

Jerrabomberra Wetlands



1 A wetland vista

Spy on the wonderful variety of wetland birds in Kellys Swamp. Interpretive diagrams in the Bittern Hide show some of the 77 species of waterbirds that have been recorded at the wetlands.

Many wetland birds depend on a variety of habitats for their survival. Within the wetlands, there are areas of mudflats, reed beds, drowned grasslands, dense riparian vegetation, short grassy banks, deep pools and many other ecological niches. Some birds require dense riparian vegetation for roosting as well as wide open mudflats for feeding. Without a variety of habitats available, many of these birds would not be able to exist in the wetlands.

As you wander along to the next stop, you will see some native trees and shrubs that were planted by teams of volunteers to replace exotic weeds. They provide habitat for native bird species, prevent erosion and reduce disturbance to the birdlife.

2 Wetland vegetation—a closer look

Here at Cygnet Hide you can see some dead logs or snags submerged in the water. Snags provide habitat for many plants and animals including microscopic bacteria, fungi and native fish. They also provide roosting places for birds and other animals such as turtles. Snags are fundamental to the wetland food web. Bacteria, algae and fungi form a slimy coating called a biofilm over the snag. The biofilm provides a rich food source for invertebrates while the snag itself is a source of food for wood boring beetles and some fungi and bacteria. In turn, these organisms provide food for other creatures in the food web.

3 European history and migratory birds

From here you can see a line of submerged fence posts still standing as testimony to an agricultural past when the area was used for dairying and growing crops. Stands of the dairy pasture grass Phalaris, can also be found along the edge of Kellys Swamp. In 1964, the Molonglo River was dammed to create Lake Burley Griffin, expanding the area of existing natural wetlands. This created perfect habitat for Latham's snipe, a migratory wader that breeds in Japan and China then flies 8,000 kilometres to spend the summer in Australia. These shy birds can be hard to see in the reeds or grass adjacent to the mudflats and shallow margins where they feed. Latham's snipe is protected by an international agreement, which provides for the reciprocal protection of migratory species and their habitat.

Continue to stop 4 on the Bialigee Boardwalk or extend your walk by taking the Billabong Walk.

4 Connectivity

The wetlands were originally part of the flood plain of the Molonglo River, an ancient yet rich and fertile landscape that provided food, water, medicines and other resources for the Ngunnawal people and visiting nations. The watercourses also acted as connectivity routes within the landscape for the local



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Welcome to Jerrabomberra Wetlands, one of the most important wetland habitats in the ACT. The wetlands are also of national and international significance. Over 200 bird species including most of the wetland species occurring in southern Australia visit or live here. Take a stroll through the wetlands to discover a unique array of wetland and terrestrial habitats as well as some of the Aboriginal history and the more recent agricultural use of this fertile area. Jerrabomberra is one of over 30 parks that are part of Canberra Nature Park.

The numbers refer to localities on the walk.

Grade: Easy with some uneven ground and steps.

Time: About one and a half hours starting at Dairy Road car park.

people. As the Ngunnawal people moved through the landscape, they practised ceremonies that connected them to their Country. Visitors from the coast and from over the mountains were also guided by the rivers and streams into Ngunnawal Country to the corroboree grounds and campsites. Large gatherings of inland and coastal groups occurred near here for ceremony, exchange and trade.

5 Jerrabomberra Creek

Stop on the bridge here for a great view of the aquatic life in the waterway. The wetlands and Lake Burley Griffin provide habitat for 11 fish species, as well as the eastern water rat and eastern long-necked tortoise. A platypus is often seen at this location.

Beware of cyclists.

6 Terrestrial life too

Stop here at the trestle bridge for a rest and watch and listen for some of the smaller terrestrial birds that inhabit the area. Common species include wrens, fantails and silvereyes. Red-browed firetails can be seen in small flocks. The firetails eat a variety of half-ripe and ripe grass seeds supplemented with herbs, berries and insects. The trestle bridge was constructed by park staff and is based on a railway bridge.

7 A threat to the wetlands

Jerrabomberra Wetlands receives run-off from a large area of land, known as the Jerrabomberra Creek Catchment. Jerrabomberra Creek runs adjacent to Narrabundah and Fyshwick, and then empties into the large siltation pond at the headwaters of the wetlands.

Monitoring has shown that much of the water and riparian quality of Jerrabomberra Creek is degraded. This may be related to a range of land management practices in the Jerrabomberra Creek catchment and from the effects of urban stormwater runoff. The Siltation Pond and the wetlands themselves, slow the flow of water, and much of the sediments and associated pollutants fall out of the water column here.

Head back to the cycle path and follow it around to the Eyre Street entrance.

8 Quiet backwaters

From Tadorna Hide you can enjoy the views over the water and the activities of the different birds. The area to the north of this bird hide includes the 'fingers' of the Jerrabomberra Backwaters. These are old flood channels or palaeochannels of the Molonglo River. Access to this area is limited in order to provide a refuge for the many shy and elusive waterbirds that use the wetlands.

9 Invasive weeds

In 2011, work commenced on a major project to remove woody weeds (including willows and blackberries) along Jerrabomberra Creek and revegetate the area with native species. These weeds smother native plant species and change the natural balance of resources for wildlife in the area.

The project will maximise the habitat value of the shoreline area and develop a more natural bushland setting along Jerrabomberra Creek.

Return to the car park.

Get involved

There are many community organisations that you can join and actively participate in the conservation of wetlands and their associated wildlife including Friends of Jerrabomberra Wetlands, Frogwatch and Waterwatch. You can also learn about birds and participate in monitoring them by joining the Canberra Ornithologist Group (COG).

Protecting Jerrabomberra Wetlands

Since 2011, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands has been managed by the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Management Committee. The committee oversees and guides strategic management and development of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve. It also fosters a spirit of partnership with ACT Parks and Conservation Service and other stakeholders including Jerrabomberra community groups, business, research organisations and ACT Government agencies.

Further information

www.jerrabomberrawetlands.org

friendsofjerrabomberrawetlands@gmail.com

Canberra Connect: 13 22 81

TAMS website: www.tams.act.gov.au

COG website: www.canberrabirds.org.au

Waterwatch website: www.act.waterwatch.org.au

Frogwatch website: ginninderrallandcare.org.au



General map of Jerrabomberra Wetlands



Detailed map of Jerrabomberra Wetlands

Legend

- H** Bird hide
- 5** Self-guide walk stopping points
- Yellow dashed line Kellys Loop
- Blue dashed line Billabong Walk
- Orange dashed line Woodland Loop
- Green dashed line Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve
- Black dashed line East Basin Loop (cycle/walking path)
- Green patch Woodlands
- Grey line Roads
- Double line Bridge
- Blue arrow **N** North
- Scale: 0, 250, 500 metres

Front cover, Great Egret, Latham's Snipe, Spotless Crake, (Photos G. Dabb) Eastern long-necked tortoise.