# Outing to Mulligan’s Flat and Forde Ponds

39 Members and guests gathered in – and more than filled up – the parking area off Amy Ackman Drive in Forde on a morning where the overcast was keeping the temperature under control.

The group strung out along the main track up the hill to the gate into the Sanctuary. Apart from the tuneless noises of Noisy Miners the main excitement was an immature Grey Butcherbird displaying independence by battering a moth against a rock. We followed the Western boundary of the Sanctuary with most members achieving sightings of a male White-winged Triller and some lucky folk getting definite views of a Jacky Winter. Two Dollarbirds visited one another in a dead tree before flying off into the heart of the Reserve.

The Big Dam still has a good level of water and was supplied with waterbirds in good diversity albeit generally low numbers. Not that one should sneer at 11 Freckled Duck! Other less common species of duck were 12 Pink-eared Duck and 2 Australasian Shovelers with Hardhead and Grey Teal adding to the mix. Despite determined peering, no Pacific Black Ducks or Australian Wood Ducks were evident. A White-faced Heron flew over and 6 Australian White Ibis and one Royal Spoonbill were seen on the far side of the dam. Shorebirds were represented by 4 Masked Lapwing, 1 Black-fronted Dotterel and a flushed Latham’s Snipe.

We travelled back via a lightly different route to the gate out of the Sanctuary. Several small flocks of Eastern Rosellas were seen, but to my surprise I didn’t note down any Crimson Rosellas. Arriving back at the small dams close to the shearing shed a nice mixed flock of the usual thornbills was noted. Some entertainment was gained by counting and recounting and recounting a flock of White-winged Choughs: the eventual total was 22 birds in three groups of 9, 7 and 6 birds.

Arriving back at the car park most members headed for other part but about 9 of us dropped down to the Mulligan’s Flat Rd ponds to see if we could hunt up some crakes or rails. The best we managed in that regard was a family of Eurasian Coots with feeding observed giving a breeding record. It was delightful to see Fairy Martins flying into a group of nests in an underpass on Mulligan’s Flat Road. It was now getting rather hot !

We totalled up 61 species, of which 5 were added on the ponds segment, meaning that the ‘official’ part of the walk scored a very healthy 56 species (with at least 3 surprising MIAs).