

Fauna of the Darebin Creek Catchment

The Darebin Creek Catchment is home to a diverse range of fauna. These animals live in the different habitats including Grasslands, Creek and Wetlands and Woodlands. The number of faunal species have declined over time due to degradation of habitat, introduced predators, water pollution, isolation of habitat, urbanisation and past and present land use. Revegetation works throughout the valley have improved the vegetation strata of a previously degraded habitat, transforming it into suitable faunal habitat for native species.

Further enhancement of faunal values along the Darebin Creek can be achieved through:

- active fox, dog and cat control
- creation of wetlands
- improving water quality in the catchment
- revegetation of the creek banks
- decreasing vehicle access along the creek
- removal of weeds

Birds

The Darebin Creek Valley is home to over 100 native bird species. Within the Darebin Parklands (Alphington) alone there are over 50 native bird species. Some birds are resident, living in the Creek Valley all year round, while others are seasonal migrants or are nomadic, visiting the area when suitable conditions arise. Each bird species have a variety of food and shelter needs and can be grouped according to their habitat.

Woodland Habitat

Preferring a Woodland habitat of mainly River Red Gum and Wattles, the *Grey Shrike-Thrush*, *Brown Goshawk*, *Kookaburra* and *White-plumed Honeyeater* are all common whether feeding in trees or soaring high above them. The *Tawny Frogmouth* is nocturnal and camouflages well in trees within the Woodland habitat. Dense bushes such as Hedge Wattle and Sweet Bursaria provide habitat for smaller birds such as the *Superb Fairy Wren*, *Yellow Robin*, *Grey Fantail*, *Red-browed Finch* and *White-browed Scrub-wren* who feed on insects.

Creek & Wetland Habitat

Creek and Wetland habitat is home to the *Sacred Kingfisher*, who fly just above the surface of the water, while the common *Pacific Black Duck* paddle and dive for fish in wetlands and still water. The *White Faced Heron* wade in shallow waters feeding on fish

and yabbies, while *Dusky Moorhen* swim and peck food from the water. The *Little Pied Cormorant* (pictured) may be seen drying their wings after fishing.



Grassland and Open Habitat

The grassland and open areas are home to raptors such as the *Black-shouldered Kite* who can be seen hovering in open areas looking for prey. Parrots such as the *Galah*, and *Red-rumped Parrot* can be seen foraging on the ground for seeds. The *Spurwinged Plover* is a noisy and aggressive bird when breeding and can be heard calling late at night.

Introduced bird species such as *Common Myna*, *House Sparrow*, *Tree Sparrow* and *Common Starling* compete with native birds for nesting hollows.

For a full listing of bird species please refer to "Birds of the Darebin Creek Catchment" Fact Sheet.

Mammals

More than 10 mammal species can be found along the Darebin Creek. Mammals are warm-blooded and usually have fur or hair. Most of the native mammals of the Darebin Creek are nocturnal meaning they are only active at night.

The *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* can be found in the upper reaches of Darebin Creek grazing on grasses by night and sleeping under trees by day. The *Water Rat*, a large aquatic rodent, and the *Platypus* may be found swimming at the Yarra River confluence.

The *Short-beaked Echidna* is a quiet and secretive animal well known for the spines on its back to protect it from predators. They live in grassland or woodland habitat as long as there are ants and termites to eat.

The *Brush-tail Possum* and *Ringtail Possum* are both common along the Darebin Creek. They sleep in tree hollows during the day and feed on Eucalypt leaves, buds and soft fruit at night.

Grey Headed Flying Foxes, are the largest of all bats with a wingspan of 1.3 metres. They are common visitors to the Darebin Parklands feeding singularly or in small groups on nectar, pollen and fruit from native trees. They are social creatures roosting together during the day and feeding by night.

Micro-bats are less than 5cm in length and can be found in open forests and woodlands. Micro-bats such as the *Southern Forest Bat*, *Little Forest Bat* and *Lesser Long-eared Bat* forage for insects close to the ground, while the *Gould's Wattled Bat* feeds on slow-flying insects and caterpillars found under the bark of trees.

Introduced mammals such as Foxes, Dogs and Cats prey on native mammal species, while rabbits, mice and rats cause ecological damage.

Reptiles

The Darebin Creek Valley is home to about 20 reptile species. There are nine species of skinks in total, and during the warmer months you are likely to see the common *Garden Skink* or *Cunningham's Skink* in leaf litter or rocky outcrops. The *Long-necked Tortoise* is a freshwater tortoise that can be found living in ponds, swamps and in the creek. They are slow moving and eat fish and tadpoles. Five species of snakes can be found sunning themselves on rocks in the warmer months. The *Tiger Snake* is a slender striped snake up to two metres long and is found in grasslands and woodlands. This snake is highly venomous and should be left undisturbed. Other reptiles include the *Marbled Gecko* and the *Blue-tongued Lizard*.

Amphibians

The Darebin Creek Valley is home to more than 10 frog and toad species. They prefer a wetland habitat near grasslands or woodlands where they can live and breed. Often you won't see frogs or toads but you can identify them by the male's voice. The *Common Froglet*, a small brown frog is commonly mistaken for crickets with its call being described as 'crik crik crik'. The *Growling Grass Frog* can be identified by its repeated growling sound, while the *Pobblebonk* or *Banjo Frog* has a distinctive 'bonk' call.



For further information please contact the Darebin Creek Management Committee on 9499 4454 or visit our website www.dcmc.org.au