



Birds of Cardinia Shire

A field guide

Produced by



Cardinia
Environment
Coalition Inc.

Introduction

Stretching from the foothills of the Dandenongs to Westernport Bay, Cardinia Shire has a wide variety of birdlife. This diversity reflects the range of native vegetation that occurs in the shire. The Cardinia Environment Coalition (CEC) Inc. has produced this practical field guide to provide landholders with a useful tool for identifying many of the species found in the area, and to encourage people to appreciate our marvellous birdlife.

The CEC was formed in 1998 to support the efforts of local landcare, friends and environment groups in protecting the native vegetation that supports such a diversity of birdlife. The Bunyip Catchment Landcare Project forms part of the work of the CEC and its network of 8 local landcare groups has provided fencing subsidies and indigenous plants to rural landholders prepared to protect their waterways and remnant vegetation.

Acknowledgements

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*Anthony Hooper,
President CEC Inc. A0036997U
April 2002*

Bird Watching

Watching birds can be very rewarding, just sitting in your garden, park or bushland observing the hustle and bustle of their movement or the contentment of their rest. Pick a comfortable spot, remain still and quiet, and wait for the birds to come to you. Use binoculars if you have access to them. All native birds are protected. It is illegal to catch, trap or shoot them, collect eggs or gather feathers without a permit.

What you can do to help Australian birds

With 100 of Australia's 800 native bird species under threat and the very real possibility that this figure could double this century we should all be mindful of the impact we have on our environment. Important bird habitat does not just exist in wilderness and bush however; our own backyards can provide valuable breeding and feeding grounds for some of our precious native birds. Birds Australia, our country's native bird conservation group, has compiled a list of things **you** can do to help secure the future of our native birds.

- Plant natives from local seed in your garden; ask your local nursery to stock local native seed or propagate your own and give extras to the neighbours. Non-native plants such as agapanthus, conifers etc encourage introduced birds such as blackbirds, starlings, mynahs and sparrows.
- If you live on the land, work towards the development of a bird-friendly farm by maintaining and enlarging areas of remnant vegetation of between 10 and 30 percent of the property. Birds will act as nature's pest controllers by eating large amounts of pest insects every day therefore reducing the need for chemical sprays.
- Where dams exist create a bird-friendly environment with a shallow, reedy area, as well as a deep area to encourage a mix of wading and diving birds. An island will provide refuge from predators and breeding areas for a range of birds.
- Be a responsible cat owner. In Victoria alone, over 200 million wildlife - many of them native birds - are killed each year by pet, stray and feral cats. Keep your cat inside at night and when outside confine them to a fenced or caged area.
- Join your local Landcare group which works hard to put native plants back onto properties.

Habitat

There are many different native vegetation communities in Cardinia Shire. This field guide has grouped these diverse vegetation communities into four broad categories - Temperate Rainforest, Woodlands, Rural and Wetlands. We have catalogued the common birds in these zones. However with the ease of movement that birds possess, there is bound to be some overlap.

Temperate Rainforest



This is dense vegetation which usually occurs in mountainous areas. It is normally dominated by a large tall, straight eucalypt species that creates a canopy. The next level is comprised of shorter trees, tall shrubs and tree ferns. Underneath grow grasses, herbs and small ferns.

Woodlands



In these areas the vegetation is sparser than the rainforest and the canopy generally not as tall. On the ground the cover is more grasses and small shrubs.

NB. *'Temperate Rainforest' is hereafter referred to as 'Rainforest' within this publication.*

Rural



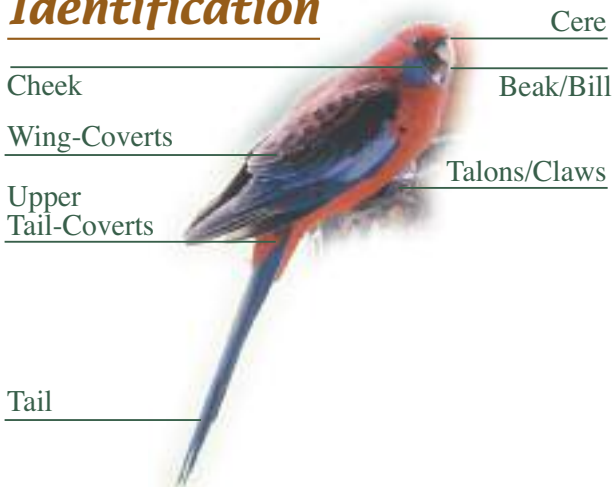
Is generally cleared farmland and it can also include parkland. These are areas that are predominantly open grasslands with a few larger trees usually eucalyptus.

Wetlands



As the name suggests these are areas that are greatly influenced by water. These include areas that are on the banks of rivers, creeks, dams, lakes and also swampy or low lying areas that flood. Quite often surrounded with reeds and bulrushes.

Identification



Eastern Yellow Robin

Eopsaltria australis



Grey upper parts, clear yellow under parts. Seen singly, in pairs or parties. Hangs sideways on trunks before pouncing on prey. Confident enough to land on handle of resting gardener's spade, to look for food.

Habitat: Forests, swamps, coastal scrubs, mallee, mulga, golf courses, gardens.

Nest: A substantial cup of shredded bark lined with grass, decorated with moss and lichen in fork 1-7m+ up.

Food: Ants, bugs and insects.

Size: 15-16 cm

Superb Fairy Wren

Malurus cyaneus



Top photo: Male

Inset: Immature male

Male has blue cap, back and cheek patch, blue-black throat and chest; grey/white under parts, dark blue tail. Males lose the bright colours but regain them in time for breeding season. Female is mouse brown with under parts washed brown, throat and breast whitish, legs reddish. Non-breeding males have similar colouring. Females are bosses in the fairy wren communities

Habitat: Many kinds of dense, low cover with areas of short grass.

Nest: Somewhat untidy dome of grass, down and spider web, fairly low in vegetation.

Food: Small insects.

Size: 13-14cm

Rainforest

Powerful Owl

Ninox strenua



A deep 'whoo-hoo' up/down call at night lets you know that the powerful owl is hunting, using large golden eyes to sight prey. It is mottled dark grey-brown above, paler with brown barring below. Legs are feathered right to dull yellow feet with powerful claws.

Habitat: Each pair uses very large territory in wet sclerophyll country, sometimes in cities, and bond for life.

Nest: Is built in a hollow lined with decayed debris in trunk or branch 8-20m above ground.

Food: Includes magpies, currawong, flying fox, glider, lorikeets and is often seen perched on a branch with half a ringtail possum in its claw.

Size: 50-60 cm, male larger.

White-Browed Scrub Wren

Sericornis frontalis



Brown with blackish mask, cream eye, white eyebrow and silver curved whisker mark. There are small white chevrons on wing. Female is duller.

Habitat: Undergrowth of forests from sea level to above the snowline, also wherever there is low plant cover including gardens.

Nest: Constructed of grass, roots, leaves and twigs, domed, built low to the ground among roots, tussocks or in a bank.

Food: Various kinds of insects and their larvae.

Size: 11-13cm

Australian King Parrot

Alisterus scapularis



Spectacular colouring: the male has a scarlet body, dark green wings with electric-blue band, red bill and yellow eye. Female has dark green upper breast.

Habitat: eucalypt forests, dense gullies and clearings; crops and gardens.

Nest: Builds in tree hollow with a high entrance.

Food: Feeds quietly on fruit, blossoms, mistletoes, acorns and crops. Can become tame in gardens.

Size: 41-44cm

Brush Bronzewing

Phaps elegans



Dark chestnut-brown above with blue/grey underparts and pink legs. Nape and shoulders are rich chestnut; wings sport two curved bronzed blue/green bars.

Habitat: Dense scrubs and forest understorey also drier, sparser bush near coast.

Nest: A scanty construction of twigs and rootlets on or near the ground under cover.

Food: Seeds of grasses, acacias and assorted berries, usually gathered from the ground.

Size: 28-31cm

Superb Lyrebird

Menura novaehollandiae



Plain brown above, coppery on wings, grey underneath. Legs are dark grey and very powerful. The 60cm tail of the male is spectacular when raised. It is similar in shape to the lyre with a guard plume each side of twelve lacy feathers. He must be the premier mimic and ventriloquist with a range that includes other birdcalls, noisy tools, vehicles and its own notes. Courting displays are performed on a mound of debris scratched up from the forest floor and this is when the repertoire of calls is heard and the tail is seen to advantage.

Habitat: Temperate rain forests from sea level to above snow line, fern gullies, forest plantations and adjacent gardens.

Nest: A dome constructed on the ground or to 25m in a tree, of sticks, bark, fern fronds lined with fibrous rootlets covered by a dense mat of feathers.

Food: Uses big feet to scratch for insects, worms and small crustaceans.

Size: Male to 1m, female smaller.

Bellbird

Manorina melanotis



Aggressively territorial this bird has olive green plumage, deep yellow bill and legs, a red triangle behind the eye and dark facial marks. They communicate continually with silver-bell-like "klinks" while they are feeding.

Habitat: Temperate rainforest, woodland with dense understorey, and along treed creek lines, near swamps and in well-treed gardens.

Nest: Placed in a fork 1-4m high it is a large cup of leaves, grass, plant down and spiders' web.

Food: Includes insects and larvae, also the sugary covering of lerps. They leave this sap-sucking insect to sometimes defoliate eucalypts while replacing their cover.

Size: 19cm

Rainforest

Barking Owl

Ninox connivens



Piercing yellow eyes do not have dark ‘goggles’ like the similar southern boobook. Plumage is smoky brown to grey above, with large white spots on the wings. Under parts are paler with grey/brown streaks, legs are feathered but not seen while the bird is perching crouched on a branch.

Habitat: Large trees like river redgums near watercourses penetrating otherwise open country, open forests and paperbark woodlands.

Nest: On decayed debris in tree hollow from low to more than 10m high and sometimes in a rabbit burrow.

Food: Mainly beetles and grasshoppers, also small animals and birds.

Size: 35-45cm; male larger.

Satin Bowerbird

Ptilonorhynchus violaceus



Top photo: Male

Inset: Female

Male and female colouring is so different they appear like different species: male is glossy blue\black with blue\white bill, greenish blue legs and blue eyes as has the female. Her plumage is olive green back, brown wings and tail (longer than the male's), brown scaly pattern on the throat, bolder on the breast and flanks.

Habitat: Rainforests, woodlands, paddocks, orchards, gardens.

Nest: Displays coloured objects in a bower 35cm high and 45cm long but nests are built of thin sticks and twigs in the fork of a tree up to 13m high, sometimes in a clump of mistletoe.

Food: Berries, blossom nectar and insects

Size: 28-32cm

Rainforest

Gang-Gang Cockatoo

Callocephalon fimbriatum



The dark grey feathers have pale margins giving a scalloped effect. His bright red head and crest gives the male a rather raffish personality.

Habitat: Wetter forests and woodlands, along treed creeks and gardens.

Nest: Tree hollow with layer of decayed debris in dense forest or woodland.

Food: Gathers inconspicuously in trees where observer's attention might be attracted by falling eucalypt seed capsules or walnuts and seeds of acacia and hedge plants such as hawthorn. Also likes leaf-gall larvae and larvae of other insects.

Size: 33-36cm.

Grey Shrike-Thrush

Colluircincla harmonica



Male has olive-brown back, black bill and eye, white lores; female has lightly streaked front, lores greyish, faint white eye-ring.

Habitat: eucalypt forests and woodlands, golf courses, parks and gardens, water courses.

Nest: Large bowl of bark-strips, grass and rootlets set 2-6m high in tree fork, creeper against a house, grass tree or tree cavity.

Food: Insects and grain from seed trays. It breaks corn and sunflower seed by banging on the tray.

Size: 22-26cm

Grey Goshawk

Accipiter novaehollandiae



In Victoria this goshawk has a grey back, white underparts, finely barred with grey, red eyes, bright yellow cere and legs. Some specimens are all white but identified by yellow ceres and legs.

Habitat: Forests, taller woodlands, trees along watercourses. Disperses during autumn to open country.

Nest: Large, shallow nest of sticks high in a tree.

Food: Small birds, mammals, reptiles, grasshoppers and other insects.

Size: 40-54cm; female larger.

White-Naped Honeyeater

Milistreptus lunatus



Olive green upper parts and white underneath, white nape band that stops short of the eye's orange/red crescent, slightly curved bill.

Habitat: Forests and woodlands where it prefers smooth barked eucalyptus, also parks and gardens.

Nest: Builds a delicate hanging cup of fine grass, bark-shreds, plant-down and spider web hung from a slender fork 5-20m high.

Food: Seeks insects, pollen and nectar among upper foliage.

Size: 13-15cm

Masked Owl

Tyto novaehollandiae



Upper part shades of dark brown with white tips to feathers. Fascial disc white with rufous or brown around eyes. Brown eyes, beak white, feet off-white to grey with feathers on legs and feet.

Habitat: Gullies in tall wet forests with dense understorey.

Nest: Needs debris-lined hollows in tall eucalypts up to 30m high though sometimes uses high cavity in a cave.

Food: Small rodents, ground and tree living marsupials, insects.

Size: 38-50cm; female larger.

Painted Button-Quail

Turnix varia



Typical quail shape, chestnut shoulder patch, red eye, creamy-grey breast with white spots and yellow legs.

Habitat: Scrublands and open woodlands with branch and leaf debris, heath lands, farm regrowth.

Nest: Depression lined with leaves and grass with part canopy, near to log, tussock or base of tree.

Food: Found by scratching in litter, forming 'soup-plate' depressions by rotating the while.

Size: 17-19cm, female larger.

Spotted Pardalote

Pardalotus punctatus



Top photo: Female

Inset: Male at nest hole

This lovely tiny bird, wearing white spots on head and wings, rich yellow throat and chestnut/red rump is Australia's smallest. Cheerful 5-note whistle indicates its presence looking for insects among outer twigs

Habitat: Anywhere from dry eucalypt country to parks and gardens.

Nest: At end of tunnel, which it digs in bank or hanging basket

Food: Small invertebrates, particularly scale insects.

Size: 8-10cm

Woodlands

Grey Fantail

Rhipidura fuliginosa



Grey upper parts, white eyebrow and throat. Tail has appearance of beautiful silvery fan.

Habitat: Anywhere there are trees.

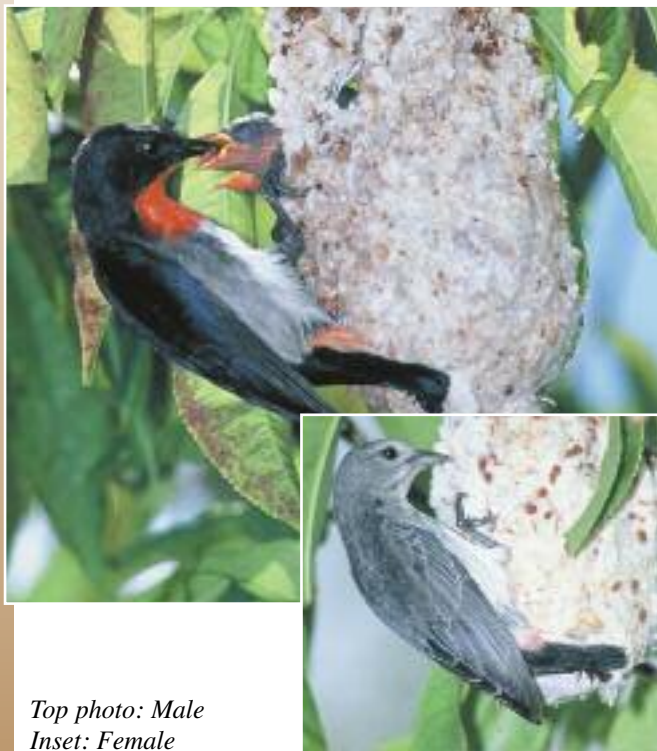
Nest: Beautiful grey cup like a wineglass without a base, built of fine grass, bark and spider web in slender horizontal fork to 12m high.

Food: Performs flying stunts to catch insects on the wing in company with other small birds.

Size: 14-17cm

Mistletoe Bird

Dicaeum hirundinaceum



Top photo: Male

Inset: Female

Upper parts glossy blue-black, throat/upper breast and under-tail coverts scarlet, underparts grey-white with black stripe down the centre. Female grey with light red undertail coverts and black tail.

Habitat: Any vegetation which supports mistletoe, follows fruiting cycle across Australia.

Nest: Is a beautiful pear shaped purse, held together with spider web, with a slit-like entrance near the top.

Food: Predominantly mistletoe berries, sometimes saltbush and other small fleshy fruits.

Size: 9.5 -11cm

Woodlands

Little Lorikeet

Glossopsitta pusilla



Tiny green lorikeet with black bill and red patch over forehead and throat. Small groups feed in treetops, moving mouse-like through blossoms and foliage. Flight bullet-like.

Habitat: Forests, woodlands, watercourses and street trees.

Nest: In small hollows often high up.

Food: Blossom, pollen, nectar, seeds and sometimes, soft fruit.

Size: 15-16.5cm

Purple-Crowned Lorikeet

Glossopsitta porphyrocephala



Green with purple crown and apricot-yellow forehead and ear coverts. Crimson visible under wings in flight. Seen in flocks or smaller parties. Feeds among outer leaves and blossoms from top to near the ground.

Habitat: Ranges widely through mallee country as well as southern Victoria.

Nest: In small hollow, several may be nearby.

Food: Nectar, occasionally soft fruit or unripe corn.

Size: 15-17cm

Woodlands

Common Bronzewing

Phaps chalcoptera



Pale edges to upper-parts feathers form scaly pattern, beautiful fiery orange/green patch in wing, under parts soft grey/pink, bright pink legs. White line under eye, male has yellow/buff forehead. Bronze under-wings show in flight. Voice is a carrying low 'oom' at about 3sec intervals often at night.

Habitat: Heaths, forest with dense undergrowth, mallee and alpine to over 2000m in summer.

Nest: Is a scanty platform or substantial saucer of twigs up to 12 m, on branch, in mistletoe clump or on stump near ground.

Feeds: With typical head-bobbing action on fallen wattle seeds or grain.

Size 32-36cm

New Holland Honeyeater

Phylidonyris novaehollandiae



Longish bill is black, face black, white eye, white eye-brow, whisker tuft and ear tuft, front streaked, bold yellow wing panels, white tips to outer tail-feathers visible in flight.

Habitat: eucalypt forests with scrubby understorey, coastal scrub, heathlands, parks and gardens.

Nest: Nest is rough cup of twigs, grass stems, plant down and spider web low in shrub or bracken 1-3m high.

Food: Insects and nectar.

Size: 17-18cm

Woodlands

Yellow-Faced Honeyeater

Lichenostomus chrysops



Upper parts olive brown, yellow stripe under eye, bordered above and below by black, ending in small white tuft. Eye blue/grey, feet brown.

Habitat: Forest areas, watercourses, orchards, and gardens.

Nest: Untidy cup of grass, plant stems, lined with hair and fur about 1.4m above ground.

Food: Berries, flowers, soft fruit and grapes.

Size: 16-18cm

Silver Eye

Zosterops citrinellus



Inset: At nest

Light grey upper parts, buff flanks, whitish under-tail coverts and silvery-white eye ring. Flocks of this small bird migrate from Tasmania to north Queensland during summer/autumn and return August/October.

Habitat: Most vegetational types in coastal and sub coastal southern Australia.

Nest: Nest of grass, thistle down, moss and spider web suspended in a shrub.

Food: Fruit, seeds, nectar and insects.

Size: 10-12.5cm

Woodlands

Crimson Rosella

Platycercus elegans



Very showy parrot, with a beautiful crimson body, back mottled black, blue cheek patch, tail and shoulders. Intelligent black eyes alert to any movement.

Habitat: eucalypt forests, farmlands, roadsides, parks.

Nest: In hollow high in tree or cavity in building.

Food: Feeds in small flocks out of breeding season, choosing seedpods, or picking flowers for their contents.

Size: 32-37cm

Tawny Frogmouth

Podargus strigoides



Colour varies from grey to brown with black marks down the side of breast, yellow eyes. Sits immobile, upright, giving appearance of broken branch, very difficult to spot. Active at dusk.

Habitat: Any treed area.

Nest: Flimsy construction of sticks and leaves on horizontal fork 5-10m high.

Food: Flying insects or dead ones on roads, which puts the frogmouth at risk from traffic.

Size: 33-50cm, male larger.

Woodlands

Musk Lorikeet

Glossopsitta concinna



Sturdy green lorikeet with brilliant scarlet patch extending from forehead over ear-coverts. Beak blackish tipped red, eye orange.

Habitat: eucalypt woodlands, drier forests on hillsides, shelter belts, timbered watercourses and dams.

Nest: Decayed debris in hole high in a tree.

Food: Soft fruit and flowers of native trees.

Size: 20-23cm

Laughing Kookaburra

Dacelo novaeguineae



Big bill is pale below, brown crown; dark patch through eye and over ear, brown wing mottled blue, tail is striped tan and black. Older males have blue-green centre rump. Raucous laugh announces territorial claim.

Habitat: Woodland, forest clearings, orchards, parks and gardens.

Nest: A level hollow in tree, bank, haystack or wall to 20metres up.

Food: Watches from perch, then glides onto reptiles, mammals, insects, sometimes dives into shallow water.

Size: 41-47cm

Woodlands

Black-Faced Cuckoo Shrike

Coracina novaehollandiae



Blue/grey with jet-black face and throat, pale under parts. Flies in pairs or parties and repeatedly shuffles wings on landing.

Habitat: Australia wide in many kinds of country including cities.

Nest: Constructs shallow cup of fine twigs and spider's web, on a horizontal branch 6-20m high.

Food: Eats large insect larvae among leaves of trees. It is the only predator of spitfire caterpillars.

Size: 30-36cm

Noisy Miner

Manorina melanocephala



Immediately identified by a whitish forehead, black crown and cheeks. Its feathers are mostly grey, paler underneath. Very confident personality in parks where it will come to be fed.

Habitat: Likes treed spaces without shrubs underneath, including gardens and golf courses.

Nest: Builds an untidy cup of twigs, wool, spiders web in the fork of a leafy branch 2-13m high.

Food: Forages on the ground and among leaves and blossoms for insects and pollen, also likes berries and fruit.

Size: 24-27cm.

Woodlands

Little Wattlebird

Anthochaera chrysoptera



In spite of its name this silvery-striped brownish bird lacks wattles. The body and tail shapes are similar to other wattle birds. A rufous wing patch is visible when in flight.

Habitat: Banksia/eucalypt woodlands, heathlands and gardens where there are nectar- producing flowers.

Nest: A loose, untidy cup of twigs lined with plant down and shredded bark placed 1-10m up in a fork.

Food: Searches around among branches after insects and nectar.

Size: 26-31cm.

Red Wattlebird

Anthochaera carunculata



Crown is black, face white below a red eye, fleshy red neck wattles become darker with age, centre of belly is lemon-yellow and legs are pink.

Habitat: Woodlands, eucalypt forests, orchards, golf courses, gardens, nectar feeders.

Nest: Untidy saucer of sticks, bark, leaves lined with bark strips, hair and fur. Can be in a fork or on bark against the trunk, from 2-16m high.

Food: Falls noisily around among branches after insects and nectar.

Size: 33-36cm

Woodlands

Golden Whistler

Pachycephala pectoralis



Top photo: Male

Inset: Female at nest

Male has black head and breast band separating white throat from brilliant golden-yellow nape and under parts. Female is grey/brown above, pale tips to wing coverts form double or single line across wing. Sings even better than a canary.

Habitat: eucalypt forests and woodlands, parks, gardens and dense acacia growth.

Nest: Rough cup of bark strips and other plant material 1-4m up in tree ferns, blackberries or fork in upright shrub.

Food: Insects of various kinds, seeds and berries.

Size: 16.5-18.5cm

Fantail Cuckoo

Cocomantis flabelliformis



Slate grey upper parts, cinnamon coloured breast and yellow rings around a brown eye. Tilts its white-notched tail on alighting. Utters a leisurely downward trill from high branches or wires.

Habitat: Forests, woodlands and man-made areas.

Nest: Deposits eggs in nests of tiny fairy wrens, thornbills and scrub wrens.

Food: Insects and their larvae.

Size: 25-27cm

Woodlands

Sacred Kingfisher

Todiramphus sanctus



Lovely colour combination of dark blue/green, peacock blue and buff/white with a black mask, a prominent white wing spot shows in flight. Has quite a heavy bill.

Habitat: Open forests and woodlands, margins of water spaces, garden ponds, golf courses.

Nest: Lays eggs on debris in tree hollows, termite nest or tunnel in a bank.

Food: Flies down from a perch to catch large insects or small reptiles.

Size: 20-23cm

Rainbow Lorikeet

Trichoglossus haematodus



Brightly coloured with blue head and belly, red/orange chest, red eye and bill, green wings and tail.

Habitat: Eucalypt forests, banksia woodlands, town gardens and streets.

Nest: Hollow in tree containing debris often high up.

Food: Nectar, raids ripe garden fruit.

Size: 25-32cm

Woodlands

Australian Hobby or Little Falcon

Falco longipennis



A dark falcon with a sharp bend on the trailing edge of its wings in flight. Upper parts dark slate-blue, forehead, throat and peaked half-collar whitish or buff, under parts orange-buff with rufous streaks. Yellow legs are feathered to just below the 'knee'.

Habitat: Woodlands, near water, parks and well-treed suburbs.

Nest: Uses nests of other raptor, usually in living trees.

Food: Flies down small birds or, at dusk, catches insects.

Size: 30-35cm; span 90cm and female larger.

Brown Falcon

Falco berigora



Dark sooty brown to light red-brown above, always has double 'teardrop' enclosing pale cheek patch and red-brown to dark brown 'trousers' on greyish legs. Perches upright on posts or trees. Hunts from the air or on ground.

Habitat: Open woodlands, plains, roadsides, alpine meadows, and farmlands Australia-wide.

Nest: In tree hollow or deserted nest of other raptore.

Food: Small mammals and invertebrates

Size: 40-50cm, span >1.2m

Welcome Swallow

Hirundo neoxena



Upper parts glossy black, throat and forehead dull tan, under parts mid-grey, tail deeply forked with lace-like white spots on inner tail feathers.

Habitat: Open woodlands, coasts and urban areas.

Nest: An open cup of mud pellets lined with a variety of soft materials. Builds in overhung banks, large hollows and often in sheds or under verandahs.

Food: Hawks for insects in swift swoops.

Size: 15cm

Wedgetail Eagle

Aquila audax



Dark brown, pale bill, legs feathered to just above pale feet. Distinctive wedge-shaped tail is best seen when flying. Glides and spirals to majestic heights almost out of sight, which is wonderful to watch.

Habitat: Australia-wide from mountain forests to almost treeless plains.

Nest: Is huge, built of sticks lined with fresh eucalyptus leaves, high in limb of tree or on ground where trees are rare.

Food: Young native animals, rabbits, cats, smaller birds, and carrion.

Size 90cm - 1.1m, span to 2.8m female larger

Australian Raven

Corvus coronoides



Black bird with throat hackle feathers, which bunch out when calling, white eye; wind-blown feathers reveal grey down.

Habitat: Alpine regions to 1500m, farmlands, beaches, and urban areas.

Nests: Substantial stick nest lined with bark and wool 10m up in tree, on telephone pole, pylon etc. Pair holds 100ha territory year round.

Food: Grasshoppers and grain.

Size: 48-52cm

Nankeen Kestrel

Falco cenchroides



Pale rufus (the colour of nankeen, a common cotton material in the 1800s) above, black teardrop down through eye. Hovers with tail fanned, black tail band contrasts with pale under parts. Lives singly or in parties.

Habitat: Almost any open area but including around city buildings.

Nest: In tree hollows, ledges on buildings or old nests of other birds.

Food: Insects and small mammals.

Size: 30-35cm; span 80cm. Female larger.

Dusky Woodswallow

Artamus cyanopterus



Bluish bill tipped black; plumage smoky brown; wings gunmetal grey with white streak on leading edge, the only woodswallow with this marking. Tail black with white tip.

Habitat: Open forests, woodlands, coastal scrub, golf courses, street trees, and orchards. Hundreds of birds might cluster in a roosting spot.

Nest: Scanty, of twigs and rootlets on branch, behind lifting bark, on stump or cavity in fence post.

Food: catches insects of various kinds on the wing.

Size: 17-18cm

White-Backed Magpie

Gymnorhina tibicen



Plumage of this conspicuous bird is black and white, large black-tipped bill is whitish. Female has lacy-patterned grey back. Keeps an alert watch with red-brown eyes. Announces territorial rights with a rich melodious yodel.

Habitat: Practically anywhere there are trees with open ground nearby except in West Australian desert country.

Nest: A compact bowl of sticks lined with soft fibres 5-16m high in outer branches of a tree. Protects nest by dive-bombing passers-by who sometimes wear ice-cream containers as a defence.

Food: Smaller birds, mice, meat scraps from picnickers in parks, seeds.

Size: 38-44cm

Rural

Magpie-Lark

Grallina cyanoleuca



DNA testing has placed this black and white bird with a yellowish eye and plaintive “pee-wee” call with monarch flycatchers instead of with magpies. Males have a black face and chest, while the female's face is white and a black band runs from the crown to form a breast-band. Their heads jerk backwards and forwards as they walk.

Habitat: Virtually anywhere there are trees and mud for nest building, except dense forests and waterless deserts.

Nest: Mud bound with grass into a bowl shape, placed on a branch in the outer part of a tree 6-15m high. It is lined with feathers, hair and grass.

Food: Insects and pond snails.

Size: 26-30cm

Galah

Cacatua roseicapilla



A jaunty pink and grey cockatoo, individual with dark eye is male, with red eye is female. Flocks appear to change from pink to grey in tilting flight. Individuals seem to enjoy acrobatic antics on telephone wires.

Habitat: Open country with suitable trees, town parks, and beaches.

Nest: Leaves and twig-lined tree hollow, strips large area of bark from around entrance.

Food: Seeds, often feeds around haystacks and grain silos or in paddocks, forages on ground or in low shrubs.

Size: 34-38cm

Rural

Little Corella

Cacatua sanguinea



Small white cockatoo with a short crest, grey skin around the eye, pink stain between eye and whitish bill, also under the throat. Feathers under tail and wings washed yellow. Rests in trees occupying its self by stripping off leaves and twigs. A large group can kill the tree.

Habitat: Pastoral country, desert sand-hills, timbered watercourses, offshore islands and towns.

Nest: Builds on decayed debris in hollows in trees, cavities in termite mounds or cliffs.

Food: Noisy mobs or pairs land on ground to feed on seeds and bulbous roots.

Size: 35-39cm

White Cockatoo

Cacatua galerita



Noisy white cockatoo with a bright yellow crest, utters raucous, shattering screeches as it flies overhead. Has a liking for western red cedar used in houses!

Habitat: Everywhere from tropical forests to city gardens.

Nest: A tree hollow lined with decayed debris, usually high up, or a hole in a cliff are favourite nesting spots.

Food: A lookout is posted while flocks are feeding on crops, grass seeds or in trees.

Size: 44-51cm

Eastern Rosella

Platycercus eximius



This is the trademark bird used on “Rosella” tomato sauce bottles. Bright scarlet head and body, white cheek patches, yellow and black back, blue shoulders, yellow and pale green under parts. Rump is same colour seen only when flying.

Habitat: Open grassy forests, farmlands, parks and gardens, timbered watercourses.

Nest: Built in hollows in trees, stumps, fence posts or termite mounds.

Food: Often seen eating seeds along roadsides, raids fruit and nut trees.

Size: 29-34cm

Straw-Necked Ibis

Threskiornis spinicollis



Iridescent black upper parts, long white bill, underparts and tail. Named for straw-like breast plumes. Flies in V formation or undulating lines.

Habitat: Grasslands, wetlands, airfields, sewage ponds.

Nest: Is shallow cup of sticks and reeds, in trees over water. Some colonies number thousands.

Food: Water insects, molluscs and reptiles.

Size: 58-76cm, span 1-1.2m

Australian White Ibis

Threskiornis molucca



A tall white bird with long, curved black bill, black head and tail. Breeding male grows yellowish breast plumes and, when it flies, reveals a patch of bare red skin under the wings.

Habitat: Fresh water wetlands, pastures and tidal areas.

Food: Ibis are a farmer's best friend as they consume countless numbers of grass-eating grubs.

Nest: Builds nest of reeds, sticks in trees over water or on trampled reeds, often in large colonies.

Size: 65-76cm; span 1.25m.

Red-Browed Finch

Neochmia temporalis



Bright scarlet bill, eyebrow and rump are distinctive on this olive green finch that is often seen on open grassy places like lawns.

Habitat: Grassy clearings in forests, among roadside growth and man-planted crops.

Nest: Feather or plant-down-lined bottle-shape of grass 1-6m up in tall grass or shrubby tree.

Food: Forages for insects and also takes prey on the wing.

Size: 11-11.5cm.

Grey Teal

Anas gracilis



Small mottled grey/brown bird with whitish throat and red eye. Can be in flocks of thousands wherein pairs persist.

Habitat: Almost any water Australia wide from coastal inlets to isolated tanks in desert country.

Nest: Mostly in tree hollows lined with down.

Food: Dabbles for aquatic insects and their larvae, plant material and grass seeds.

Size: 40-46cm; span 60-67cm.

Dusky Moorhen

Gallinula tenebrosa



Grey/brown body, legs red above dark knee, red or greenish below, yellow tipped red bill, black tail with white under edges. Flies with legs trailing.

Habitat: Well-vegetated wetlands, dams, sloping river verges, visits mangroves during dry periods.

Nest: Bulky saucer of sticks, stems, bark and grass, in or near water, on stump or low branches of waterside tree.

Food: Forages ashore and on surface of water for aquatic plants and insects

Size: 35-40cm

Purple Swamp Hen

Porphyrio porphyrio



A large bird with robust scarlet bill and forehead shield, deep blue head and breast, long reddish legs and big feet. Flicks its tail exposing white under-tail coverts.

Habitat: Margins of swamps and lakes, among reedy edges of rivers and creeks, golf courses, sewage ponds, airfields. Can climb into trees.

Nest: Bowl-shaped in a shallow platform of rushes and grass.

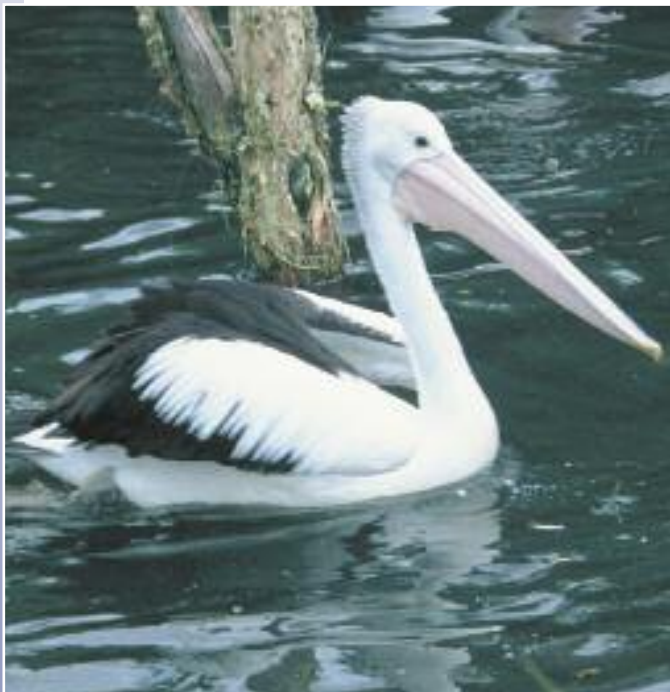
Food: Young reed stems, fish, scavenges dead birds. Begs around picnic tables in parks.

Size: 44-48cm.

Wetlands

Pelican

Pelecanus conspicillatus



White and black bird with very large pink bill-pouch. Reminiscent of a flying boat when in the air. Flies in lines or Vs alternating gliding with wing-beats and wheeling to great heights.

Habitat: Large shallow waters, rivers, islands - coastal and inland.

Nest: In colonies in a scrape lined with sticks, grass and seaweed.

Food: Fish and crustaceans.

Size: 1.5-1.9m, span 2.4-2.6m

White-Eyed Duck

Aythya australis



Now known as “hardhead”. Coloured a rich mahogany with a white eye, white stern and white under wings showing in flight. Its head is high and round, the tip of its blackish bill is crossed by a blue/white band.

Habitat: Deep permanent wetlands, dams, swamps and lakes. Can be seen in singles, pairs or rafts of thousands.

Nest: Woven cup of stems, with a canopy, in waterside reeds, lignum, or bushes.

Food: Remains under water for some considerable time raking mud for small animals, emerges swimming rapidly. Also feeds on surface.

Size: 45-60cm; span to 70cm.

Mountain Duck

Tadorna tadnoroides



Top photo: Female

Inset: Male

Plumage mostly black with bold white and chestnut markings, iridescent panel in wing.

Habitat: Fresh, salt or brackish waters, irrigation areas, farmlands and open woodlands.

Nests: In rabbit burrow, down-lined hollow, or under vegetation often far from water.

Food: Grazes on short green grass, dabbles or upends in shallows

Size: 55-74cm, span 1-1.3m

Chestnut Teal

Anas castanea



Bottle-green head, rich chestnut body, white flank mark and black stern. White wedge under wing shows in flight.

Habitat: Prefers saline swamps and lakes but does visit fresh water.

Nest: Lined with down, in tree hollow, rock crevice, or among grass or rushes. Readily uses nest boxes.

Food: Seeds and minute aquatic life.

Size: 40-48 cm

Pacific Black Duck

Anas superciliosa



Plumage dark brown with pale feather margins. Crown black, face and throat whitish to yellow-buff with bold black stripe through the eye and another from chin. Quite unique!

Habitat: Any suitable water including swimming pools or farm dams.

Nest: Often a down-lined hollow in a stump or part-formed nest in reeds.

Food: Forages among wetlands vegetation, wet pastures and grain stubble for grass, herbage and aquatic animals, upends in shallows

Size: 48-60cm, span 80-94cm.

Australian Wood Duck

Chenonetta jubata



Male in background, female in foreground

A handsome pale grey duck with a brown head and two black stripes along the back. Male has a small black mane, female has two pale stripes separated by the eye. She is also more profusely patterned on the under parts.

Habitat: Grasslands, pastures, parks, seaside, farm dams, often seen perching incongruously on fence posts.

Nest: Down-lined hollow, which can be quite high up in a tree not necessarily near water. Ducklings “float” to ground when ready to leave the nest.

Food: Grass and young crops

Size: 44-50cm, span to 80cm

Wetlands

Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo



Sometimes called ‘black shag’ these all-black birds form flocks that herd fish into a bunch, and then indulge in frenzied diving, leap-frogging over those in front to feed. Afterwards they sit in companies drying outspread wings. Conspicuous yellow bare skin on face and throat, eye green, bill grey, legs and feet black.

Habitat: Mostly where water is reasonably deep: bays, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, dams.

Nest: Makes colonies of rough platforms of sticks, bark, leaves and water plants in large trees over water.

Food: Fish

Size: 80cm

Wetlands

Yellow-Billed Spoonbill

Platalea flavipies



In breeding plumage this spoonbill has a fine black line around the face and a few black plumes from inner wings. Usually solitary, it slowly forages muddied waters scything from side to side with spoon-shaped yellow bill.

Habitat: Isolated fresh waters.

Nest: In colonies on a platform of sticks in tree over water or in reeds.

Food: Grubs, small fish and other aquatic life.

Size: 74-80cm, span c.1.3m

Darter

Anhinga melanogaster



Two differences between this and other cormorants are the stiletto bill and pointed pattern in dark plumage. Male has a white streak on the kinked neck, the female's head is grey and she has a pale front.

Habitat: Larger fresh or salt shallow waters but seldom on open sea.

Nest: Builds in small colonies in a tree over water.

Food: While searching for fish and aquatic animals only its neck and head show above water.

Size: 86-94cm; span 1-2m.

Black Swan

Cygnus atratus



The world's only black swan has a red beak and white wing feathers visible in flight, sometimes thousands of birds in the group.

Habitat: Prefers large permanent lakes and swamps with subaquatic vegetation, visits ornamental lakes and flooded pastures.

Nest: 1-1.5m wide heap of reeds, grasses and aquatic plants in shallow water.

Food: Consists of aquatic plants and animals.

Size: 1-1.4m; span 1.6-2m, male larger.

Royal Spoonbill

Platalea regia



A spotless white bird with black spoonbill and legs. Breeding time adds a small red mark along the black forehead, a rich yellow mark above each eye and flowing white head plumes.

Habitat: Larger well-vegetated shallow wetlands and tidal mud-flats.

Nest: Shallow platform of sticks over water in loose colony, often with other waterbirds.

Food: Small fish, aquatic insects and molluscs obtained by scything bill briskly from side to side in water.

Size: 74-80cm.

Wetlands

Silver Gull

Larus novaehollandiae



Silver-grey and white body, black and white wing tips, scarlet beak and legs, white eyes. Excretes salt from seawater through nostrils.

Habitat: Almost anywhere food scraps abound, Australia wide.

Nest: A saucer of seaweed or plant stems built on ground, under jetties, in old boats etc.

Food: Fish, plankton and scraps scavenged on rubbish tips.

Size: 38-43 cm, span 94 cm

Black Winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus



Long pink legs nearly double the length of the body, white front, black nape and long slender bill make this Australian race of a widespread cosmopolitan species unmistakable. May be seen singly or in large flocks.

Habitat: Shallow river or lake margins, tidal estuaries, sewage ponds.

Nest: Built of water plants and weeds, built up, sometimes floating or on dry ground, often in loose colonies.

Food: Aquatic animals and plants.

Size: 33-38cm.

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