

BOOK REVIEW

BIRDING SITES AROUND PERTH by Ron van Delft. University of Western Australia Press, 1988. 132 pages, 1 map, 39 colour aerial photographs, 18 colour bird photographs. Price \$9.95.

This attractive little booklet is a must to any visitor planning to spend time birdwatching in the Perth metropolitan area, defined on the map as a radius of some 30 km from the city centre. The booklet is the result of a cooperative effort in which more than 130 people "faithfully surveyed" their nearby park or favourite bird watching site each month for a full 12 months. Funds for the publication were provided by a wide range of corporate, public sector and private sponsors.

From the total of more than 130 sites surveyed, 29 were selected for detailed descriptions. The descriptions include a colour aerial photograph with special features highlighted, the name of the authority responsible for its management, the street address so that it can be easily located from the metropolitan street directory, a comment on access for disabled people, and in some cases availability of parking.

For each site there is a list of birds seen regularly, and in addition a summary of two which regularly visit that site. These details are not duplicated for other sites so that there are descriptions of 76 species altogether.

I decided to evaluate the information by checking one site, Thompsons Lake. This is a 509 ha reserve that is significant for its variety of birds (106 species had been recorded) and its relatively undisturbed sample of coastal plain vegetation.

I had no trouble finding the site, and found as indicated there was no vehicular access. However the information did not explain that access to the lake itself, and to the water birds and waders, is almost impossible because of a broad band of dense reed growth fringing the lake. It appeared to be continuous around the lake. I had to climb a dead tree to observe birds on the lake. Neither did the information mention the close proximity of Jandakat airport, an

extremely busy light plane terminal. I found the air traffic so close to the lake very distracting.

However, in a little over an hour, I recorded 10 of the 19 species listed as regularly seen at the site. Surprisingly both the Brown Honeyeater and the Singing Honeyeater, which were very common on my visit, are not on this list, especially as they are both on the list of Perth's nine most common birds. Neither were Red-capped Parrots on the Thompsons Lake list of frequently seen birds. The booklet states that they are often seen near the car park, but I saw many individuals some distance away. Overall, in the same hour or so, I saw 24 of the 106 species listed for the site.

Although a management plan was prepared for the area in 1971, and the vegetation is said to have improved, there are still obvious problems such as the invasion of exotic plants such as Perennial Veldt Grass, Blue Lupins, Capeweed and False Caper. I also saw fresh cattle tracks and considerable evidence of rabbit activity, all of which tend to diminish the ecological value of the site.

The booklet also contains a biological geography of the Perth environs including descriptions of land forms, climate and vegetation (with coloured map of the latter). There are suggested tours for bird watchers, and notes on Perth's nine most common species: Pacific Black Duck, Eurasian Coot, Laughing Turtle-Dove, Spotted Turtle-Dove, Port Lincoln Ringneck, Red Wattlebird, Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Australian Magpie and Australian Raven. I wonder if anyone knows which are Adelaide's nine most common species? Finally, there are brief notes on raptors, bitterns and crakes, waders and nocturnal birds.

This is an excellent little publication with a great deal of information packed into the 132 pages. A similar publication would be an invaluable asset to Adelaide bird watchers, be they residents, migrants or vagrants.

BILL MATHESON