

Cessnock West Birding Route

HUNTER REGION

Lower Hunter



Dusky Woodswallow

In the park itself there is a variety of planted trees that include Mugga Ironbarks, Swamp Mahoganies and Silky Oaks. When these trees are flowering (winter-spring), they attract a wide variety of honeyeaters and lorikeets that can be seen at close range. The park is managed by Cessnock Council, and is bordered by Werakata SCA to the west.

There are toilets and a children's playground in the park.

4 ELLALONG LAGOON NEAR PAXTON

Ellalong Lagoon is a very large wetland listed as "nationally important" in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. The lagoon itself is on fenced private property and is not accessible.

Views of the lagoon are limited due to planted trees along Millfield Road, although there is a good view from the grassed area on the corner of Millfield and Congewai Roads (a telescope is recommended). When water levels in the lagoon are high there can be a variety of waterfowl present, though it is also very interesting when there are areas of exposed mud during dry periods. At these times small shorebirds such as Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels, Red-capped Plovers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers can be seen. There is a resident breeding pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles that are often seen perched in the dead trees along the edge of the lagoon.

Landscaped plantings on the grassed area in front of the lagoon often contain White-cheeked, Lewin's and Blue-faced Honeyeaters.

There are public toilets available in Paxton and small general stores provide supplies in Paxton and Ellalong.



Painted Button-quail

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Birding Routes are available to download from the HBOC website

www.hboc.org.au

HBOC meets at 7:00pm on the second Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, off the roundabout at Sandgate Road, Shortland. Also, monthly outings on first Tuesday and third Sunday of each month – check our website for details.

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Factfile Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*)



The Swift Parrot breeds only in Tasmania, migrating to mainland Australia in autumn/winter where it feeds on eucalypt blossom and lerp. It is critically endangered with fewer than 2000 birds remaining. It is an annual visitor to the highly productive forests of the Cessnock area, particularly some of the sites mentioned in this birding route.



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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This map is for illustrative purposes only and the scale is approximate



Regent Honeyeater



Werakata NP

3

Poppet Head Park



Jacky Winter



Werakata SCA



Red-capped Plover

Quorrobolong Rd

To Sandy Creek Rd

1km

1 WERAKATA STATE CONSERVATION AREA

Werakata State Conservation Area (SCA) near Pelton provides productive woodland birding in habitat dominated by Spotted Gum-Ironbark forest. It is best known for the consistency of its Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot records but is also a very good site for other uncommon woodland birds such as Black-chinned Honeyeater, Painted Button-quail, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Spotted Quail-thrush. Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters are the dominant small honeyeater around Pelton although there are pockets where Fuscous Honeyeaters dominate. Little Lorikeets are often plentiful when the Spotted Gums are flowering and this is also the best time to look for Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots (though the latter do occur here most years regardless of blossom; ~100 birds were recorded feeding on lerp here in autumn 2018). Dusky Woodswallows can be seen



Varied Sittella

year-round. The SCA is accessed via a gravel track (sign posted "Pelton Road" on a telegraph pole) about 1km along Ellalong Road, south from the turn-off from Wollombi Road. The best place to park is about 500m along this track at the intersection with the second track to the left. After wet

weather many of these tracks can be impassable to 2WDs. Walk the old coal haulage railway corridor which is flat and has good birding along its length. All other tracks provide good birding opportunities.

There are no toilet facilities.

2 WERAKATA NATIONAL PARK

Werakata National Park near Kitchener/Abernethy is another area offering easily accessible woodland birding in the open forests. The Kearsley South Fire Trail is particularly rewarding, especially when there are stringybarks or Spotted Gums flowering (this is another regular haunt of Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots when blossom is present). When the trail reaches the point where there is forest each side of the track look for Buff-rumped Thornbills, Jacky Winters and Varied Sittellas. In winter there are Scarlet and Rose Robins in this area.

Alternatively take the small track that leads off to the right a short distance along the fire trail. Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens are sometimes encountered along the ridge here. Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters are a constant companion in this part of Werakata. The track then goes down a steep hill into a gully where there are more woodland birding opportunities. To access the Kearsley South Fire Trail drive from Kitchener or Abernethy, stopping at a car park and gate 1.3km east of Kitchener. The best birding is had to the north of the gate on the northern side of the road.

There are no toilet facilities.



Little Lorikeet



Black-chinned Honeyeater

3 POPPET HEAD PARK IN KITCHENER

Poppet Head Park is an excellent area for casual birdwatching, with easy grade walking trails around a small dam that contains a number of waterfowl species, some which breed here. There is open forest along these trails as well and many woodland birds can be encountered whilst walking the perimeter of the dam. Azure Kingfishers can be seen hunting along the fringe of the dam and when water levels are low Black-fronted Dotterels may be seen parading the shoreline.