9, 30/9) and 4 large raptors (Osprey and/or White-bellied Sea Eagle) were noted further south. Smaller migratory shorebirds (plover, oystercatcher, sandpiper, stint, avocet, dotterel, godwit) were not reported this month.

AROUND THE PARK many seasonal bird species have been reported: Olive-backed Oriole, Australasian Figbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-breasted Wood Swallow, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Eastern Whipbird, Red-browed Finch, Superb Fairy-wren, and the 6 'honeyeater' species mentioned in last month's bird report. Three breeding events were also noted. On 17/9 a Grey Butcherbird was seen on nest, and in the same Melaleuca swamp only 30 m away, a Tawny Frogmouth on its nest. On 30/9 a Little Wattlebird was seen on a low-level nest with 2 eggs in a Coastal Tea tree.



A BELMONT LAGOON survey (17/9/24) indicated a strong return of woodland and wetland birds³. 42 species and 209 birds were recorded; the highest since pre-covid surveys.

This is a great time of year to go bushwalking within Belmont Wetlands. Four tips may improve your birdwatching this spring-summer: a pair of binoculars (8x50); a copy of BWSP's Belmont Lagoon Bird Guide⁴; an e-bird guide on your mobile phone (allowing easy access to bird images and calls); and a small digital tape recorder or note pad and pencil.

If you'd like to meet with or go with a birdwatching group, check out the Hunter Bird Observers Club website (<https://www.hboc.org.au/>). The club has monthly meetings, guest speakers, excursions, recent sightings and articles. Its membership and resource expertise also include bird photographers, and a substantial library of bird images and books.

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¹ Floral abundance here means many native plants are in bloom. You can download BWSP's Local Plants Guide.

² Coast Wattle *Acacia sophorae*; Coast Tea Tree *Leptospermum laevigatum*;

³ Belmont Lagoon bird survey 17sep24: <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=10059872&h=75e8aec7>

⁴ Belmont Lagoon Bird Guide www.belmontwetlands.com.au