

The Birds of the Bay



EDMUNDS BAY



The Birds of the Bay

The calm waters and sheltered habitat of Edmunds Bay are favoured by many birds. Waterbirds feed in the mangroves, nest and breed in the nearby forests, and a number of migratory birds have a seasonal dependence on the estuary. You may have noticed honeyeaters and lorikeets feeding on nectar during the flowering season; plovers, curlews, herons and ibises foraging through the mud flats around the mangroves when the tide is out or in the shallow water at the tide's edge searching for crabs, prawns, fish and small invertebrates; pelicans landing and taking off across the water; the graceful Black Swan feeding on the seagrass; pied cormorants nesting in the mangrove forests or balancing on the branches of mangrove trees with wings outstretched to dry. These are wonderful sights to behold.



Edmunds Bay provides birds with:

- roosting habitat;
- nesting areas during breeding season;
- habitat for migratory birds during their annual migrations;
- refuge during droughts
- nectar during the flowering season;
- food resources such as fish, crabs, insects, prawns and molluscs
- particularly during low tide.

Black Swans

Black swans are common around Lake Macquarie and many residents may have noticed them more recently in Edmunds Bay, now that the seagrass habitat is revitalising.

Black Swans prefer to live in open shallow waterways such as permanent lakes. They are equally at home in salt, brackish or fresh water environments. Although the swans prefer large expanses of water, the depth of the water is a more critical factor in determining where they live. They prefer shallow waterways with abundant aquatic vegetation which they can access with ease. Edmunds Bay can provide swans with just such habitat.

What do the Swans eat?

The Black Swan is a grazing waterfowl. Its diet consists predominately of the leaves, shoots and starchy leaf bases of submerged or emergent aquatic plants such as algae, weeds, seagrass, reeds, rushes and sedges. Swans occasionally eat insects but this is usually incidental to the consumption of the plants. Black Swans will also eat grain, pasture grass and clovers and may come ashore or to the bank at times to do so.

Swans cannot dive for their food. They usually take their food while swimming, either at the surface of the water or by reaching their long necks down to access the underwater vegetation. The swan can reach down to depths of up to one metre and its strength enables it to uproot plants too tough for other waterfowl.



Family group of Swans

The breeding season for swans can vary depending on rainfall and availability of suitable habitat, but in general the breeding season in southern Australia occurs from winter to spring. When breeding and raising their young, swans typically remain in family groups or small colonies and can be aggressively territorial. Swans pair for life and both parents care for the eggs and hatchlings.

Young swans (cygnets) are able to swim shortly after hatching and begin to fly at about two months of age but they stay with their parents until the next breeding season (about nine months) at which time the young swans must go off to establish their own territory.

After breeding the swans moult (lose their flight feather). During the moult (which is at its peak during summer) they cannot fly and are very vulnerable to predators, including feral animals. This is why they tend to flock together in greater numbers and in larger, safer bodies of water.