

Bush birds

The reserve supports 87 species of bush birds; six of which are honeyeaters, these include the strikingly plumaged **New**



Holland Honeyeater (left) and **Western Spinebill**. Parrots are also well represented and include the colourful **Red-capped Parrot**, which is endemic to south-western Australia. The reserve also has its accomplished songsters like the **Brown Honeyeater**,

Western Gerygone, **Rufous Whistler** and **Grey Shrike-thrush**. Other bush birds commonly found in the reserve are the **Willie Wagtail** and **Grey Fantail**; the jewel-like **Splendid Fairywren**, **Spotted Pardalote** and **Scarlet Robin**; and the migratory **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Rainbow Bee-eater** and **Shining Bronze** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoos**.

Nocturnal birds

Two species of owl occur in the reserve: the **Barn Owl**, found almost worldwide; and Australia's smallest owl, the **Southern**



Boobook (left), whose alternative name 'mopoke' is an interpretation of its distinctive night-time call. The **Tawny Frogmouth** is another nocturnal bird that lives here (this bird is not an owl but related more closely to nightjars). The Tawny Frogmouth, whose diet includes nocturnal insects, is

noted for its remarkable camouflaging ability in which both its colouring and posture cleverly resemble the branch on which it is perched. Also living in the reserve is a nocturnal waterbird, the **Nankeen Night Heron**. Though not strictly nocturnal - it can sometimes be seen feeding in daylight - this bird generally roosts in dense foliage by day, and hunts for prey (which includes fish, frogs and crustaceans) by night.

Access to the lake

Parking is available at Moore Street, Forrestdale and the Southern end of Commercial Road as well as on Broome Street near the Forrestdale Primary School. Wheelchair access to the bird observation platform and information shelter is from the Moore Street car park.

A six-kilometre limestone walk trail encircles the lake, and goes via banksia and paperbark woodland. A seat is located at a high viewing point on the lake's eastern side.

References

DEC (2005) *Forrestdale Lake Management Plan*.

DSEWPac *Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*.

Birdlife Australia (2003) *Atlas of Australian Birds* (bird surveys ongoing).

Government of Western Australia (2000) *Bush Forever Volume 2: Directory of Bush Forever Sites*.

Rod Giblett (2006) *Forrestdale People and Place* (includes oral history and comprehensive bird and plant list).



Great Egret

Contacts

WA Branch of Birdlife Australia on (08) 93837749 or wa@birdlife.org.au ; www.birdlife.org.au/wa

David James (member of Birdlife Australia & Friends of Forrestdale) on (08) 93970276

Friends of Forrestdale (Inc.) 2013

Photos & artwork by Bryony Fremlin

Front panel, clockwise from top left: Black-winged Stilt, Splendid Fairywren, Scarlet Robin, White-necked Heron, Rainbow Bee-eater.

BIRDS

OF

LAKE FORRESTDAL

NATURE RESERVE



Lake Forrestdale - a magnet for waterbirds

When **Lake Forrestdale** begins to fill with water in winter the waterbirds start to appear. First to arrive are the **Australian**



Shelducks (left), **Pacific Black Ducks** and **Grey Teal**. Also to arrive at this time are **Black Swans**, **Black-winged Stilts**, **Hérons**, **Purple Swamphens**, **Ibises** (below) and **Egrets**. Later to arrive are the birds

that favour deeper water, such as **White-eyed Ducks**, **Blue-billed Ducks**, **Musk Ducks** and **Australian** and **Hoary-headed Grebes**. From October onwards, the migratory wading birds arrive from the Northern Hemisphere, these include the



Common Greenshank, **Red-necked Stint** and **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**. They will spend the warmer months here feeding on aquatic invertebrates until April when they return to their summer breeding grounds in northern Siberia and the Arctic Circle. Also at this time, large numbers of **Red-capped Plover** - a non-migratory wading bird -

arrive; most will leave when the water is gone, but a few stay all summer despite the lake being dry.

In recognition of its value as a waterbird habitat, Lake Forrestdale was nominated in 1990 for inclusion on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

Seventy-nine species of waterbird have been recorded at Lake Forrestdale, with a maximum of around 21,100 individuals recorded in February 1987. Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a dramatic decline in visiting migratory wading birds. Two key reasons for this are the lake's diminishing water levels, and habitat loss along the flyway between Australia and the Northern Hemisphere.

Cygnets rescue

Lake Forrestdale has always been an important breeding site for **Black Swans**, with 170 cygnets being recorded in one season. However, the number of swans breeding on the lake



has declined in recent years as a result of lowering water levels. Furthermore, the lake now often dries before many of the cygnets can fly, which means they either die of exposure or fall prey to foxes. In

an effort to prevent these deaths from occurring, rescue operations have been conducted (the first being in January 2009). This involves officers from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and volunteers rounding up and catching the cygnets which are then kept by wildlife carers before they are ready to be released into other wetlands.



Lake Forrestdale

Lake Forrestdale is classed as an ephemeral lake, which means that it only holds water for brief periods of the year. In years of high rainfall this can be from midwinter to early summer. In recent years, however, the lake's water levels have continued to decline. Several factors contribute to this, including over use of ground water and diminishing rainfall.

Raptors

Fifteen species of raptor have been recorded in the reserve,



one of the most common being the **Swamp Harrier** (pictured left and distinguished by the splash of white on its rump). Other raptors regularly seen include the **Whistling Kite**, **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Little Eagle** and **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Species that make but rare appearances in the

reserve are the **White-bellied Sea Eagle**, **Spotted Harrier**, **Brown Falcon**, **Peregrine Falcon** and **Black Kite**.

Wildlife habitat even when dry

Lake Forrestdale in summer is a parched, often searing environment, yet even at this time it is habitat for many



animals. Among them is the **Red-capped Plover** (left). A small flock of these hardy little birds stay and breed when no water remains and they make a scant scrape in the dry soil for a nest. Both parents incubate

the 2 or 3 greenish-grey, spotted eggs until the speckled, downy young emerge, who, soon after hatching, are able to run across the ground as adeptly as their parents. Other birds that make use of the dry lake habitat are **Black-shouldered Kites** and **Nankeen Kestrels** which are often seen hovering in mid-air as they search for prey such as mice and insects. **Stubble** and **Brown Quails**, **White-fronted Chats**, **Australasian Pipits** and **Australian Magpies** are also frequently seen foraging for insects on the dry lake bed.