

Map of Canning River Regional Park



The Canning River Regional Park lies along the Canning River between Shelley Bridge and Nicholson Road Bridge. It comprises both freshwater and estuarine sections of river, two tidal lagoons and a constructed wetland, as well as parkland and bushland remnants. The Park is just one area along the Canning River where excellent bird watching is available.

Note - a second guide is available, detailing bush birds found along the Canning River.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare

The South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL) is an independent Natural Resource Management body. SERCUL brings together the community, business and government to develop and implement projects that improve the health of our waterways and other ecosystems.

For more information contact:

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The Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC) lies within the Canning River Regional Park (CRRP) and is focused on increasing awareness and understanding of the Canning River and the Park through school and community environmental education programs. CREEC also provides support and facilities for local environmental groups, businesses and government organisations.

For more information contact:

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Members of BirdLife Western Australia are offered a variety of activities and services including conservation and research projects, excursions, campouts, surveys and social activities. There is also a library and books for sale at the office. To view the full range of bird guides visit the website.

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Waterbirds of the Canning River

White-faced Heron: photograph by Andrew Hobbs



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SHOREBIRD

Many waders and shorebirds breed in the Northern Asian/Alaskan summer. Some fly to the west coast of Australia then disperse to coastal mudflats or inland wetlands. Many which once came to Canning wetlands no longer appear. Wader numbers are known to be diminishing world-wide, largely due to loss of suitable feeding grounds.

BLACK-WINGED STILT >

Feeds on aquatic plants, insects and shrimps. Breeds in Australia. Often seen around Riverton Bridge in the summer.
U, Ir/N



< RED-NECKED AVOCET

Wades through shallow water, sweeping its upturned bill in search of food. Look for them near Riverton Bridge in the summer.
R, Ir/N



BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL >

Prefers shallow margins or mudflats. Bobs its head, tips and runs. Nests on ground, relying on cryptic colouring and distraction displays to protect its nest and young.

U, Res, B



< COMMON SANDPIPER

Occasionally seen wandering solitarily along river margins in the downstream sections of the Park. Bobs nervously. Note white of breast forms a slight 'hook' round bend of wing.

R, Mi, IA



COMMON GREENSHANK >

Found solitarily along the water's edge, searching for insects and molluscs. More likely at Riverton Bridge or Adenia Lagoon. Call is a haunting 'tew-tew-tew'.

U, Mi, IA



TERN, GULL

Gulls are broad-winged, with mainly white bodies and are longer-legged than terns. Terns generally have sharper, finer bills and slender wings. They take food by plunging below or skimming the surface of water for fish.

CASPIAN TERN >

Largest of our terns. Heavy red bill is diagnostic. Patrols downstream areas of the park, plunging for prey. More common in summer.

U, Ir, IA



< CRESTED TERN

Note yellow bill and shaggy black fringe on the back of its head. Also plunges spectacularly. More likely around Riverton Bridge in summer.

U, Ir



< SILVER GULL

Has benefited from white settlement. Under natural conditions, feeds on plankton, small crustaceans and invertebrates. Young birds are mottled.

C, Res



RAPTOR

Both these birds of prey are associated with water.

< EASTERN OSPREY

Large raptor; diet of fish, which are caught in talons. Often seen cruising above the river; nests downstream from Shelley Bridge.

U, Ir



SWAMP HARRIER >

Large dark raptor with pale rump. Cruises above swampy areas searching for prey. Nests on ground in dense reeds.

U, Res



OLD WORLD WARBLER

Australian forms are medium to small birds with streaked or unstreaked brownish plumage. They favour grassy, swampy habitats and are usually secretive.

AUSTRALIAN REED-WARBLER >

Lives among typha (bulrushes). In spring its rich, loud call is conspicuous at Adenia Lagoon, Nicholson Billabong, Liege Street Wetland.

M, Res, B



< LITTLE GRASSBIRD

Secretive little bird. Sneaks to top of dense vegetation to view intruders. Presence indicated by a melancholy, three-note call. Try Adenia Lagoon or Liege Street Wetland.

U, Res



BIRD WATCHING along the CANNING RIVER

- Birds are more active early in the morning.
- Stay on pathways so birds feeding or nesting on the ground are not disturbed.
- Be wary of disturbing waterbirds when canoeing.
- Keep dogs on leads.
- Be tolerant of dead trees - they are useful as perches, and often have vital hollows.
- Resist feeding birds.
- Be aware that mosquitoes may be present.

Injured birds - Wildcare Helpline 9474 9055

This brochure is dedicated to the late Allan Jones who, as a volunteer of Birds Australia WA (now BirdLife WA), worked tirelessly over many years to produce numerous guides to promote birds and birding.

Species Profiles

WATERFOWL

These are big-bodied waterbirds with dense, water-resistant feathers and bills adapted for filtering food from water. They may dive for food or graze on nearby grasslands.

MUSK DUCK >

Stiff-tailed duck which prefers deep water. Dives for frogs, gilgies and insect larvae. When courting, the male splashes and whistles, while inflating a leathery lobe beneath his bill.
U, Ir



< BLACK SWAN

Large birds which prefer open water for flight take-off and use their long necks to reach underwater plants.
M, Res, B



AUSTRALIAN SHELDUCK >

Large boldly marked duck, common on fresh or salt water. Feeds by sifting mud and water for food or by grazing on grasslands.
M, Res, B



< AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCK

Numbers have increased with the development of farm dams and pastures. Often seen feeding on grassy areas beside the river.
M, Res, B



PINK-EARED DUCK >

Filter feeder of microscopic plants, animals and small seeds. Sometimes seen rotating in pairs on Wilson Lagoon.
U, Ir



< AUSTRALIAN SHOVELER

Has a spoon-shaped bill fringed with lamellae for filtering small aquatic animals. Best spots: Wilson Lagoon or Nicholson Billabong.
U, Res/N, B



GREY TEAL >

More wary than Pacific Black Ducks, Grey Teal also feed by upending. They disperse widely after good rains.
M, Res/N, B



< PACIFIC BLACK DUCK

Feeds by upending in shallow water for plant or animal food. Often nests in a tree hollow near water.
C, Res, B



HARDHEAD >

Prefers deeper water where it dives for molluscs and seeds. Only the male has a white eye. Look for them on Wilson Lagoon or Liege Street Wetland.
U, Ir, B



< BLUE-BILLED DUCK

Another stiff-tailed duck, usually found in deeper fresh water. Dives for plants and insects. In breeding plumage, the male's bill is a striking blue.
U, Res/Ir



GREBE

Grebes are tiny waterbirds, often mistaken for ducklings. They are sharp-billed, almost tailless with lobed rather than webbed feet. They dive for tadpoles, insect larvae and small fish.

AUSTRALASIAN GREBE >

Found in fresh or brackish water. Usually dives to escape danger. Their floating nests of water-weeds can be seen along the river in summer.
C, Res, B



< HOARY-HEADED GREBE

Identified by its brushed back grey 'hair', dark nape stripe and silver eye. When disturbed, may fly rather than dive. Highly nomadic.
R, Ir/N

CORMORANT

These are fishing birds with hooked bills, long flexible necks and all four toes webbed. They extend their wings to dry out feathers after fishing as they are not water-proofed like ducks' feathers. They roost and breed in colonies.

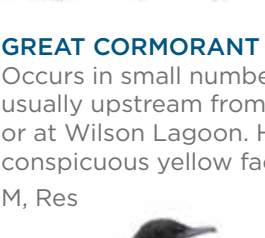
AUSTRALASIAN DARTER >

Specially jointed neck enables it to suddenly stab at prey (fish), or to submerge with barely a ripple. Darters have several breeding sites within the Park.
C, Res, B



< LITTLE PIED CORMORANT

Has a stubby yellow bill. Usually fishes alone. Often seen perched on dead trees near the islands at Riverton Bridge.
C, Res, B



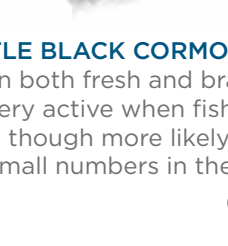
GREAT CORMORANT >

Occurs in small numbers, usually upstream from the weir or at Wilson Lagoon. Has a conspicuous yellow facial patch.
M, Res



< LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT

Common in both fresh and brackish water. Very active when fishing in flocks, though more likely to be seen in small numbers in the Park.
C, Res



HERON, IBIS, ALLIES

Hérons and egrets are medium to tall birds with long necks and legs and straight sharp bills for seizing slippery prey. They mostly nest in tree-top colonies. Ibises have a long down-curved bill while spoonbills have a straight bill with the end flat and broad.

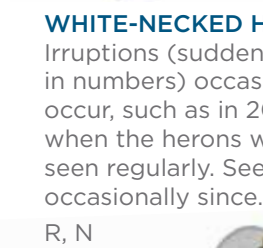
< AUSTRALIAN PELICAN

Often gregarious when fishing or soaring on thermals. Most common at Riverton Bridge. Breeds in huge colonies in remote areas when conditions are suitable.
C, Res



WHITE-NECKED HERON >

Irruptions (sudden increases in numbers) occasionally occur, such as in 2002 when the herons were seen regularly. Seen only occasionally since.
R, N



< EASTERN GREAT EGRET

Stately bird, usually found singly. Waits, motionless, before making a lightning thrust at prey.
M, Res, IA



LITTLE EGRET

Similar but smaller. Much more active.
R, Ir



WHITE-FACED HERON >

Feeds on frogs, insects, small fish and crustaceans found in shallow wetlands or in open grassy areas. Builds a nest of sticks in a tree.
M, Res, B



BIRD PROFILE CODES

Abundance

C - Common
M - Moderately common
U - Uncommon
R - Rare

Status

Res - Resident
Ir - Irregular visitor
Mi - Migratory
N - Nomadic
IA - Protected by international agreement
T - Threatened

Breeding

B - Breeds in CRRP

CRAKE, RAIL, ALLIES

These are very small to medium sized, slim and secretive birds with slender bills, longish necks and long toes for walking on floating vegetation. They flick their tails when walking.

PURPLE SWAMPHEN >

Feeds on tender reed stems but will also graze some distance from water. Within the Park, often seen clambering noisily through Melaleucas.
C, Res, B



< BUFF-BANDED RAIL

Usually seen singly in vegetation along the water's edge; sometimes in open grassland. Try Adenia Lagoon, Nicholson Billabong, Wilson Lagoon.
U, Res, B

SPOTLESS CRAKE >

In fringing vegetation near Riverton Bridge; also occurs upstream. Reminiscent of a dark bantam hen as it dashes between rushes. Distinctive loud rattling call.
U, Res, B



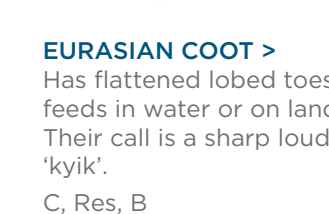
< DUSKY MOORHEN

Found in the fresh water section of the park, grazing aquatic vegetation by upending like a duck. Also feeds on land plants, insects and frogs.
C, Res, B



EURASIAN COOT >

Has flattened lobed toes and feeds in water or on land. Their call is a sharp loud 'kyik'.
C, Res, B



HERON, IBIS, ALLIES

< NANKEEN NIGHT HERON

Feeds from dusk to dawn and shelters by day in trees. Sometimes seen standing statue-like in melaleucas (paperbarks) but often goes unnoticed.
U, Res



AUSTRALIAN WHITE IBIS >

Gradual movement south from the Kimberley since 1952. Eats crustaceans and small aquatic animals. Locally, often seen probing water-logged areas or lawns and ovals.
C, Res



< YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL

Sweeps its bill from side to side, in search of small aquatic animals. Best spots: Nicholson Billabong, Wilson Lagoon or Liege Street Wetland.
M, Res

