

HFNC Excursion to Lake Linlithgow & allied wetlands on 18 Feb. 2024

Rod Bird

Participants: Rod Bird, Diane Luhrs, Wendy McDonald, Peter Hocking, Steve Clark & Glenys Cayley.

We met at The Point, at 8 am. There was no wind and the sky was overcast. The water was at about 90% of full cover. The marker at The Point indicated a max. depth of 90 cm of water.

Water depth (cm) & Rainfall (mm)		
Year	Depth in Feb	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	508
2020	34	676
2021	53	558
2022	15	749
2023	90	647
2024	90	
Long term		679

The table (left) has annual rainfall data (mm) and maximum lake water depth (cm) in February from the year we began annual surveys here.

Note that the annual rainfall is read at the end of December, whereas the entry for lake water depth is for February of the next year. No water is pumped from this lake and it rarely overflows (the last time was in 1956), so it acts as a crude rain gauge for the catchment. The influence of climate change is evident.

Annual rainfall in 15 years (1983-97 inclusive) was 496-864 mm (ave. 666 mm) and the lake was never dry in February. The max. depth of water in mid-Feb. 1984-98 inclusive was 85-245 cm (ave. 158 cm).

Annual rainfall in 26 years (1998-2024 inclusive) was 428-838 mm (ave. 608 mm) and the lake was dry in 11 years. The maximum depth of water in mid-Feb. 1999-2024 was 0-114 cm (ave. 34 cm).

On **Jenawarra** there were only a few Black Swan, Eurasian Coot and Hoary-headed Grebe but thousands of Grey Teal, hundreds of Australian Shelduck and 1100 Blue-billed Ducks in several rafts over the middle of the lake. Other ducks were in very low numbers.

There was a group of 7 Brolga on an adjacent paddock – the birds were seen the previous day on the water by the eastern bank. Yellow-billed and Royal Spoonbills were also seen from the east bank.

Apart from Masked Lapwings, no small waders were seen. That was surprising, since there appeared to be enough exposed mud flat to attract the plover, stint and sandpipers. A survey on the previous day at Lake Kennedy had revealed the presence of 58 Red-capped Plover along with 87 Red-necked Stint resting on the beach at the NE corner of the lake. These species were not seen on adjacent wetlands.

This year there were 6 species of raptors seen, with Black-shouldered Kites and Whistling Kites prominent. Another interesting sight on Linlithgow Lane was a Stubble Quail escorting a group of 6 chicks along the edge of the track, finally able to usher them into the adjacent cover of tall phalaris.

Other birds seen around Jenawarra included Blue-winged Parrots near Boonawah Creek and Purple-crowned Lorikeets in the HFNC plantation on the east bank. We saw a couple of Black Wallaby along the east bank and, for what appears to be a first record at the lake, two Eastern Grey Kangaroos.

Our next stop was at **Krause Swamp**, via Linlithgow Lane where, as last year, we saw very few birds. Purple Swamphen were seen but not at any other adjacent wetlands.



We continued our drive around **Jenawarra** (Linlithgow) via North Lakes Rd and then West Lakes Rd. We made 3 stops along the way. We did not encounter any ‘new’ species along the way.

Waterbirds in February on the Linlithgow area lakes and swamps in February 2024

WETLAND	LKEN	JENA	LBUL	KRAU	HARN	SOL
Observer	RB	HFNC	RB	HFNC	RB	RB
Survey date	17/02/24	18/02/24	17/02/24	18/02/24	17/02/24	17/02/24
Duration of survey (mins)	80	210	10	15	20	10
Water depth (max. cm)	mod	0.9	mod	mod	mod	dry
Water % cover on bed	80	90	95	95	95	0
Shorebirds & Waders						
Masked Lapwing	53	45		1	4	
Red-capped Plover	58					
Red-necked Stint	87					
Cranes, Crakes, Ducks, Geese, Grebes, Swans						
Australasian Shoveler		39		9		
Australian Shelduck	325	875		85	430	
Australian Wood Duck		1	30		1	
Black Swan	23	180		2	4	
Blue-billed Duck		1100				
Brolga		7				
Chestnut Teal	650	20				
Grey Teal	5500	3135		70	80	
Hardhead		8			1	
Hoary-headed Grebe		18		19	10	
Musk Duck		4				
Pacific Black Duck	300				12	
Pink-eared Duck		3			2	
Gannets, Pelicans & Cormorants						
Bitterns, Coots, Egrets, Herons, Ibis, Moorhens, Spoonbills & Swamphe						
Australian White Ibis				11		
Eurasian Coot		70	20	4	70	
Purple Swamphe				2		
Royal Spoonbill		2				
White-faced Heron	5	8				
Yellow-billed Spoonbill		6				
Gulls & Terns						
Silver Gull	370	46				
Raptors						
Brown Falcon	4	2	1			
Black-shouldered Kite	2	5				
Collared Sparrowhawk				1		
Nankeen Kestrel		1				
Peregrine Falcon		1				
Wedge-tailed Eagle		2				
Whistling Kite		6	1			
Other Birds Associated with Wetlands						
Golden-headed Cisticola		2				
White-fronted Chat		1				

Lake Kennedy, Jenawarra (Lake Linlithgow), Lake Bulrush, Krause Swamp, Harnath Swamp, Soldiers Swamp (on West Boundary Rd, off Hamilton Highway)