

Common Birds on The Macleay

RAPTORS

Osprey

The osprey is found throughout most of the world and in Australia is found right around the country close to water. Once the osprey sets up residence in an area it will generally live there for life.

The osprey will nest just about anywhere, tall dead trees, power poles, on cliff edges, on the ground occasionally, and even on the masts of yachts. They use the same nest for years just adding new material each season and as you can imagine over ten years or more the nests can become huge. They don't just add sticks either, they add seaweed or anything else they find on the beach or floating around.

The osprey, unlike some of the other raptors feeds almost exclusively on live fish as opposed to carrion, small animals etc. It hovers above the water till it spots a fish and then drops feet first onto its prey. It can hit the water with such force it will disappear over a metre below the surface. In the Macleay area the ospreys nest from March till September to coincide with the large schools of mullet travelling in the area at that time.



Juvenile osprey

This species, once facing extinction, is now making a comeback worldwide thanks to conservation efforts.

Brahminy Kite

This is one of the most easily identified raptors you will see on the river with its snow white head, neck and breast contrasting drastically with its rufous (rusty) body colour.



Brahminy Kite

It is nearly always associated with estuary areas only venturing inland on odd occasions. But this raptor is not just associated with Australia and can be found in a number of overseas countries, including India.

This species is much happier to take carrion than a lot of the other raptors and upstream at Jerseyville where the main fishing fleet is moored it is not uncommon to see them feeding on the frozen packages of chicken gut that the fishermen use in their fish traps. But they also feed on fish, frogs, crustaceans, reptiles and insects. However when it comes to feeding chicks in the nest fish either alive or dead are the main food.

Unlike some of the other raptors, nests are newly built each year and are usually found about 10 to 20 metres above the ground. Usually the eggs are laid between July and October.

Whistling Kite

Like the brahminy kite that can be recognised by its appearance, the whistling kite can be recognised by its call. A very distinctive whistle followed by 4 to 6 shorter ones with a rising inflection, leaves no doubt to its identity.

The adults feed on anything from insects to carrion, with their chicks the diet is more particular. Carrion is generally not fed to chicks. Their diet mainly consists of smaller birds, insects, rats, rabbits and fish, particularly mullet. The only exception is that during the calving period, the fresh placenta from the cow is feed to young whistling kites. Whistling kites use the same nest year after year.

White-breasted Sea-Eagle

Also called the white-bellied sea-eagle this is our second largest raptor, the wedge-tailed eagle being the largest.

Like the whistling kite and osprey it uses the same nest each year and they can turn out as huge structures. There have been some found that are four metres (14 feet) deep, and contain half a ton of wood.

Unlike many of the other raptors, fish is the main diet, though it has been known to take tortoises, sea snakes, small mammals and occasional carrion. Other water birds are often fed to chicks along with the fish.



Sea-Eagle

WATER BIRDS

Cormorants and Darters

Along with the darter there are four species of cormorant occurring in the Macleay area; black, little black, pied and little pied.

Cormorants, also known as shags, are long necked, long billed diving birds that primarily feed on fish. They can be found in all the river systems in the Macleay including freshwater bodies. They are also common in Trial Bay where they can be observed feeding on passing schools of fish.

After catching a fish they bring it to the surface where they flip it around so they can swallow it head first.

Because cormorants feed by swimming underwater they have a low level of waterproofing on their feathers to reduce buoyancy and allow them to stay submerged a long time with little effort. Because of this cormorants can often be seen sitting on a branch or rock with their wings spread to help dry them.

Pelican

Pelicans are found throughout Australia and is a common sight patrolling the waterways in search of fish and crustaceans. Pelicans have been in Australia for a long time and some of their fossil remains date back to 30 to 40 million years.

Although pelicans are adept fish catchers often herding the bait schools into the shallows for easier capture, they have also learnt to associate anglers with a free feed. Anywhere in the Macleay where anglers clean their catch a pelican won't be too far away.



Pelican

Pelicans are unmistakable with the distinct bill and associated pouch which can hold 6 litres of water. They have a wing span up to 2.6 metres and can often be observed soaring high in the sky, up to 3000 metres.

BUSH BIRDS

Most of the birds you will hear are bush birds. They are not very big or easy to see but if you look closely you will see them fluttering from tree to tree. Many of the birds are honeyeaters - feeding on the pollen and nectar of the flowering shrubs and trees. There are also quite a few wrens including the well recognised blue wren.

Grey fantails

Grey fantails seem to be in constant motion, fluttering and hopping from branch to branch. This constant movement is accompanied by non stop chattering. Although only small birds they are aggressive towards other birds in their area.

Willie Wagtail

The name willy wagtail comes from the birds constant swaying of its body and wagging of its tail. Theory has it that this action flushes insects from the grass. It is related to the grey fantail and behaves similarly.

Brown Thornhill

Easier to hear than see, this tiny 10 cm bird is constantly on the move in the lower bushes. Associating with other species, the brown thornbill seeks insects and seeds.



Willie Wagtail

Sacred Kingfisher

An attractive species of the forests and mangroves, the sacred kingfisher belongs to the same family as the kookaburra. Prey consists mainly of reptiles and insects. The bird can be difficult to see and is often only noticed when it moves from one area to another. Its flight is swift and direct. The bird excavates its breeding hollow in a termites nest generally high in a tree.

Yellow-faced honeyeater

Yellow-faced honeyeaters are one of the more vocal honeyeaters and can be seen in large numbers in the Macleay area from March through October. Outside of this time they migrate south to breed. Their main habitat is coastal shrubs and open woodlands.

Yellow-faced honey eaters are very active birds and arboreal foragers taking insects from twigs and foliage. They also feed on nectar from eucalypts, banksias and grevilleas.



Yellow-faced Honeyeater

Rufous Whistler

Usually seen alone or in pairs, this colourful species is known for its rich and explosive calls. Loud noises such as thunder or the slamming of a car door usually invokes a whistling response. Frequenting forests and scrubs they feed on insects, berries and fruits.

Emu

There are emus on Shark Island, there were six, and they have bred over the years. Unfortunately foxes have killed all the young. The male and one female left the island last year by swimming to the mainland at Fishermans Reach, so I believe those we see now are only females.

It is not an uncommon sight to see the emus wade out into deeper water to cadge a fish from fishermen who may be working their nets in the area.

Egrets

The four egrets found in Australia are all residents of the Macleay area. The cattle egret is the smallest followed by the little egret, then plumed egret, up to the large egret. All are very similar in appearance and difficult to tell apart for the unskilled eye as they are all white in colour.

These graceful birds are usually found alone or in small numbers, except for the cattle egret which follows feeding cattle. The remaining three species can be seen feeding on insects, fish, or invertebrates in shallow waters, mudflats, or paddocks.



Egret

White-faced Heron

An attractive bird similar in appearance to the egrets, but with grey plumage and white face. This species feeds on crustaceans, fish, insects, snails and worms in a variety of habitats ranging from mudflats and swamps to paddocks and lawns. It usually nests high in a tree.

Waders

Waders are made up of a large number of different species of birds that have some similar characteristics. All are shore birds of some type, many have long bills which have evolved to aid feeding in the shallows and mudflats of estuaries.

Many of the wader species are migratory birds who travel to Australia from China, Japan and Siberia' to escape the severe winters in those countries. By spending spring and summer in Australian estuaries and flying north to Asia and Siberia during our autumn these small birds travel vast distances in search of perpetual warm seasons which support increased food availability.

Black Duck

A common bird of lakes, estuaries, swamps and rivers, this species feeds on plants and insects, and breeds from July to October. Black Ducks congregate in vast numbers when conditions are favourable, such as after floods.

Chestnut Teal

This attractive duck frequents swamps and estuaries of southern Australia and feeds on plants, insects and crustaceans. In contrast to the male, the female is plain brown in colour.

Wood Duck

Wood ducks are more closely related to geese than ducks. They much prefer to walk around than swim and usually only enter the water to bathe, copulate or for refuge.

Wood ducks mate for life. They nest in tree holes and ducklings jump out of the nest hole soon after hatching, called out by their parents from below. Young can feed almost as soon as they hatch feeding on green herbage, grains and insects. It takes about 50 days before they can fly and during this time both parents care and protect the young. However, the young wood ducks are much preyed upon by hawks, eagles and harriers who view them as an easy catch.

Jabiru

Also known as the Black-necked Stork, these huge birds stand 1.2 metres high and have a wingspan of 2 metres. This attractive and distinctive species mainly inhabits northern Australia becoming scarcer further south. There are a number of these birds around the Macleay area and they can be seen feeding on fish, reptiles, and carrion along the mudflats.



Jabiru Black-necked Stock

BIRD LIST

DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

OBSERVER: _____

CONDITIONS: _____

COMMENTS: _____

BIRD SPECIES FOR MACLEAY VALLEY & SURROUNDS
(From Continental Shelf to top of Great Dividing Range)
380 Species recorded between 1991 and 2010, including
Vagrants – V; Uncommon – U.
Compiled by Ken Shingleton – (South West Rocks – 6566 7846)
For NSW Bird Atlassers, 23.7.10.

Ratites

Emu - V

Mound Builders

Australian Brush-turkey

Quails

Stubble Quail

Brown Quail

King Quail

Magpie Goose

Magpie Goose - V

Swans, Ducks

Plumed Whistling-Duck

Wandering Whistling-Duck

Musk Duck

Freckled Duck - V

Black Swan

Australian Shelduck - V

Australian Wood Duck

Pink-eared Duck

Australasian Shoveler

Northern Shoveler - V

Grey Teal

Chestnut Teal

Northern Mallard

Pacific Black Duck

Hardhead

Blue-billed Duck - V

Tropicbirds

Red-tailed Tropicbird

White-tailed Tropicbird

Grebes

Australasian Grebe

Hoary-headed Grebe

Great Crested Grebe

Pigeons, Doves

Rock Dove

White-headed Pigeon

Spotted Dove

Brown Cuckoo-Dove

Emerald Dove

Common Bronzewing - U

Brush Bronzewing - U

Crested Pigeon

Peaceful Dove

Bar-shouldered Dove

Wonga Pigeon

Wompoo Fruit-Dove

Superb Fruit-Dove

Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove

Topknot Pigeon

Frogmouths

Tawny Frogmouth

Nightjars

White-throated Nightjar

Owlet-Nightjar

Australian Owlet-nightjar

Swifts

White-throated Needletail

Fork-tailed Swift

Southern Storm-Petrels

Wilson's Storm-Petrel

White-faced Storm-Petrel - U

Black-bellied Storm-Petrel - U

White-bellied Storm-Petrel - U

Albatrosses

Wandering Albatross

Royal Albatross

Black-browed Albatross

Shy Albatross

Yellow-nosed Albatross

**Petrels; Giant-Petrels, Petrels,
Prions, Shearwaters**

Southern Giant-Petrel
Northern Giant-Petrel - U
Cape Petrel
Fairy Prion
Wedge-tailed Shearwater
Buller's Shearwater - U
Flesh-footed Shearwater
Sooty Shearwater
Short-tailed Shearwater
Streaked Shearwater
Fluttering Shearwater
Hutton's Shearwater
Little Shearwater
Tahiti Petrel
Herald Petrel - U
White-headed Petrel - U
Great-winged Petrel
Providence Petrel
Gould's Petrel
White-necked Petrel
Common Diving-Petrel - U

Penguins

Little Penguin

Frigatebirds

Lesser Frigatebird - U
Great Frigatebird - U

Gannets, Boobies

Australasian Gannet
Masked Booby - U
Brown Booby - U

Darter

Australasian Darter

Cormorants

Little Pied Cormorant
Great Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant
Pied Cormorant

Pelican

Australian Pelican

Stork

Black-necked Stork

Bitterns, Egrets, Herons

Australasian Bittern
Australian Little Bittern
Black Bittern
White-necked Heron
Eastern Great Egret
Intermediate Egret
Cattle Egret
Striated Heron
White-faced Heron
Little Egret
Eastern Reef Egret
Nankeen Night-Heron

Ibises, Spoonbills

Glossy Ibis
Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis
Royal Spoonbill
Yellow-billed Spoonbill

Osprey, Kites, Eagles, Hawks, etc.

Eastern Osprey
Black-shouldered Kite
Square-tailed Kite
Pacific Baza
White-bellied Sea-Eagle
Whistling Kite
Brahminy Kite
Black Kite - U
Brown Goshawk
Collared Sparrowhawk
Grey Goshawk
Spotted Harrier - U
Swamp Harrier
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Little Eagle

Falcons

Nankeen Kestrel
Brown Falcon
Australian Hobby
Peregrine Falcon

Cranes

Brolga

Crakes, Rails, Gallinules

Purple Swamphen
Lewin's Rail

Crakes, Rails (cont.)

Buff-banded Rail
Baillon's Crake
Australian Spotted Crake
Spotless Crake
Pale-vented Bush-hen - V
Black-tailed Native-hen - V
Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot

Stone-Curlews

Bush Stone-curlew
Beach Stone-curlew

Oystercatchers

Australian Pied Oystercatcher
Sooty Oystercatcher

Stilts, Avocet

Black-winged Stilt
Red-necked Avocet - U

Plovers, Dotterels, Lapwings

Pacific Golden Plover
Grey Plover - U
Red-capped Plover
Double-banded Plover
Lesser Sand Plover - U
Greater Sand Plover - U
Black-fronted Dotterel
Red-kneed Dotterel
Banded Lapwing - U
Masked Lapwing

Jacanas

Comb-crested Jacana

Painted Snipe

Australian Painted Snipe

Snipes, Godwits, Sandpipers

Latham's Snipe
Black-tailed Godwit
Bar-tailed Godwit
Whimbrel
Eastern Curlew
Terek Sandpiper
Common Sandpiper
Grey-tailed Tattler
Wandering Tattler

Common Greenshank
Lesser Yellowlegs - V
Marsh Sandpiper
Common Redshank - V
Wood Sandpiper
Ruddy Turnstone
Great Knot
Red Knot
Sanderling
Red-necked Stint
Long-toed Stint - V
Pectoral Sandpiper
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Curlew Sandpiper
Ruff - U

Button-Quails

Red-backed Button-quail - U
Painted Button-quail
Little Button-quail - U

Pratincoles

Oriental Pratincole - V
Australian Pratincole - V

Skuas, Jaegers

Brown Skua
Pomarine Jaeger
Arctic Jaeger
Long-tailed Jaeger

Gulls, Terns

Common Noddy
Black Noddy - U
White Tern - U
Grey Ternlet - U
Sooty Tern
Little Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Whiskered Tern
White-winged Black Tern
White-fronted Tern
Common Tern
Arctic Tern - U
Crested Tern
Kelp Gull - U
Silver Gull

Cockatoos

Glossy Black-Cockatoo
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Galah
Long-billed Corella
Little Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Parrots

Rainbow Lorikeet
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
Musk Lorikeet
Little Lorikeet
Australian King-Parrot
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella
Pale-headed Rosella - V
Australian Ringneck - V
Blue Bonnet - V
Swift Parrot
Red-rumped Parrot - U
Turquoise Parrot - V
Ground Parrot - U

Coucals, Cuckoos

Pheasant Coucal
Eastern Koel
Channel-billed Cuckoo
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Little Bronze-Cuckoo
Pallid Cuckoo
Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Brush Cuckoo
Oriental Cuckoo - U

Hawk Owls

Powerful Owl
Southern Boobook

Barn Owls & Allies

Sooty Owl
Masked Owl
Eastern Barn Owl
Eastern Grass Owl

River Kingfishers

Azure Kingfisher

Tree Kingfishers

Laughing Kookaburra
Forest Kingfisher
Red-backed Kingfisher - V
Sacred Kingfisher

Bee-Eaters

Rainbow Bee-eater

Rollers

Dollarbird

Pittas

Noisy Pitta

Lyrebirds

Superb Lyrebird

Scrub-birds

Rufous Scrub-bird

Treecreepers

White-throated Treecreeper
Red-browed Treecreeper
Brown Treecreeper

Catbirds, Bowerbirds

Green Catbird
Regent Bowerbird
Satin Bowerbird

Fairy-wrens, Emu-wrens

Superb Fairy-wren
Red-backed Fairy-wren
Variegated Fairy-wren
Southern Emu-wren

**Scrubwrens, Gerygones,
Thornbills**

Yellow-throated Scrubwren
White-browed Scrubwren
Large-billed Scrubwren
Speckled Warbler
Weebill - U
Brown Gerygone
Mangrove Gerygone
Western Gerygone
White-throated Gerygone
Striated Thornbill
Yellow Thornbill

Thornbills (cont.)

Yellow-rumped Thornbill
 Buff-rumped Thornbill
 Brown Thornbill

Pardalotes

Spotted Pardalote
 Striated Pardalote

Spinebills, Honeyeaters, Chats

Eastern Spinebill
 Lewin's Honeyeater
 Yellow-faced Honeyeater
 White-eared Honeyeater - V
 Fuscous Honeyeater - U
 White-plumed Honeyeater - V
 Bell Miner
 Noisy Miner
 Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - V
 Little Wattlebird
 Regent Honeyeater - U
 Red Wattlebird
 White-fronted Chat - U
 Scarlet Honeyeater
 Tawny-crowned Honeyeater
 Brown Honeyeater
 New Holland Honeyeater
 White-cheeked Honeyeater
 Brown-headed Honeyeater
 White-throated Honeyeater - U
 White-naped Honeyeater
 Blue-faced Honeyeater
 Noisy Friarbird
 Little Friarbird
 Striped Honeyeater

Babblers

Grey-crowned Babbler - U

Logrunners

Australian Logrunner

Quail-thrushes, Whipbirds

Spotted Quail-thrush - U
 Eastern Whipbird

Sittella

Varied Sittella

Cuckoo-shrikes, Trillers

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
 White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
 Barred Cuckoo-shrike
 Cicadabird
 White-winged Triller
 Varied Triller

Whistlers, Shrike-thrushes

Crested Shrike-tit
 Olive Whistler
 Golden Whistler
 Rufous Whistler
 Little Shrike-thrush - U
 Grey Shrike-thrush

Figbird, Orioles

Australasian Figbird
 Olive-backed Oriole

Woodswallows, Butcherbirds, Magpie, Currawongs

White-breasted Woodswallow
 Masked Woodswallow - U
 White-browed Woodswallow - U
 Black-faced Woodswallow - U
 Dusky Woodswallow
 Grey Butcherbird
 Pied Butcherbird
 Australian Magpie
 Pied Currawong
 Grey Currawong - V

Drongo

Spangled Drongo

Fantails

Rufous Fantail
 Grey Fantail
 Willie Wagtail

Ravens, Crows

Australian Raven
 Forest Raven
 Torresian Crow

Flycatchers, Monarchs, Magpie-lark

Leaden Flycatcher
 Satin Flycatcher
 Restless Flycatcher

Monarchs etc. (cont.)

White-eared Monarch - V
Black-faced Monarch
Spectacled Monarch
Magpie-lark

Chough

White-winged Chough

Birds of Paradise: Riflebirds

Paradise Riflebird

Australo-Papuan Robins

Jacky Winter
Scarlet Robin
Red-capped Robin
Flame Robin
Rose Robin
Pale-yellow Robin
Eastern Yellow Robin

Cisticolas

Golden-headed Cisticola

Reed-Warblers

Australian Reed-Warbler

Grassbirds, Songlarks

Tawny Grassbird
Little Grassbird
Rufous Songlark - U
Brown Songlark - U

White-eyes

Silvereye

Swallows, Martins

White-backed Swallow
Welcome Swallow
Fairy Martin
Tree Martin

Bulbul

Red-whiskered Bulbul - V

True Thrushes

Bassian Thrush
Russet-tailed Thrush

Starlings, Myna

Common Starling
Common Myna

Mistletoebird

Mistletoebird

Grass Finches, Mannikins

Zebra Finch - U
Double-barred Finch
Red-browed Finch
Diamond Firetail - U
Beautiful Firetail - V
Nutmeg Mannikin - U
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin - U

Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow

Pipits

Australasian Pipit

Old World Finches

European Goldfinch - U