

HFNC Excursion to Lake Linlithgow & Krause's Swamp on 24 Feb. 2019

Rod Bird

Participants: Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, Dave & Lyn Munro, Reto Zollinger & Yvonne Ingeme, Glenys Cayley, Kate Kennedy, Peter Hocking and Steve Clark..

We met at The Point, off Chatsworth Rd at 8 am. There was no wind and the sky was overcast but visibility was good. The water level was at about 80% capacity and the marker at the Point was at 2.37 (indicating a max. depth of 107 cm). There were many ducks in the Chatsworth Rd Bay area. These birds and others on the lake fly out to deeper water when any vehicles stop, a response to duck hunting. This is in contrast to the years before 1985 when the lake was a sanctuary. The Freckled Duck that were present here in winter (650 birds were seen on 29 June 2018) have mostly moved on, only 23 birds being seen. The most numerous waterbird was the Pink-eared Duck, at least 5,000 birds were seen.

Along the SE bank, past the old windmill, we stopped to observe waders on the beach and in the water: Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Plovers and Red-necked Avocet (photo below).



We stopped at the Nth end of the 1975 HFNC tree block and counted the Blue-billed Duck in rafts across the middle of the lake. There were very few Coots, Grebes and Swan, often seen in many hundreds.

The track to Boonawah Ck was deeply rutted by 4WDs so it was necessary to divert from the track where the ruts were too deep to negotiate. We saw 3 Pacific Golden Plover 100 m away, only the second record for the lake (Steve Clark saw one bird near The Point in Sept. 2002). We also saw 4 Double-banded Plovers, regular late autumn-winter visitors from New Zealand. We continued down to the mouth of Boonawah Creek where we had morning tea. A Black Falcon was seen flying over the lake (see photo).



Our next stop was at Krause's Swamp, via Linlithgow Lane, where we saw few waterbirds other than Masked Lapwing, 176 birds all standing in the water, with 10 White-faced Heron.

We drove around Lake Linlithgow on North Lake Rd and stopped where the road turns to the NW, to inspect the bank site where, in the early 2000s, HFNC members planted Plains Silver Banksia grown from seed collected from Yatchaw and Sweet Bursaria, grown from seed collected from the shrubs on this bank. A single Whiskered Tern was seen over the lake.

We drove along the firebreak track on the lake reserve (parts of that track would be boggy in winter) to our last stop at the parking area on the lake bank off West Boundary Rd. There we observed Red-necked Avocets and Blue-billed Ducks at a closer range. Our excursion finished then at about 12.45 pm.

The table below lists the annual rainfall data (mm) and maximum lake water depth (cm) in February from the year we began our annual surveys here. Note that for each line in the table the annual rainfall is read at the end of December whereas the entry for lake water depth is for February of that year. No water is pumped from this lake, and it rarely overflows (the last was in 1956), so the lake acts as a rain gauge

for the catchment and the influence of climate change is shown. The average depth in Feb. for the first 16 years (1983 to 1998) was 152 cm, compared with 26 cm for the last 20 years (1999 to Dec. 2018).

The annual rainfall in 16 years from 1983 to 1998 was 664 mm (range 496-864 mm) and the lake was never dry in February. The max. depth of water in mid-Feb. 1984-99 was 126-245 cm (ave. 152 cm). The annual rainfall in 20 years (from 1999 to 2018) was 603 mm (range 428-838 mm) and the lake was dry in 11 years. The maximum depth of water in mid-Feb. 2000-2019 was 0-114 cm (ave. 28 cm).

Waterbirds & Raptors seen in 24 Feb. 2019			
	LLIN	Krause	
Black-winged Stilt	1	176	
Double-banded Plover	4		
Masked Lapwing	70		
Pacific Golden Plover	3		
Red-capped Plover	30		
Red-necked Avocet	~200		
Red-necked Stint	90		
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	35		
Australasian Shoveler	~100		44
Australian Shelduck	~600		
Black Swan	4		
Blue-billed Duck	~1200		
Chestnut Teal	4		
Freckled Duck	23		
Grey Teal	~3000		
Hoary-headed Grebe	6		
Pink-eared Duck	~5000		
Eurasian Coot	2	10	
Straw-necked Ibis	~200		
White-faced Heron	9		
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2		
Silver Gull	82		
Whiskered Tern1	1		
Black Falcon	1	1	
Black-shouldered Kite	2		
Brown Falcon	1		
Swamp Harrier	1		
Whistling Kite	3		
White-fronted Chat	P		
Golden-headed Cisticola	P		

Water depth (cm) & Rainfall (mm)		
Year	Depth in Feb	Annual Rainfall
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	
Long term		680



Pacific Golden Plovers (above) and Yellow-billed Spoonbills (below)

