


Birds of LAKE ILLAWARRA





An introductory guide to birds, their habitats
and how to protect them

LAKE ILLAWARRA BIRDS

Lake Illawarra is a home, a nesting site and a food source for many birds. In and around the lake you'll find three main groups of birds:

 *Water birds* live in or around water. There are more than 55 species of waterbird that call Lake Illawarra home. Some travel 20,000km from the Arctic to spend their summer here. Waterbirds around the Lake include Australian Pelicans, Chestnut Teal ducks and Black Swans.

 *Waders* are a special kind of water bird that forage for food like insects or crustaceans (such as crabs) that live in the mud or sand around the shoreline and mudflats. Waders around the Lake include White-faced Herons, Black-winged Stilts and Royal Spoonbills.

 *Birds of Prey* such as the White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Eastern Osprey also depend on the Lake for their life cycle. These birds build their nests in tall trees near the Lake.

PROTECTING BIRDS AT LAKE ILLAWARRA

Birds numbers and species diversity are great signs of the health of the Lake.

! Plastic and rubbish

Take your rubbish with you and place it in the correct bin. Join in litter clean ups.

! Seagrass loss

When boating cast the anchor onto sand to avoid damaging seagrass.

! Attacks on birds

Keep pets away from the birds and their nests.

! Propeller hits

Beware of diving birds when boating - propeller injuries occur.

! Polluted runoff

Wash your car on the grass.
Cover any uncompacted soils.
Pick up and correctly dispose of your dog's droppings.

! Water pollution

Make sure watercraft have no engine leaks. Ensure bilge water is not contaminated and empty in an appropriate place.

! Weeds

Plant natives in your garden and remove invasive weeds. Join a local BushCare or LandCare group.

! Overfishing causing less food for birds

Stick to bag limits.

! Entanglement of birds

Take your fishing line and nets home with you. Avoid using stainless steel fish hooks. Cast away from foraging birds or move away.

! Coastal development and habitat loss

Leave the trees on the foreshore. Keep a buffer zone between your property and the lake.

! Bird drownings

Keep a close eye on submerged crab traps.



BIRD HABITATS

Lake Illawarra has a variety of habitats used by birds for shelter, roosting, breeding and nesting. These important habitats face a range of threats.

SEAGRASS

Grows in large underwater meadows in sheltered areas. Food for plant eating waterbirds. Fish spend the early part of their life in seagrass beds, so fish-eating waterbirds hunt in the area.

THREATS: Damage caused by boat propellers, jet skis and anchors, shading/smothering, dirty water, dredging.

MANGROVES

Grow in muddy soils of the coastal zone. Prevent erosion by stabilising soils and are a buffer against severe storms. They provide habitat and food for birds, fish, molluscs and crustaceans.

THREATS: Foreshore development, vandalism, dirty water, grazing animals.

ISLANDS

Used as breeding sites by a number of species that nest on the ground. Waders and terns also commonly use these areas as roosts.

THREATS: Weeds, litter, climate change and sea level rise.

INTERTIDAL SANDS & MUDFLATS

Stretches of sandy or muddy land uncovered at low tide. Long-legged and long-billed birds wander in the shallows probing, spearing, sieving and scooping for tiny creatures living in the ground. Terns and other birds fly overhead and dive for food in the shallow water.

THREATS: Pollution and runoff from developments, sea level rise, mud disturbance (e.g. digging out bait worms, illegal vehicle access), climate change.

SALT MARSH

This community of plants can tolerate high soil salinity and occasional tidal inundation. Used by birds for roosting, and provides the ideal hunting ground for waders and fish eating birds, with food found in the water and soil below.

THREATS: Weeds, mowing and domestic gardens on the foreshore, trampling and soil compaction (e.g. by bikers, walkers, horses and other livestock), climate change and sea level rise.

SEDGES, RUSHES & GRASSY BANKS

Used for shelter and nesting by many bird types. Ducks and swans feed on grassy banks. Ibis, herons and swampheens are also feed on fringing bulrushes.

THREATS: Weeds, mowing and domestic gardens on the foreshore, disturbed/loose soil covering plants, litter.



AUSTRALASIAN DARTER

Often spotted hanging around with Cormorants, but can be differentiated by looking at the sharp spear-like beak used to stab fish underwater.



AUSTRALIAN PELICAN

A common sight around the Lake, but did you know pelicans often soar above us at 1000m high? Pelicans ride thermal air currents and can stay in the sky for 24 hours!



AUSTRALIAN WHITE IBIS

The Ibis has many nicknames, known as farmer's friend, tip turkey and even bin chicken!



BAR-TAILED GODWIT

These migratory birds arrive in spring and stay until summers end. Each year they make a 22,000km round trip, that's like driving around Australia almost two times!



BLACK SWAN

Moulting after breeding causes them to lose their flight feathers. The Lake provides the swans with a safe harbour for the few weeks they cannot fly.



BLACK-WINGED STILT

Often spotted in groups around the shallower parts of the Lake. These social birds use their long beaks like tweezers to pick insects from the surface of the water.



CHESTNUT TEAL

Unlike most ducks, the Chestnut Teal is more able to tolerate the high salinity areas of the Lake. Look for them foraging near the shore on an incoming tide.



CRESTED TERN

Spotted in groups or flying above the Lake looking for lunch. Once they spot their prey they swiftly dive into the water, grab the fish behind the head and fly away!



DUSKY MOORHEN

This bird has two look alikes that are also seen around the lake. You can tell this one apart by checking eye and beak colour.



GREAT EGRET

Prefers flowing water, but seen in the shallows anywhere around the Lake. They also grow nuptial plumes in the breeding season.



LITTLE PIED CORMORANT

Look for a cheeky head popping above water every now and then. Or spot them drying off perched with their wings spread wide.



MASKED LAPWING

Commonly referred to as plovers and known to be very territorial. They swoop if you get too close, so give them space.



ROYAL SPOONBILL

Usually seen nesting with cormorants, herons and ibises. They form large, noisy breeding colonies and nest in a tree over water or among high reeds and rushes.



PIED OYSTER-CATCHER

Often seen probing their chisel-shaped bills in the mud looking for molluscs. Their nests are just a scrape in the sand. Watch your step their eggs are well camouflaged!



SILVER GULL

You know them as Sea Gulls, surviving off hot chips and food scraps. Other birds find it hard to compete, and Gulls often dominate shared nesting sites.



STRIATED HERON

Found hanging silently and still around the mudflats the Lake. It pulls its head in close to its body and flicks its tail down as it hunts crabs and small fish.



WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE

If you've seen them nesting around the Lake chances are it's the same pair that was there last year! They mate for life and nest at the same place each year. Be aware: easily disturbed when nesting.



WHITE-FACED HERON

Very versatile and seen all around the Lake. Notice long, wispy feathers on its head, neck and back? These are called nuptial plumes, only present in breeding season.



WHERE YOU MIGHT FIND US



Seagrass



Mangroves



Intertidal sands & mudflats



Saltmarsh



Sedges, rushes & grassy banks



Islands



WALKS AROUND LAKE ILLAWARRA

HOOKA POINT LOOP TRACK (SHOWN IN YELLOW ON MAP)

START: Hooka Point, Holborn Street, Berkeley.

DISTANCE: 3.1kms return **LEVEL:** Easy

BIRDS COMMONLY SPOTTED: Bar-tailed Godwit, Eastern Curlew, Striated Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Black Swan, White-faced Heron, Little Pied Cormorant, Australian White Ibis, Pied Oystercatcher.

KULLY BAY WETLANDS WALK (SHOWN IN RED ON MAP)

START: Kully Bay Park, Northcliffe Drive, Warrawong.

DISTANCE: 4kms return **LEVEL:** Easy

BIRDS COMMONLY SPOTTED: Black-winged Stilt, Great Egret, Australasian Darter, Chestnut Teal, White Ibis, Black Swan, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Purple Swampphen, Great Egret, Pied Oystercatcher.

KOONA BAY WALK (SHOWN IN BLUE ON MAP)

START: Corner of Kanahooka and Koonawarra Sts, Albion Park Rail.

DISTANCE: 2kms return **LEVEL:** Easy

BIRDS COMMONLY SPOTTED: Darter, Pied Cormorant, Striated Heron, White-faced Heron, Purple Swampphen, Black-winged Stilt, Great Egret, Purple Swampphen, Royal Spoonbill, White Ibis, Pied Oystercatcher.

PICNIC ISLAND WALK (SHOWN IN PURPLE ON MAP)

START: Lake Illawarra PCYC, Reddall Parade, Lake Illawarra.

DISTANCE: 3kms return **LEVEL:** Easy

BIRDS COMMONLY SPOTTED: Little Pied Cormorant, Chestnut Teal, Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Australasian Darter, Royal Spoonbill, Pelican, White-bellied Sea Eagle, White Ibis, Silver Gull, Crested Tern.

Map is for reference only and not 100% accurate.

TIPS ON BIRD WATCHING



Go in the early morning – birds are most active at this time.



Take binoculars.



Listen carefully – you often hear birds before you see them.



Walk slowly and be as quiet as you can.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

If you want to find out more, get involved in birdwatching activities or report injured wildlife, see:

Illawarra Birders
www.illawarrabirders.org

Illawarra Bird Observers Club
www.iboc.com.au

Australian Seabird Rescue – South Coast -
www.seabirdrescue.org.au

Thank you Martin Potter from Illawarra Birders and Professor Dietmar Müller for the use of their images in this brochure.



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