Native Wildlife of Hobsons Bay

A comprehensive guide to the amazing native animals that call Hobsons Bay home

Birds of Prey 🦅

Black-shouldered Kite

Scientific name: Elanus axillaris **What they look like:** Medium-sized raptor with white body, gray wings, and distinctive black shoulder patches. Red eyes and black wingtips in flight. **Where to spot them:** Open spaces throughout Truganina Park, hovering over grasslands **What they eat:** Small mammals, especially mice and rats **Hunting style:** Famous for hovering in one spot before diving down to catch prey

Nankeen Kestrel

Scientific name: Falco cenchroides **What they look like:** Small falcon with rufous (reddish-brown) and black plumage, distinctive hovering flight **Where to spot them:** Throughout Truganina Park, often seen being chased by Black-shouldered Kites **What they eat:** Insects, small mammals, small birds, and reptiles **Special ability:** Can hover perfectly in strong winds while hunting

Brown Falcon

Scientific name: Falco berigora **What they look like:** Large brown falcon with lighter undersides and distinctive pale patches **Where to spot them:** Open spaces of Truganina Park **What they eat:** Small mammals, birds, reptiles, and large insects **Behavior:** Often perches on prominent posts or trees to scan for prey

Swamp Harrier

Scientific name: Circus approximans **What they look like:** Large raptor with long wings and distinctive low, gliding flight pattern **Where to spot them:** Over wetlands and reed beds throughout Hobsons Bay **What they eat:** Waterbirds, small mammals, frogs, and fish **Hunting style:** Glides low over wetlands, surprising prey **Conservation:** Benefits greatly from wetland restoration projects

Migratory Shorebirds 🐓

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 🐓

Scientific name: Calidris acuminata **Amazing journey:** These incredible birds fly all the way from Siberia to Hobsons Bay every summer - that's over 10,000 kilometers! **What they look like:** Small brown birds with long, thin beaks perfect for probing in the mud. They have sharp, pointed tail feathers (that's where their name comes from!). **Where to spot them:** Cheetham Wetlands, mudflats around Port Phillip Bay **What they eat:** Small worms, insects, and crustaceans they find in the mud **Cool fact:** Up to 65,000

migratory birds like these visit Hobsons Bay wetlands each summer - making it internationally important!

Red-necked Stint

Scientific name: Calidris ruficollis **What they look like:** Tiny shorebirds (smaller than your hand!) with reddish necks in breeding season and grey-brown backs **Special status:** Present in internationally significant numbers in Hobsons Bay - over 1% of the world's population visits here! **Where to spot them:** Mudflats at low tide, Cheetham Wetlands, Point Gellibrand **What they eat:** Tiny marine worms, small mollusks, and insects **Migration marvel:** These little champions fly from Alaska and Siberia to spend summer in Australia

Swift Parrot

Scientific name: Lathamus discolor **Conservation status:** Critically Endangered - one of Australia's most threatened birds! **What they look like:** Bright green parrots with red faces and blue wing patches. Fast flyers (hence "swift"!) **Where to spot them:** Eucalyptus woodlands around Hobsons Bay, especially when trees are flowering **What they eat:** Nectar from eucalyptus flowers, especially Blue Gum and Yellow Gum **Why they're special:** They're making Hobsons Bay their home, which is amazing news for conservation!

Curlew Sandpiper

Scientific name: Calidris ferruginea **What they look like:** Medium-sized shorebird with long, curved bill and rusty-red breeding plumage **Migration marvel:** Breeds in Arctic Siberia, travels over 20,000km to reach Hobsons Bay! **Where to spot them:** Mudflats at Cheetham Wetlands, Point Gellibrand **What they eat:** Marine worms, mollusks, and crustaceans in mudflats **Conservation status:** Present in internationally significant numbers at Hobsons Bay

Double-banded Plover

Scientific name: Charadrius bicinctus **What they look like:** Small, stocky shorebird with distinctive double black bands across chest **Migration pattern:** Breeds in New Zealand, migrates to Australia for our winter **Where to spot them:** Sandy beaches and mudflats around Port Phillip Bay **What they eat:** Small invertebrates, worms, and insects **Special status:** Recently identified as present in internationally significant numbers

Eastern Curlew

Scientific name: Numenius madagascariensis **What they look like:** Largest wading bird - up to 60cm tall with extremely long, curved bill **Where to spot them:** Large mudflats and shallow waters **What they eat:** Uses its long bill to probe deep for crabs,

worms, and mollusks **Impressive journey:** Flies from breeding grounds in Siberia and Mongolia **Feeding behavior:** That amazing curved bill can reach 20cm deep into mud!

Waterbirds 🦆

Great Crested Grebe

Scientific name: Podiceps cristatus **What they look like:** Large waterbird with distinctive crest and elegant neck, famous for elaborate courtship displays **Where to spot them:** Newport Lakes, Jawbone Reserve lakes **Famous for:** Incredible courtship dances where pairs mirror each other's movements **What they eat:** Fish, aquatic insects, small crustaceans **Breeding:** Build floating nests anchored to vegetation **Photography tip:** Best spotted during golden hour near apartment-side shores

Blue-billed Duck

Scientific name: Oxyura australis **What they look like:** Compact duck - males have bright blue bills during breeding season **Where to spot them:** Newport Lakes, Jawbone Reserve **Behavior:** Excellent diver, often disappears underwater for long periods **What they eat:** Aquatic vegetation, seeds, and small invertebrates **Conservation status:** Declining species that benefits from habitat restoration

Hardhead

Scientific name: Aythya australis **What they look like:** Brown diving duck with distinctive white eyes (hence sometimes called "White-eyed Duck") **Where to spot them:** Deeper waters of Newport Lakes and Jawbone Reserve **What they eat:** Aquatic plants, seeds, and small animals **Diving ability:** Can dive up to 7 meters deep to feed

Purple Swamphen

Scientific name: Porphyrio melanotus **What they look like:** Large, striking purple-blue waterbird with bright red bill and enormous feet **Where to spot them:** Reed beds around Newport Lakes and wetland edges **Special feet:** Massive feet help them walk on floating vegetation **What they eat:** Shoots, roots, and seeds of aquatic plants, plus some small animals **Behavior:** Often seen using feet like hands to manipulate food

Woodland and Garden Birds 🐓

Superb Fairy-wren

Scientific name: Malurus cyaneus **What they look like:** Males are brilliant blue and black, females brown with blue tails **Where to spot them:** Woodland areas of Truganina Park, around Newport Lakes car park **Social structure:** Live in family groups with complex social relationships **What they eat:** Insects and spiders found in dense vegetation **Fun fact:** Males often carry yellow petals to court females!

New Holland Honeyeater

Scientific name: Phylidonyris novaehollandiae **What they look like:** Black and white bird with distinctive yellow wing patches **Where to spot them:** Flowering native plants throughout Hobsons Bay parks **What they eat:** Nectar from native flowers, plus insects and spiders **Behavior:** Aggressive defenders of flowering trees - will chase much larger birds away **Important role:** Key pollinators for many native plants

Yellow-rumped Thornbill

Scientific name: Acanthiza chrysorrhoa **What they look like:** Small brown bird with distinctive yellow rump patch visible in flight **Where to spot them:** Woodland areas, often in small flocks **Behavior:** Constantly active, flitting through foliage searching for insects **What they eat:** Small insects, spiders, and occasionally seeds **Social:** Often seen in mixed flocks with other small birds

Brown Quail

Scientific name: Synoicus ypsilophorus **What they look like:** Small, well-camouflaged ground bird with intricate brown patterning **Where to spot them:** Open grasslands and woodland edges - Jawbone Reserve is famous for them **State significance:** Classified as a bird species of state significance **Behavior:** Prefers to run rather than fly when disturbed **What they eat:** Seeds, green shoots, and insects **Special sighting:** Groups of 16+ have been spotted sunning themselves at Jawbone

Nankeen Night Heron

Scientific name: Nycticorax caledonicus **What they look like:** Stocky, medium-sized heron with buff-colored plumage **State significance:** Bird species of state significance **When to spot them:** Most active at dawn and dusk (hence "night" heron) **Where to spot them:** Jawbone Reserve, Newport Lakes **What they eat:** Fish, frogs, crustaceans, and aquatic insects **Behavior:** Patient hunters that stand motionless waiting for prey

Welcome Swallow

Scientific name: Hirundo neoxena **What they look like:** Sleek blue-black bird with rusty throat and deeply forked tail **Where to spot them:** Flying over water throughout Hobsons Bay, especially Newport Lakes **What they eat:** Insects caught on the wing **Flight pattern:** Graceful aerial acrobats that drink by skimming water surface **Nesting:** Build mud cup nests under bridges and building eaves

Australian White Ibis

Scientific name: Threskiornis molucca **What they look like:** Large white wading bird with distinctive curved black bill and black head **Where to spot them:** Wetlands, parks, and increasingly urban areas **What they eat:** Fish, frogs, insects, and unfortunately human food scraps **Urban adaptation:** Successfully adapted to city life, sometimes too

successfully **Conservation status:** Actually helps control pest insects and small animals

Rare and Endangered Species ⭐

White-bellied Sea Eagle

Scientific name: Haliaeetus leucogaster **What they look like:** Massive raptor with distinctive white head, breast, and belly **Where to spot them:** Coastal areas, occasionally seen over Truganina Coastal Parklands **State significance:** Bird species of state significance - very rare in urban areas **Wingspan:** Up to 2.8 meters - Australia's second-largest raptor! **What they eat:** Fish, waterbirds, and carrion **Conservation:** Needs large territories and minimal human disturbance

Orange-bellied Parrot

Scientific name: Neophema chrysogaster **Conservation status:** CRITICALLY ENDANGERED - fewer than 50 birds left in the wild! **What they look like:** Small bright green parrot with distinctive orange belly patch **Where to spot them:** Truganina Swamp during winter months (May-September) **Migration:** Breeds only in Tasmania, winters on mainland coast **What they eat:** Seeds of saltmarsh plants, especially beaded glasswort **Critical habitat:** Truganina Swamp provides essential winter feeding grounds

Marine Life 🐟

Southern Fiddler Ray

Scientific name: Trygonorrhina dumerilii **What they look like:** Flattened ray with distinctive fiddler violin shape **Where to spot them:** Shallow seagrass beds in Jawbone Marine Sanctuary **What they eat:** Small fish, crustaceans, and worms **Behavior:** Often partially buried in sand with just eyes protruding **Conservation:** Benefits from seagrass bed protection

Pipefish Species

Family: Syngnathidae **What they look like:** Long, thin fish that look like swimming sticks **Where to spot them:** Seagrass beds at Jawbone Marine Sanctuary **Related to:** Seahorses - males carry the eggs! **Habitat:** Rely on healthy seagrass for camouflage and food

Common Shore Crab

Scientific name: Cyclograpsus audouinii **What they look like:** Small crab with square-ish shell, variable colors from gray to purple **Where to spot them:** Rocky shores and rock pools at Williamstown and Altona **What they eat:** Algae, small animals, and detritus **Behavior:** Quick-moving, hide under rocks when disturbed **Habitat:** Lives in intertidal zone, tolerates changing water levels

Blue Mussel

Scientific name: Mytilus galloprovincialis **What they look like:** Dark blue-black shells attached to rocks in clusters **Where found:** Rocky shores and jetties around Port Phillip Bay **What they eat:** Filter plankton and organic particles from water **Important role:** Help clean water by filtering out particles

Insects and Other Invertebrates 🦋

Altona Skipper Butterfly ⭐

Scientific name: Hesperilla flavescens flavescens **What they look like:** Small orange-brown butterfly with white spots **CRITICALLY IMPORTANT:** Found nowhere else in Melbourne area! **Complete life cycle:** Lives entirely on one plant species - Chaffy Saw-sedge (Gahnia filum) **Where to spot them:** Saltmarsh areas of Truganina Park and Swamp **Conservation status:** Extremely rare and declining **Threats:** Habitat loss, trampling, invasive weeds

Blue Ant (actually a wasp!)

Scientific name: Diamma bicolor **What they look like:** Large metallic blue "ant" up to 2.5cm - but it's actually a wingless wasp! **Where to spot them:** Open areas, often seen walking with raised abdomen **What they eat:** Hunts beetle larvae underground **Special behavior:** Females are wingless, males have wings and are smaller **Sting:** Can sting but rarely aggressive toward humans

Common Brown Butterfly

Scientific name: Heteronympha merope **What they look like:** Brown butterfly with eye-spots on wings **Where to spot them:** Grassy areas throughout Hobsons Bay parks **What they eat:** Adults feed on flower nectar, caterpillars eat native grasses **Life cycle:** Caterpillars depend on native tussock grasses

Stag Beetle

Scientific name: Various Leptinopterus and Cyclommatus species **What they look like:** Dark beetles with enlarged "jaws" (actually mandibles) especially in males **Where to spot them:** Around rotting logs and tree stumps **What they eat:** Adults feed on tree sap, larvae live in rotting wood **Important role:** Help decompose dead wood, creating habitat for other species **Declining status:** Many species threatened by loss of old trees

Native Cockroach species

Scientific name: Various Polyzosteria species **What they look like:** Usually smaller and less shiny than introduced pest species **Where found:** Under logs, rocks, and in bushland areas **What they eat:** Decomposing organic matter - important recyclers

Ecological role: Break down dead plant material and aerate soil **Difference from pest species:** Live outdoors, don't infest houses

Spiders 🕷

Redback Spider

Scientific name: Latrodectus hasselti **What they look like:** Female has distinctive red hourglass marking on black abdomen **Where to spot them:** Dark, dry places - under outdoor furniture, sheds, playground equipment **What they eat:** Insects caught in messy cobwebs **Safety:** VENOMOUS - seek medical attention if bitten **Important fact:** No deaths since antivenom introduced in 1956 **Behavior:** Females much larger and more dangerous than tiny males

Huntsman Spider

Scientific name: Sparassidae family **What they look like:** Large, hairy spider up to 15cm leg span with crab-like leg positioning **Where to spot them:** Under bark, rocks, occasionally in houses and cars **What they eat:** Flying insects, cockroaches, other spiders - excellent pest controllers **Behavior:** Don't build webs, are active hunters that run down prey **Safety:** Not dangerous to humans, rarely bite, more likely to run away **Benefit:** Natural pest control - they eat many household pests

Wolf Spider

Scientific name: Lycosidae family **What they look like:** Gray to brown hunting spider with eight eyes arranged in three rows **Where to spot them:** Burrows in soil, under rocks and logs throughout parks **What they eat:** Ground-dwelling insects and other spiders **Special behavior:** Females carry egg sacs and babies on their backs **Safety:** Not dangerous - prefer to run away rather than bite **Hunting style:** Active hunters that chase down prey rather than using webs

Garden Orb Weaver

Scientific name: Eriophora species **What they look like:** Round-bodied spider that builds classic circular webs **Where to spot them:** Large circular webs between plants and structures **What they eat:** Flying insects caught in sticky webs **Web rebuilding:** Often rebuild webs daily, consuming old web for protein **Safety:** Reluctant to bite, bites cause only mild local symptoms **Seasonal activity:** Most active during summer months

White-tailed Spider

Scientific name: Lampona species **What they look like:** Gray to dark reddish spider with distinctive white spot on abdomen tip **Where to spot them:** Don't build webs - hunt other spiders in vegetation and buildings **What they eat:** Other spiders - they're

specialist spider hunters **Behavior:** Active at night, rest during day in folded leaves or bark **Safety:** Bites cause mild local symptoms, not dangerous despite reputation

Garden Wolf Spider

Scientific name: Lycosa species **What they look like:** Brown hunting spider with excellent eyesight **Where to spot them:** Hunting on ground in gardens and parks **What they eat:** Ground insects, including many garden pests **Parental care:** Mothers carry egg sacs and young on their backs **Safety:** Harmless to humans, important beneficial predator

Amphibians 🐸

Growling Grass Frog ⭐

Scientific name: Litoria raniformis **What they look like:** Large, bright green frogs with golden eyes and warty skin. Can grow up to 10cm long! **Why the funny name:** Males make a deep "growling" call that sounds like a motorbike! **Where to spot them:** Wetlands, creeks, and ponds around Hobsons Bay - especially at night **What they eat:** Insects, worms, small fish, and even other frogs **Conservation status:** Vulnerable - their numbers have declined due to habitat loss

Reptiles 🦎

Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard

Scientific name: Tiliqua scincoides **What they look like:** Large, thick-bodied lizard with distinctive bright blue tongue and dark brown bands across sandy-brown body **Where to spot them:** Throughout Hobsons Bay parks and reserves, often sunbaking on warm rocks or paths **What they eat:** Snails, insects, berries, flowers, and small rodents - excellent garden pest controllers! **Defense mechanism:** Puffs up body and sticks out bright blue tongue to scare predators **Garden benefits:** Fantastic for controlling garden snails and insects naturally **Safety:** Completely harmless to humans and beneficial to have around

Tiger Snake

Scientific name: Notechis scutatus **What they look like:** Thick-bodied snake with variable patterns - can have distinct dark bands or be almost solid colored **Where found:** Near water throughout Hobsons Bay - wetlands, creeks, and coastal areas **What they eat:** Frogs, fish, small birds, and mammals **Important ecological role:** Top predator that helps control rodent and frog populations **Safety:** VENOMOUS - always give them space and they'll avoid you **Behavior:** Generally shy and will retreat if given space to escape **If you encounter one:** Stay calm, back away slowly, never corner or threaten

Eastern Bearded Dragon

Scientific name: Pogona barbata **What they look like:** Medium-sized lizard with spiky "beard" of scales under chin that puffs out when threatened **Where to spot them:** Sunny open areas, fence posts, rock walls - loves to bask in morning sun **What they eat:** Insects, spiders, small lizards, flowers, and fruits **Behavior:** Often seen "arm-waving" and head-bobbing as communication **Basking habit:** Frequently sits on elevated spots to regulate body temperature **Defense:** Beard turns jet black when threatened, making them appear larger

Marbled Gecko

Scientific name: Christinus marmoratus **What they look like:** Small nocturnal gecko with intricate marbled pattern of gray and brown **Where to spot them:** Under bark, rocks, and around buildings at night **What they eat:** Small insects, spiders, and moths - active night hunters **Special ability:** Can walk up glass walls thanks to specialized toe pads **Habitat:** Often found around outdoor lights where insects congregate **Benefit:** Excellent natural pest control, eating many flying insects

White-lipped Snake

Scientific name: Drysdalia coronoides **What they look like:** Small snake up to 45cm with diagnostic white stripe along upper lip **Where found:** Under rocks, logs, and dense vegetation throughout Hobsons Bay **What they eat:** Skinks, small frogs, and invertebrates **Behavior:** Secretive and rarely seen, prefers to hide during day **Safety:** Mildly venomous but not dangerous to humans - bites are very rare **Conservation value:** Important predator of small pest species

Garden Skink (multiple species)

Scientific name: Lampropholis species **What they look like:** Small, sleek lizards with smooth scales, usually brown with lighter stripes **Where to spot them:** Gardens, leaf litter, under pot plants and garden debris **What they eat:** Small insects, spiders, and garden pests **Behavior:** Very quick movers that dart between cover when disturbed **Tail defense:** Can drop their tail if caught by predators (tail regrows!) **Garden value:** Consume enormous quantities of small garden pests

Mammals 🦔

Short-beaked Echidna

Scientific name: Tachyglossus aculeatus **What they look like:** Spiny, football-sized mammal covered in sharp protective spines **Where to spot them:** Woodlands and parks throughout Hobsons Bay, especially active on cool days **What they eat:** Ants, termites, and other small insects using their long sticky tongue **Special status:** One of only two egg-laying mammals in the world (monotreme) **Baby name:** Baby echidnas are

called "puggles"! **When active:** Most active in cooler weather - often seen during winter days **Defense:** Rolls into spiky ball when threatened

Common Ringtail Possum

Scientific name: Pseudocheirus peregrinus **What they look like:** Small possum (half the size of Brushtail) with distinctive white-tipped curled tail **Where to spot them:** Tree canopies throughout Hobsons Bay parks, much smaller than Brushtails **What they eat:** Eucalyptus leaves, flowers, and fruits **Unique behavior:** Build round stick nests called "dreys" in tree forks **Social structure:** Often live in family groups unlike solitary Brushtails

Common Brushtail Possum

Scientific name: Trichosurus vulpecula **What they look like:** Cat-sized marsupial with bushy tail and large eyes **Where to spot them:** Wooded areas throughout Hobsons Bay parks **When active:** Nocturnal - most active just after dark **What they eat:** Leaves, flowers, fruits, and sometimes insects **Urban adapters:** Successfully live alongside humans in suburban areas

Water Rat (Rakali)

Scientific name: Hydromys chrysogaster **What they look like:** Large native rodent with dense waterproof fur and partially webbed feet **Where to spot them:** Creeks and waterways around Hobsons Bay - especially Kororoit Creek **What they eat:** Fish, frogs, freshwater mussels, insects, and crustaceans **Swimming ability:** Excellent swimmer and diver, can stay underwater for several minutes **Conservation status:** One of the few native rodents to survive urbanization **Signs of presence:** Neat piles of mussel shells on creek banks

Little Forest Bat

Scientific name: Vespadelus vulturnus **What they look like:** Small insect-eating bat with dark brown fur **Where found:** Throughout Hobsons Bay parks, roosting in tree hollows and building crevices **What they eat:** Small flying insects caught during night-time hunting flights **When active:** Evening and night - often seen around lights catching moths **Roosting:** Groups roost together in tree hollows during day

Brown Long-eared Bat

Scientific name: Nyctophilus geoffroyi **What they look like:** Small brown bat with distinctively large ears **Where to find them:** Truganina Coastal Parklands area (4 bat species recorded) **When active:** Night-time insect hunting **What they eat:** Moths, flies, and other night-flying insects **Roosting:** Tree hollows and building crevices during day

Creating Native Wildlife Habitat in Hobsons Bay

Key native plants that help these animals:

- Saltmarsh plants (Beaded Glasswort, Shrubby Samphire) for Orange-bellied Parrots and shorebirds
- Chaffy Saw-sedge for Altona Skipper butterflies
- Native eucalyptus (Blue Gum, Yellow Gum) for Swift Parrots and nectar-feeding birds
- Native grasses (Kangaroo Grass, Wallaby Grass) for ground-feeding birds
- Banksias and Grevilleas for honeyeaters and other nectar feeders
- Aquatic plants for waterbirds and frogs
- Dense shrubs (Sweet Bursaria, Golden Wattle) for small woodland birds

Important native habitats to protect:

- Wetlands and mudflats - feeding areas for shorebirds
- Saltmarsh areas - critical for rare species like Orange-bellied Parrot and Altona Skipper
- Eucalyptus woodlands - nesting sites for parrots and feeding areas for nectar feeders
- Open grasslands - hunting grounds for birds of prey
- Reed beds - nesting areas for waterbirds
- Seagrass beds - marine nursery areas
- Creek corridors - wildlife movement pathways