

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, as 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 traverses banksia and paperbark woodland. A seat is located at a high viewing point on the eastern side of the lake.

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*.

Giblett, R. (2006) *Forrestdale People and Place*. Bassendean: Access Books.



Great Egret

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

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BIRDS

OF

LAKE FORRESTDALE

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 arriving 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 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 over 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 in January 2009. This involves officers from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and volunteers catching the cygnets which, if old enough, are relocated to other wetlands that have water, or kept by wildlife carers until old enough to be released.



Lake Forrestdale

In contrast to former times when Lake Forrestdale either never dried up or held water for most of the year, the lake now holds water for only a few months each year. In recent decades water levels have continued to decline. Key contributing factors are diminishing rainfall and excessive government and private groundwater abstraction.

Raptors

Fifteen species of raptor have been recorded in the reserve.

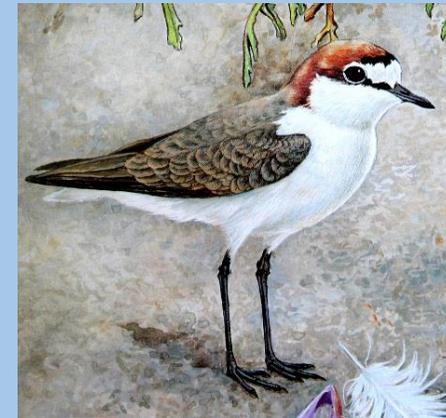


One of the most common is the **Swamp Harrier** (pictured left and distinguished by the splash of white on its rump). Other raptors regularly seen include the **Whistling Kite**, **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Nankeen Kestrel**, **Little Eagle** and **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. Species that make rare appearances 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. They make a scant scrape in the dry soil for a nest and both parents

incubate the 2 or 3 greenish-grey, spotted eggs until the speckled, downy young emerge - soon after hatching, the young 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**. Both 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.