

HFNC Excursion 21 Oct 2012 – Bool Lagoon Game Reserve in South Australia

Rod Bird & Dave Munro

This was the third of the HFNC excursions to these wetlands in the last 20 years, starting from a campout in October 1994 and a day visit in May 2005.

Present: John & Glenys Cayley, Amanda & Craig Carpenter, Ken Grimes & Janeen Samuel, David & Lyn Munro, Rod Bird, Hilary Turner.

Travel: Most of the group met at the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre at 9 am and drove through Penola to Bool Lagoon, stopping at the entrance car park. There we met Ken & Janeen who had been driving back from Adelaide and Amanda & Craig who had been staying at Penola. The entry fee was \$9 per vehicle.

Bool Lagoon: This is one of the largest and most diverse freshwater systems in southern Australia. This a wetland of international importance, registered under the RAMSAR convention, and significant as a summer refuge for migratory waders. Brolga and Magpie Geese also find it a haven. The brochure states that 150 bird species frequent the wetland system. From a scrutiny of the map, the wetland covers about 3,000 ha.

There was only shallow water in much of the swamp, covered in Water Ribbons. That vegetation obscured the ducks, Black Swan, Great Egrets and Magpie Geese that were out in the expanse of water. However, the wetland area near the main buildings and picnic area was quite clear of vegetation and hence deeper in water. There we saw quite a few Hardheads, many Eurasian Coots and a few Hoary-headed Grebes.

We started with the **Gahnia Walk**, near the entrance, and going out on the boardwalk to the bird hide. A highlight was the flushing of an Australasian Bittern on the first part of this walk. White-fronted Chats, Reed Warblers and Little Grassbirds were much in evidence, the latter two vocally. Growling Grass Frogs were heard at intervals.

We drove along to the **Tea-tree Boardwalk** and explored that area.

We had lunch at the **Hacks Lagoon Conservation Park** picnic area, where there was a good view across the deeper water of the SE swamp area. Whistling Kites and Swamp Harriers were cruising over the reeds and water, while Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos (~30) were feasting on the kernels of pine cones in the trees nearby. A large flock of Eurasian Coots (~700) were seen through the spotting scope.

We walked out on the **Pat-om Walk** to the SE, passing shallow areas that were hosting many Black-tailed Native Hens (~700) and Ibis. The walk continues on over the inlet channel to an area that is mostly vegetated with pasture grasses (Phalaris and clover) but has the odd Drooping Sheoak. There is a viewing platform near the inlet channel overflow (Mosquito Creek). There was not a lot of activity in the waters; a few Hoary-headed Grebe and Australasian Grebe, a small flock of duck and the Eurasian Coots seen earlier from the picnic ground.

After the walk we drove along Hacks Peninsula (the camping area) where we looked at the **Gunawar Walk**.

Before starting homewards, some of us drove on to **Big Hill** (3 km west from the entrance). This site is a high ridge that projects out into the swamp, giving a great view of the water area. We thought that there may have been at least 100 Great Egrets, possibly 100 Magpie Geese and many Straw-necked and White Ibis dispersed across the wetland. There were no Brolga visible.

There were fewer Magpie Geese than we remembered when HFNC camped here in 22 & 23 Oct 1994. Those present then recalled the early morning honking of several hundred geese and flurry of activity reminiscent of Kakadu wetlands. We think there was much more water in the wetland at that time.

We arrived home at around 6 pm, after a pleasant and relaxing outing.

Bird List – a list of birds seen is attached, along with a comparison with our visit on 22/23 Oct 1994 and that of 22 May 2005. In total, we have recorded 69 species at the wetlands.

**BIRDS AT BOOL
LAGOON**

HFNC visits 22/23 Oct 1994,
22 May 2005 & 21 Oct 2012

	1994	2005	2012
Bittern, Australasian (Brown)			Y
Brolga		Y	
Butcherbird, Grey	Y		
Chat, White-fronted		Y	Y
Cisticola, Golden-headed	Y	Y	
Cockatoo, Yellow-tailed Black-			Y
Coot, Eurasian		Y	Y(700)
Cormorant, Little Pied		Y	
Duck, Musk	Y		
Duck, Pacific Black	Y		
Duck, Pink-eared	Y	Y	
Egret, Great	Y	Y	Y(100)
Fairy-wren, Superb		Y	Y
Falcon, Brown		Y	Y
Fantail, Grey		Y	Y
Firetail, Red-browed		Y	
Godwit, Bar-tailed	Y		
Goldfinch, European		Y	Y
Goose, Cape Barren	Y	Y	
Goose, Magpie	Y(500)	Y	Y(100)
Grassbird, Little	Y		Y
Grebe, Australasian			Y
Grebe, Hoary-headed	Y	Y	Y
Greenshank	Y	Y	
Gull, Silver		Y	
Hardhead			Y
Harrier, Swamp		Y	Y
Heron, Pacific		Y	
Heron, White-faced	Y	Y	Y
Honeyeater, New Holland			Y
Ibis, Glossy	Y	Y	
Ibis, Straw-necked,		Y	Y
Ibis, Australian White	Y		Y
Kestrel, Nankeen		Y	
Kite, Black-shouldered		Y	Y

	1994	2005	2012
Kite, Whistling		Y	Y
Lapwing, Masked		Y	Y
Magpie, Australian		Y	Y
Magpie-lark			Y
Moorhen, Dusky		Y	
Native-hen, Black-tailed	Y	Y	Y (70)
Parrot, Blue-winged		Y	
Pelican, Australian		Y	
Pigeon, Crested		Y	Y
Pipit, Australasian		Y	
Plover, Red-capped	Y		
Quail, Stubble		Y	
Raven, Australian			Y
Raven, Little	Y	Y	
Reed-warbler, Australian	Y		Y
Sandpiper, Common	Y		
Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed	Y		
Sandpiper, sp		Y	
Shelduck, Australian	Y	Y	
Shoveler, Australasian	Y	Y	
Silvereye		Y	Y
Skylark, Eurasian	Y		Y
Songlark, Brown			Y
Spoonbill, Royal	Y		
Spoonbill, Yellow-billed	Y	Y	Y
Stilt, Black-winged	Y	Y	
Swallow, Welcome		Y	Y
Swamphen, Purple		Y	Y
Swan, Black		Y	Y
Teal, Grey	Y	Y	
Tern, Whiskered (Marsh)		Y	Y
Thornbill, Brown		Y	Y
Thornbill, Yellow-rumped		Y	Y
Wagtail, Willie		Y	Y
Wattlebird, Red			Y?

Owl, Barking
– a pair seen just west of Bool
Lagoon, in old Manna Gums

