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Bleak picture for native ducks

THE country's long-term data set on the health and biodiversity of our river and wetland environments has again painted a bleak picture for native ducks.

Despite two successive La Nina years, three major indices for waterbirds – total abundance, number of species breeding and wetland area index – continued to show significant declines over time.

Long-term trends are more informative for predicting population status than year-to-year fluctuations.

Recent data from the Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey reported breeding comprised mostly of Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Pelicans, Egrets and Whiskered Terns.

Data also revealed waterbirds were concentrated in a few wetlands, with about 41 per cent of surveyed wetlands having no waterbirds.

Most game duck species had abundances well below long-term averages, in some cases by order of magnitude.

Six out of eight species continued to show a significant long-term decline, with some declining even further from 2021, including the Grey Teal duck, Pink-eared duck and Hardhead duck.

In 2021, there had been a 58 per cent fall in game ducks from 2020.

The Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey monitors around 50 species of waterbirds at around 2000 wetlands and rivers each year.

This long-term data provides the essential baseline information with which to assess changes and impacts on the environment, and is the only long-term objective data on waterbird populations in Australia.