

## Annual Challenge Bird Count – 2023 results

By Chris Timewell

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club members have been involved in the Annual Challenge Bird Count for more than 20 years, and 2023 was no exception.

There were three groups representing Castlemaine in 2023. Kerrie Jennings and I covered areas around Baringhup and to the west of Tarrengower. Geraldine Harris led a team of three through a range of locations around Barkers Creek, Harcourt and eastern Muckleford. Sue Boekel – a member of BirdLife Castlemaine – led a team of three across a range of sites from Malmsbury to Maldon.

A detailed list of the birds that were detected in the Castlemaine area, and then lodged with BirdLife Australia, is provided on our website. In summary, 1575 individual birds were recorded from 108 different species. Some of the highlights included a single Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on a farm dam in Baringhup, a Black-tailed Native-hen in Muckleford, two Intermediate Egrets in the Harcourt area, 43 White-browed Woodswallows around Barkers Ck and Muckleford, and a Square-tailed Kite in Muckleford area.

Please refer to the table on the main page for the Challenge Bird Count to see a comparison of bird numbers across the years.

In 2023, there were 16 teams participating from across Australia and its territories, of which half were from country Victoria. The results from across Australia is summarised in the Table below. In comparison to the past 10 years of sightings through Birddata, our 108 detected species represented 58.7% of the total diversity of bird species that we could have reasonably expected to detect.

**Table 1.** Summary of bird sightings by Annual Challenge Bird Count teams across Australia in 2023

Location	# of species	# of individual birds	% of likely species detected
Horsham	160	7,283	108.8% !!
Mackay (Qld)	148	5,122	98.7%
Latrobe Valley	98	1,604	74.2%
East Gippsland	156	17,969	68.7%
Portland 3	107	2,656	62.2%
<b>Castlemaine</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>1,575</b>	<b>58.7%</b>
Cocos Island	31	438	58.5%
Portland 1	87	2,765	57.2%
Portland 2	96	1,741	56.5%
Mornington Peninsula	104	3,374	51.0%
Christmas Island	24	721	45.3%
Plenty Gorge	70	398	37.8%
Wonga Wetlands	51	314	26.4%
Toora Beach	24	358	19.8%
Warrnambool	54	835	N/A
Bellarine	138	9,080	N/A