

BIRDWATCHING AROUND NORTHAM

This is an interesting transition zone. Within 50 km we move from wet forest (800 mm pa) to the western wheatgrowing area (400 mm pa). Rainfall controls a rapid change in vegetation, primary industries and other dependent environmental effects.

This provides for a great diversity of habitats, from Jarrah-Marri through Wandoo woodland to York Gum, sandplain and farmland. Throughout there are lakes, rivers and swamps. The rapid change in habitat from east to west results in forest birds such as Western Spinebill (Bassian species) being found in close proximity to birds of the drier east, such as Mulga Parrot (Eyrean species). As well, many birds of both zones live side by side.

Many birds of the more arid interior appear in the eastern area from time to time, such as the Crimson Chat.

This information is arranged in seven geographical zones which can form several one-day excursions to observe the variety of habitats and changing pattern of bird populations.

For further more detailed information, the following publication is available from the tourist offices in Toodyay, Northam and York:

The Avon Valley - The Naturalists View, M Walker (Ed), Toodyay Naturalists Club, 1986.

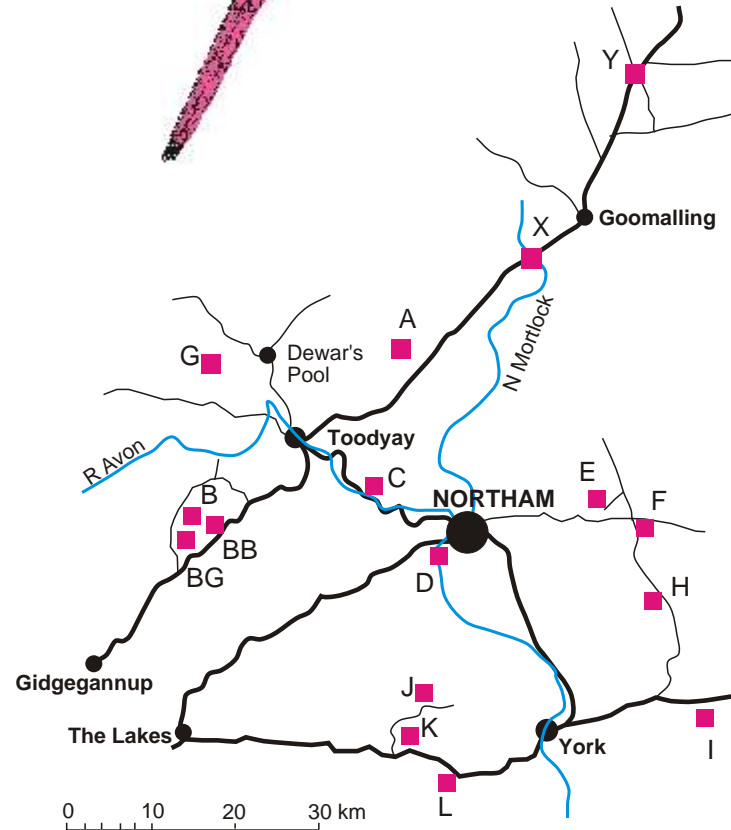
WETLANDS - North Mortlock River (X) and Walyormouring Lake Reserve (Y)

Good examples of saltmarsh and lakes of the wheatbelt.

X is alongside the Toodyay-Goomalling Road with York gum and jamtree woodland east of the bridge. A small swamp on the west side of the reserve is a breeding site for the Hoary-headed Grebe and Black-tailed Native-hen.

Y is a large salt marsh and lake, but with open woodland including Sandalwood in the north-east corner. Crested Bellbird reside in the Sandalwood with Mulga Parrot and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater occurring throughout. These are typical species of the dryer wheatbelt.

The marsh areas are usually drier in midsummer, so visit in winter or spring. Wheatbelt lakes can be rich in



plankton, making them attractive to many thousands of waterbirds. Spectacular flocks of Grey Teal and Banded Stilt occur late in the season. Other duck species, Black Swan, plovers and migratory waders are always present in the spring.

WETLANDS - Katrine Pool (C) and Northam Town weir (D)

Good examples of permanent river pool habitats, serving as summer/autumn refuge areas with trees and fringing vegetation, particularly at Katrine. Here you can see Splendid Fairy-wren, Scarlet and Red-capped Scarlet Robin, Western Gerygone and Rufous Whistler. Watch for Australian Hobby and Peregrine Falcon as they hunt the large summer flocks of the many species of duck. The Avon river is used as a flyway by many waterbirds such as Black Swan, Great Egret, Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis, and both species of Spoonbill.

WET FOREST - Mokine Reserve (J), St Ronan's Reserve (K), Wambyn Reserve (L)

Turn off at Boyercutty Road for Mokine Reserve.

These reserves have many of the south-west forest species but rainfall decreases rapidly eastwards to the wheatbelt. All the reserves have extensive areas of granite outcrop and great diversity of habitat with Acacia and Sheoak woodland. There is a wealth of lizards and orchids in spring.

The dry open woodland supports Little Wattlebird, New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeater and Western Spinebill which mingle with Yellow-plumed and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and White-browed Babbler. Scarlet and Red-capped Robin occur and in the denser understorey, Splendid Fairy-wren and Western Thornbill. The eastern limit of the Marri tree and Red-capped Parrot is reached about here.

In Mokine and Wambyn, magnificent stands of Powder bark Wandoo favour Painted Button-quail. Rufous Treecreeper, Western Yellow Robin and Dusky Woodswallow can occur.

WET FOREST - Morangup Hill Reserve (B) [including Goonaring (BG) and Beelaring Springs (BB)]

Turn off the Midland-Toodyay Road at Morangup Road.

Except for the springs area, generally very open Jarrah, Marri or Wandoo woodland but with some dense understorey of shrubs and heath.

The granite top of Morangup Hill provides extensive views and a favoured hunting ground of the Square-tailed Kite. Red-capped Parrot and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater are found here.

WET FOREST - Julimar state Forest (G)

A very large area of jarrah changing to Wandoo and Powder bark Wandoo in the drier eastern part. Bird species are similar to J, K and L reserves. However large flocks of Short-billed Black-Cockatoo, and in flowering trees Purple-crowned Lorikeet do occur. Of special interest is the rare Crested Shrike-tit in the Wandoo-dominated valleys. It is easy to get lost here! You will find a map and compass reassuring. Begin your birdwatching from Dewar's Pool.

DRY WHEATBELT - Wongamine Reserve (A)

Largely Wandoo with some sandplain heath. Bird species, especially honeyeaters, reflect the overlapping of the wet south-west and drier wheatbelt.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, New Holland, White-cheeked and White-fronted Honeyeater occur, and Western Spinebill, although at different times of the year. This reserve is rich in plant species, some rare and endangered.

DRY WHEATBELT - Throssell Reserve (E), Meenar Reserve (F), Duck Pool Reserve (H) and Wallaby Hill Reserve (I)

These small reserves show a diverse sample of bushland habitats present before clearing took place in the western wheatbelt. A great variety of plant species including orchids exist.

Duck Pool (Meenar South Road) has the salty Mortlock River flowing through it with thick bush surrounds where you may see Mulga Parrot, White-winged Fairy-wren and Crested Bellbird.

Throssell Reserve is entirely open mature Wandoo forest with nesting parrot species, Australian Hobby, Sacred Kingfisher and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill. Other inland species are Spiny-cheeked and White-fronted Honeyeater, Zebra Finch and White-backed Swallow.

Meenar Reserve is notable for its flora, the Red-backed Kingfisher if you are lucky as well as the species already mentioned. Along the road to Wallaby Hill (Goldfields Road) watch for flocks of Galah, Little Corella and occasionally Elegant Parrot. When at the reserve enjoy the old Grasstrees as well as find the Painted Button-quail.

WHAT IS BIRDS AUSTRALIA?

Birds Australia is a non-profit national organisation working for the enjoyment, study and conservation of Australia's birds. The WA group of Birds Australia has members statewide and offers a variety of activities for members, including conservation and research projects.

Activities and services include excursions, camp-outs, bird surveys and social activities. We also have a library, books for sale and information about birds.

To view our full range of bird guides and bird lists, visit our web site.

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AVON VALLEY
WESTERN WHEATBELT**

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*Rufous
Treecreeper*

