

# BACKYARDS FOR BIRDS



SCARLET HONEYEATER  
STEVE POPPLE



“EVERYONE LIKES BIRDS. WHAT WILD CREATURE IS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO OUR EYES AND EARS. AS CLOSE TO US AND EVERYONE IN THE WORLD, AS UNIVERSAL AS A BIRD?” -

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH  
[YOU KNOW WHO HE IS!!]

“SEQ is blessed with birds and I, for one, would easily acknowledge that life is better with birds. A large motivation for writing this Backyards for Biodiversity booklet for me is to encourage more and more people to share in the joy that comes from birding: observing and identifying birds in their backyards”.

- Ken



**Birding is a great hobby and interest that one can [and should] rationally defend.**

First, before I explain its appeals, I need to quickly describe what it is. Birdwatching, I'm sure many would surmise, is watching birds. If, for example, you put seed out for your birds and sit and watch them [and gain decent pleasure from that] you are bird watching. And there is nothing wrong with that!

Birding, however, is something different, something more. Birding involves actively seeking birds, identifying them by sight and song, savouring them, recording them, listing them, enjoying them and their habitats and then later, learning, reading and perhaps writing about them.

The way I see it there are seven joys of birding. And I admit being impressed by the explanation of these seven by New York City birder, Chris Cooper.

**The first joy is the beauty of the birds.**

Please think of some of our common but beautiful Australian birds; the pink and grey Galah, impossibly coloured but well named, Rainbow Lorikeets, Scarlet Honeyeaters; the males appearing as if they'd just been dipped head first in bright red paint. Imagine the no less attractive Emerald Dove, a small jade ground-loving pigeon with a faded pink head and chest. Picture, if you can, a silently sitting male Regent Bowerbird, an impressive mix of orange and jet black and, as it takes flight, another explosion of colour through its orange wings. Even the abundant Australian Magpie, when studied, is a handsome bird in fine black and white.

Birders tap in commonly to these common beauties that many, sadly, walk blindly past.

**From top to bottom - Crimson Rosella, Eastern Spinebill, Eastern Yellow Robin. [K.Cross]**

# THE JOYS OF BIRDING

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**The second joy is the pleasure of being in natural places.** Modern life and technology have robbed many of much of the sublime found in nature. Birding insists that time is spent in nature; the search for the diversity of birds opens the door to a variety of natural habitats and with that the promise of continued new experiences. And in south east Queensland, we have some truly wonderful country to see.

**The third pleasure is hunting, albeit without the bloodshed.**

To see birds well, alert senses, stealth and, occasionally, patience, are needed. These are the skills of good hunters and these, too, are the skills of good birders. We share, too, the satisfaction of claiming our targeted prize. Where we differ is that we leave our quarry alive and in peace, the hunt rather than the kill, the source of satisfaction.

**Please stick with me – Joy number four is the pleasure of problem solving.**

One obvious challenge for a birder is to identify every species that they see; to answer the obvious question, “What is that?” Now some birds do not cooperate. They hide among the leaves and the foliage such that you only see part of them at any one time – demanding a sort of mental jigsaw. Still other birds are very similar to other birds, that is, the differences between them are, to say the least, subtle. As with most puzzles arriving at the correct solution is a pleasure.

**Joy number five is the pleasure of collecting or, as it is sometimes called, listing.**

Birders collect sightings and keep them as lists. Perhaps the ultimate aim for an Australian birder is to sight and then record every bird species within our continent. The world birder wants to see every one of the ten and a half thousand species or so on our planet. There are some in Australia who have a list of over 800 bird species, seen within Australia and its island territories and the seas between. You can also collect lists for your yard – a yard list, this year – your year list, or your entire life – naturally a life list.

Ebird, an amazing on line bird data base, can help you record your list and keep track of all of your bird sightings.

**Joy number six is the satisfaction of making scientific discovery.**

There are lots of birds and very few scientists and subsequently many, many unanswered questions. Every birder can contribute, at least, to helping answer the basic question of “Where are the birds?” And here again Ebird is an important tool. Ebird’s collected information about bird distribution and numbers is, of course, essential for conservation science.

**Lastly, joy number seven, what I call the Lifer Effect.**

This pleasure needs a little explaining. When you begin birding you read the bird books or Apps and see pictures of birds. The birds exist in your mind as merely ‘ideas’. One day though you see the real bird – the concept suddenly becomes reality and you are having an experience that you know that you have never had in your life before. You have just seen a Life bird, and experienced the Lifer Effect and it is, surprisingly, thrilling. [For a non-birder try to imagine the pleasure that could be gained by seeing a wild tiger in the wild, knowing that this experience has never happened before and may never happen again.]

So, there are the seven joys but there are other reasons. It is cheap, inclusive and it can be done anywhere, to varying degrees, on our planet. It is cheap – one pair of binoculars and one field guide [an illustrated book describing all of the birds] and you are ready to go. Although I do encourage all to join [Birdlife Australia](#).



**Regent Bowerbird [K.Cross]**

# THE JOY OF BIRDS

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It is inclusive - birding can be enjoyed by anyone and everyone of every generation and it is a hobby that can last a lifetime. So try birding. Many of you will be glad that you did. - Ken



## BIRDS OF SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND.

Queensland is the most bird rich state in Australia with over 600 species recorded. In south east Queensland? Over 300 species recorded throughout our many terrestrial habitats and coastal waters.

My backyard, in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, has now recorded over 110 species, although a few of them are mere fly overs. Most SE Queensland backyards would be able to attract 40 species or more, given a year of observation. And many backyards could achieve that in a week!

Some of the familiar birds that we record in our backyards include Australian Magpie, Grey and Pied Butcherbirds, Pied Currawong, Magpie Lark, Willy Wagtail, Crested Pigeon and the introduced Spotted Dove, the ubiquitous Noisy Miner, Rainbow Lorikeets, Welcome Swallows and Torresian Crows.

Smaller common birds include Brown Thornbill, Grey Fantail, Brown Honeyeater, Silvereye, Lewin's Honeyeater among others.

Start recording your bird species now so you can be aware of the changes when you begin wildlife gardening.

To assist you visit the [Birds in Backyard website](#) and download their free App.

- Ken

**From top to bottom: Rainbow Lorikeet, [K.Cross], Magpie-lark [W.Kroll], Willie Wagtail [H.Erkin]**



# PLANTING FOR BIRDS

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**Hopefully everyone wants a great variety of bird species in their own backyard. Not surprisingly, the variety will be determined by your actions and the actions of your neighbours and Council. So we all need to work together to make our suburbs bird rich.**



## **Planting for Birds**

When planting for birds many people go only as far as the brightly coloured flowering shrubs of bottlebrush, grevillea, and banksia. Sadly, there is something wrong with this approach; it is limiting. These plants will attract great numbers of loud and aggressive species such as Noisy Miner [a native honeyeater] and Rainbow Lorikeets - often at the expense of smaller more timid species.

Given that we would like to maximise the variety of birds we need to maximise the variety of plants.

For birds, plants offer shelter for themselves, their young and their nests. To shelter a variety of bird species we need a variety of plant types, forming a variety of layers, a variety of foliage types and thickness of foliage. Again, variety of plants will pay dividends.

Birds also see plants as either a direct or indirect source of food. Nectar is but one source of food. Fruit is another. Consideration of a variety of plants that fruit and flower at different times throughout the year will invite more bird species in more often. Again, variety of plants is key. Some birds feed on insects and insect larvae. In fact, most passerines [perching birds] need insects for food. Honeyeaters, for example, do not survive just on nectar, their young, especially, need the protein that insects and their larvae supply. In the Americas, even the most famous of nectivorous birds, the Hummingbirds, turn into 'flycatchers' to capture insects to feed their chicks. **As a result, we must plant species that are the food plants for a variety of insects. As stated previously we need to plant many, many plants that evolved in southern Queensland and a good diversity of them to maximise the insect fauna.**

**From top to bottom: Dusky Honeyeater, Silvereye, White cheeked Honeyeater [S.Popple]**

# SHELTER FOR BIRDS

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Supplying specific species' shelters for our fauna is essential for their survival. Large numbers of trees and shrubs provide cover for small birds to hide from predators and to nest. Many Australian bird species have suffered due to the removal of dead trees, as when they are removed their hollows too are removed. This provides an argument for the supply of nest boxes tailor made for some of these species.

**Over 100 bird species in Australia use tree hollows.**



From top to bottom: Three species of hollow using birds: Australian Kestrel, Masked Owl, Spotted Pardalote. [K.Cross]

**Here is a summary of birds that use tree hollows across south-east Queensland.**

- **Ducks and geese:** Wood Duck (Maned Duck), Australian Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck, and Cotton Pygmy-goose all use tree hollows for breeding. Chestnut Teals, Australian Shovelers and Pacific Black Ducks will sometimes choose to nest in tree hollows.
- The **Australian Kestrel** will sometimes use tree hollows for nesting.
- **Parrots:** In south-east Queensland all cockatoo, lorikeet and parrot species use hollows for nesting except the Ground Parrot.
- **Owls:** All south-east Queensland Owls use hollows except for the Grass Owl.
- **Australian Owlets** use tree hollows for nesting and roosting.
- **Kingfishers:** Most of our kingfishers will often use tree hollows, as well as holes made within termite mounds or earth banks, including the Laughing Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher and Torresian Kingfisher.
- **Dollarbirds** will only nest inside tree hollows.
- **Tree Martins** will only nest in tree hollows, while Fairy Martins on occasion will nest in tree hollows.
- **Brown, Red-browed and White throated Treecreepers.**
- **Pardalotes:** Some Pardalote species will sometimes nest in tree hollows, or inside tunnels dug into embankments, including Striated and Spotted Pardalote.
- **Dusky and White-breasted Woodswallows** will use hollows.
- **Grey Shrike-thrush** will sometimes nest in tree hollows.

# SHELTER FOR BIRDS

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Natural Tree hollows take centuries to develop naturally and many have been removed so it is reasonable that as many of us as possible erect a range of suitable hollows for birds [and other creatures too] in our backyards and even, if possible, in nearby bushland.

When you decide to put up a nest box please recognise that you are accepting a little responsibility for it.

The first consideration is the construction of the box with an awareness of the expected species. The box should be built strongly with appropriate materials - please examine the following plans. The second consideration is the placement of the box. Generally speaking, considering your safety first, the box should be placed high in a tree as close to the trunk as possible. The position should take into account the prevailing wind such that the entrance is protected. Shade should be offered in the hottest parts of the day. If possible metal tree guards can be placed at head height on the tree trunk to deter cats, rats and goannas from preying on eggs and chicks. Once erected your job involves monitoring albeit from a distance. Don't be too disappointed if birds do not move in immediately [although you should rejoice if this occurs!] Look out for unwanted tenants such as Indian Mynas or honeybees - these will need removing! When birds do move in keep a record of the species and the date and document breeding success; number of young raised and / or whether any young were lost to predators. Please do not go too close during breeding or be tempted to examine the nest box as birds have abandoned nests on lesser intrusions.

**Birds in Backyards is a website supplying, you guessed it, a lot of information about birds in backyards. It exists under the wings of the main bird study and conservation organisation, Birdlife Australia.**





# SHELTER FOR BIRDS

## NEST BOXES



Birds in Backyards have kindly allowed for the reproduction of some of their nest box plans.

### STRIATED PARDALOTE

The Striated Pardalote is a small bird found almost everywhere across our continent. They are insectivorous and prefer to forage in high canopy, however they can be seen close to the ground.

#### Materials Needed

Timber at least 15mm thick (for adequate insulation). If you use thicker timber, please adjust the dimensions of the nest box appropriately. It is best to use untreated recycled wood, such as off-cuts or plywood, or plantation-grown wood, rather than using unsustainably harvested timber.

- Plastic piping (e.g. PVC) 30mm diameter, 100mm long
- Wood glue (something odourless)
- Non-toxic paint or sealant
- Linseed oil
- Screws
- Stainless steel hinge (either one long one or two smaller ones)
- Hook latch and eye
- For mounting strip attachment: A piece of timber 630mm by 90mm or 320mm by 90mm depending on whether you are attaching it to a limb or the trunk respectively) plus 100mm galvanised screws (for mounting the strip to the tree)

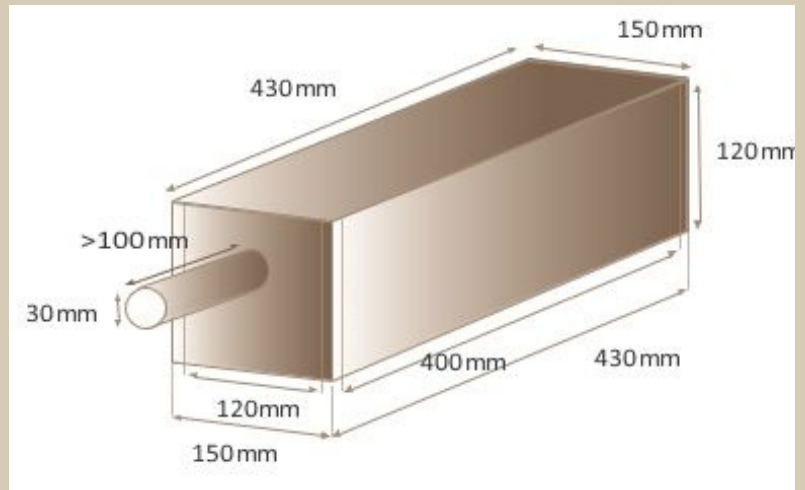
#### Construction

##### 1. Cut out shapes

- Wearing safety glasses and a dust mask, use the saw to cut out all of the required shapes for the box.
- Label each panel with pencil (on the inside) so that you can keep track of each part.
- Paint the outside and edges of each panel with non-toxic paint or sealant. Leave the inside face of each panel raw.

##### 2. Add features to the panels

Front panel: use your hole drill bit to cut a hole 30mm in diameter (or the same width as your piping). The hole should be in the middle of the front panel, a couple of cm from the top.



- You may need to use sandpaper or a rasp to file the hole a touch larger so the tubing fits snugly in to place. Cut the plastic tubing to a length of 100mm, and use the wood glue to fit one end into the hole. This makes a tunnel entrance for the birds.
  - Side panel (for tree limb attachment only): select the side that will attach to the tree limb. Run the mounting strip horizontally along the length of the nest box (with excess timber at either end) and secure with small screws from the inside of the panel. Pre-drill 2 holes in the mounting strip, one at each end. Alternatively you can run 2 mounting strips vertically at each end of the box.
  - Side panel (for trunk attachment only): select the side that will attach to the tree trunk. Run the mounting strip vertically down the middle of the nest box and secure with small screws from the inside of the panel. Pre-drill 2 holes in the mounting strip, one at the top and one at the bottom.
  - Bottom panel: drill at least 5 small holes into the bottom panel for drainage
- ##### 3. Put the box together
- Glue the side panels to the outside edges of the bottom panel and secure with screws. Use at least 3 screws per panel face for the entire box.
  - Repeat for the front and back panels.
  - Use the hinge to attach the top panel to the back panel. This will allow you to lift the lid to inspect the nest box.
  - Fit a hook latch and eye to stop the lid from blowing open in a strong wind.
  - Treat the outside of the box with linseed oil to help it last.
- For this species the ideal height for the box is 5 metres.



# SHELTER FOR BIRDS

## NEST BOXES

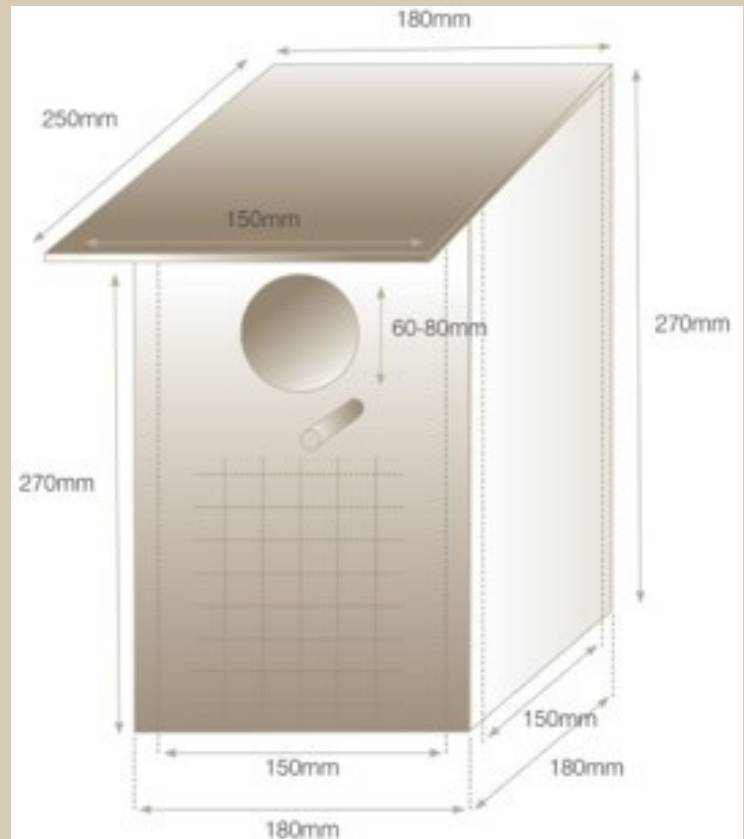
### OWLET NIGHTJAR

The Owlet Nightjar is the smallest nocturnal bird in Australia and is found widely across our continent. The birds mate for life, with both sexes contributing to the lining of the nest hollow, the incubation of the eggs and the raising of the two to three chicks. Owlet Nightjars hunt for insects at night, chiefly grasshoppers, beetles and even ants; so if you can make your backyard and neighbourhood great for insects you will increase your chances of attracting an Owlet Nightjar pair to choose your backyard to nest in!

Shapes needed (based on 15mm thick timber)

- Front and Back: 2 x rectangles 270mm x 180mm
- Sides: 2 x rectangles 270mm x 150mm
- Base: 1 x square 150mm x 150mm
- Top: 1 x rectangle 180mm x 250mm

Assemble the box using the picture to the right and the previous instructions for the Striated Pardalote as your guide.



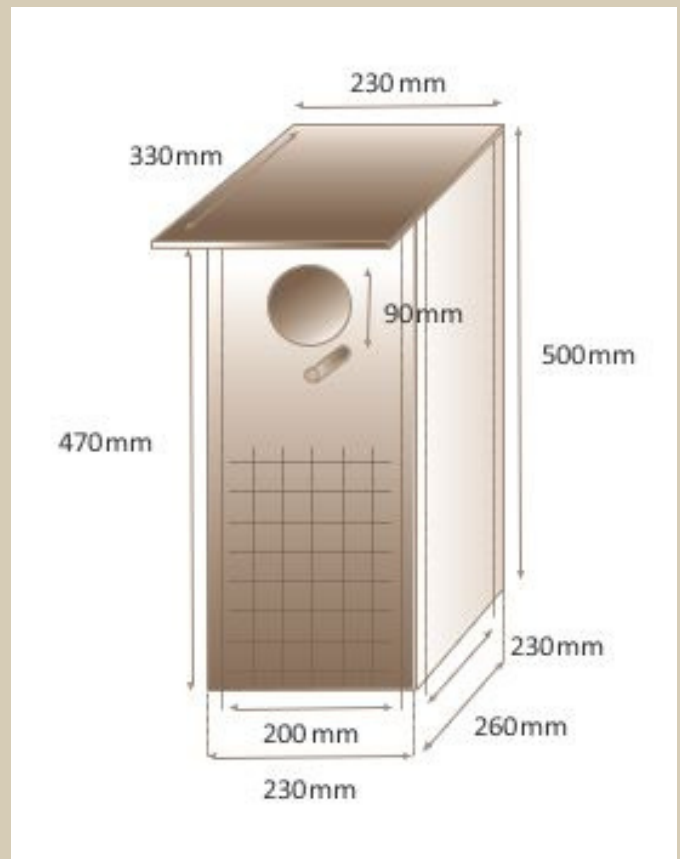
### PALE HEADED ROSELLA

The Pale headed Rosella is a familiar parrot of south east Queensland.

Shapes needed (based on 15mm thick timber)

- Top: rectangle 230mm x 330mm
- Sides: 2 x rectangles 230mm x 500mm (note: both pieces have to be cut to form a sloping edge for the roof)
- Front: rectangle 230mm x 470mm
- Back: rectangle 230mm x 500mm
- Base: rectangle 200mm x 230mm

Assemble the box using the picture to the right and the previous instructions for the Striated Pardalote as your guide.



# SHELTER FOR BIRDS

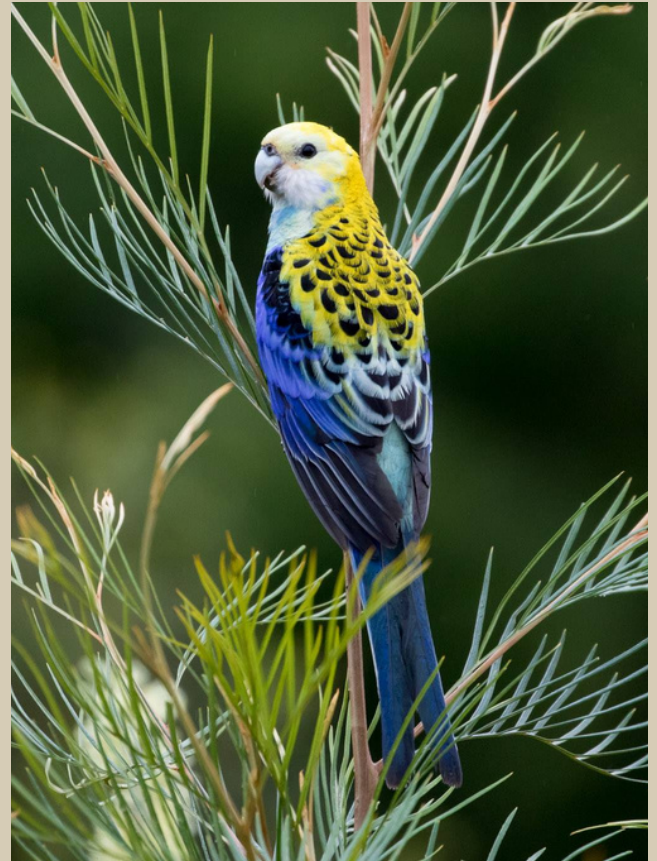
## NEST BOXES

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### OWLET NIGHTJAR



### PALE HEADED ROSELLA



Left to right - [P.Colley] and [S.Popple]

## NEST BOX RESOURCES

[Nest Box Tales](#) - A wonderful website by Alice McGlashan with a load a fantastic information about every aspect of nest box construction, installation and monitoring. In particular, a full free download, featuring nest box designs, plus species lists for many regions across the entire country.

[Nest Box Tales](#) - A facebook group run by Alice McGlashan.

[Birds in Backyards: Nest Box Designs](#) - A page from [Birds in Backyards](#) - an initiative by [Birdlife Australia](#).

Good information plus free designs. featuring

[Birds in Gardens](#) - A page from [Birds Queensland](#) featuring ideas to attract birds to your backyard.

[Hollow Log Homes](#) - a long established business and industry leader in the design and construction of durable (long life) bird and mammal nesting boxes. If you are like us useless on the tools and problematic on ladders, we recommend you go with the experts.

[A Nest Box Manual](#) published on-line by local councils of north east NSW is useful.



# FEEDING BIRDS

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**Some 'bird experts' would argue that the best way to feed birds is to plant appropriately and allow nature to feed itself.**

**While I have sympathy for that idea, I am also mindful that a lot of people in Australia [and Britain, Europe, and the Americas] gain incredible enjoyment from feeding birds and watching the variety of species at their feeders. It has been estimated that between 30% and 60% of Australian households feed their birds from time to time. Clearly great numbers of Australians care for birds such that they want to encourage them into view. Feeding allows an intimacy of viewing that 'normal circumstances' do not. We should encourage more and more people to feed the birds and enjoy them. The respect and love for our fauna should be promoted.**

**Feeding the birds, like anything though, should be done thoughtfully.**

**Perhaps the first question to ask is, "What is the effect of feeding on birds?"**

In the majority of cases feeding birds, assuming the food is correct, and the feeding dishes are clean, has negligible effect on them. All studies demonstrate that wild birds, who are supplied with food from residents, still source the majority of their food from the wild. In other words, the birds do not come to rely on your food, and they prefer natural foods. If you do have any concerns with birds becoming too habituated, then only supply food two or three times per week.

**Picture below - Brown Cuckoo-dove feeding in *Homolanthus populifolius*. Bleeding Heart [S. Pople]**



# FEEDING BIRDS

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## There are some important considerations for bird feeders though.

- **Keep your feeders clean.** Dirty, unwashed feeders allow bacteria to breed which can cause your birds to catch disease and perish.
- **Feed only appropriate food.** Do not simply throw out food scraps or bread. This is far less than ideal.
- **Feed seed** – feed the lower ends of the food chain – parrots, pigeons and finches. These birds are beautiful and come quite readily to seed.
- **Feed fruit.** Certain species will be attracted to fruit. Experiment! Ensure that your fruit is changed regularly though and does not begin to rot or ferment.
- **Feed mealworms.** I have never done this however some people breed meal worms and habituate some insectivorous species such as Grey Shrike-thrush, Eastern Yellow Robin to come in to eat meal worms.
- **Feed nectar.** Vets have a specially made powdered mix designed to have water added for nectar eating species such as honeyeaters. Generally, in our suburbs there are large numbers of flowering shrubs so this will probably not be necessary.
- **Do not feed meat!** – similarly do not feed the carnivores. Kookaburras, Magpies, Butcherbirds and Currawongs are all fine-looking birds, however when you feed these species and encourage a high density of potential small bird killers into your yard you will ensure bird diversity will decline. Specifically, these large species kill birds, especially baby birds. If you encourage the ecology of your yard, you will have the above species turn up without the promise of minced meat.
- **Keep out of reach of cats and dogs** – Sadly the majority of animals that people choose for pets are carnivorous. Cats are excellent predators and feral cats are a major threat to much of our Australian native fauna. Pet cats, too, have a similar potential for harming native animals despite what some naïve owners claim. Feeders and bird baths need to be located out of these animals reach or better still ensure that cats and dogs have their own areas separate from native animals.

Picture below - **Scaly-breasted Lorikeet in *Melaleuca quinquenervia* Broad-leaved Paperbark [S. Popple]**





# WATER FOR BIRDS

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**Australia is the driest continent in the world and even in SE QLD our rainfall can be temperamental. Birds must drink daily. Therefore, the surest way of seeing more birds in your yard, more often, is to have a good supply of fresh water and in a variety of places.**

Again, variety is the key.

Different types of water container are going to work better for different species.

Small shallow containers will work for smaller species simply wanting to drink.

Larger pots of water, with appropriate perches and sticks for safety, will allow even large species to bathe.

Some maintenance of bird baths is required. Bird baths will need to be emptied, cleaned, and re-filled periodically.

Frog ponds, suitably designed, will also be utilised by some bird species for drinking and bathing. [See page xxxx]

Ensure you position at least some of these water containers so they can be comfortably viewed from windows or verandas or backyard benches.



**Pictures this page - from top to bottom - White-cheeked Honeyeaters [W. Kroll], White-headed Pigeons [G. Jeffers], Regent Bowerbird [G. Jeffers]**

**Pictures next page - clockwise from top left - Emerald dove, Satin Bowerbird, Pale-headed Rosella, Eastern Spinebill, White-browed Scrubwren, Green Catbird [All photos by Paul Fraser]**







## Binoculars

To watch birds properly, and perhaps other fauna, it is essential to have a pair of binoculars.

Binoculars are described as 10x40's or 7x50's or other combinations. The first figure describes the strength of magnification; ten times and seven times, in the two examples given. The second figure describes the exit diameter of the binocular; 40mm or 50mm, in the two examples given. Most birdwatchers that I know prefer either 10x40 or 8x40. Often the weight is also a factor in their decision, the higher the magnification usually the heavier the binoculars.

Binoculars exist in a great range of quality and cost. The top binoculars cost around \$3000. Binoculars, worth having, probably begin around \$300. Like many things you get what you pay for. The most expensive binoculars offer great quality of image. I have never met anyone who had paid top dollar for binoculars and later regretted it.

Our recommendation would be to purchase the best binoculars you can afford and then use them as often as you can.

## Cameras

These days every naturalist we know carries a camera as well. Digital cameras have allowed almost anyone to become a nature photographer of sorts. Digital cameras also allow you to delete the many bad pictures that you will invariably take.

Having a decent camera that will allow you to take pictures of your flowering plants, your spreading ground covers, your glossy beetles and wasps, your beautiful but blurry butterflies and, of course, birds will increase your backyard enjoyment and allow you to share your backyard biodiversity with others.

Please speak to the experts for advice on what camera would suit you best.

## Field Guides and Apps

Australia is blessed with a variety of good bird field guides. These books exist to describe and illustrate every bird species recorded on our continent. Field guides routinely have maps displaying the distribution of each species so the reader can easily tell whether a particular species would be expected in your yard. To the right are two of the better field guides.

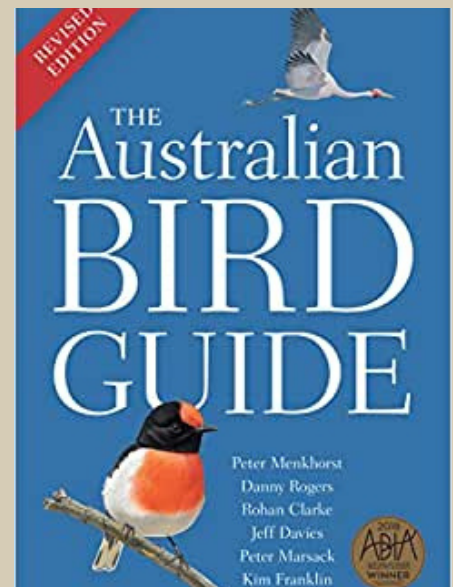
At the moment we have had two of Australia's field guides made into Apps. They are Pizzey and Knight and, secondly, Michael Morcombe's guide. The advantage of Apps is their portability and also their sound recordings. Knowing the songs of more secretive species is key to be able to record every species utilising your backyard. David Stewart, the most prominent recorder of nature's sounds in Australia, has released a comprehensive sound resource for Australian birds in 2022. This will feature over 4000 recordings of over 700 species, with some interesting emphasis on sub species.

***“ACQUIRING THE TRICK OF LISTENING TO BIRDS  
WILL TEACH YOU HOW BETTER TO ENJOY LIFE AND  
HOW BETTER TO ENDURE IT”.***

-SIMON BARNES - UK SPORTS AND NATURE JOURNALIST



**Swarovski binoculars - one of the best global brands.**

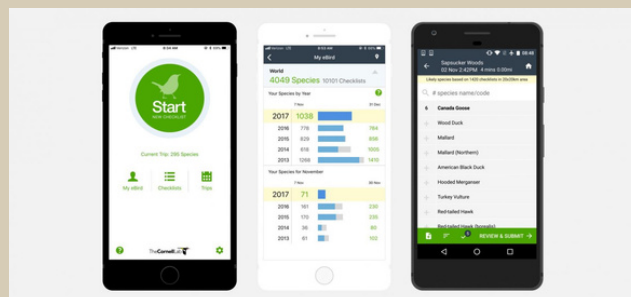


## Notebook

It is a little bit old school however you will find it interesting and enjoyable to keep records of the birds in your backyard. Keeping lists of sightings really helps you remember the identity of birds plus it is important to help you learn about seasonal movements, breeding and other aspects of bird's life histories. Your notebook could become an excellent backyard diary.

Listing your birds is like keeping a collection. Every new day provides an opportunity for a new 'Day List' which will go on to create Week Lists, Month Lists, Year Lists and Life Lists. You will want to travel to new places to list the birds there, motivated by another list - "Birds I am yet to See"!

# eBird



## Record your sightings on-line

An international bird database, [Ebird](#), and a national one, [Birdata](#), are two places where you can record your backyard sightings online. Long-term observation and recording of bird species and their numbers assist researchers in answering basic questions such as:

- Where are the birds?
- What are their numbers like?
- Are numbers increasing, decreasing, or remaining constant?

This information is essential for good environmental management.

Both Ebird and Birdata have websites and can be downloaded as Apps from Google Play or the App Store.



# birdata





# Cities for Birds

and biodiversity.

So far in this chapter the emphasis has been on the actions and infrastructure a resident can provide to ensure that their backyard's potential for a range of bird species is realised.

We should also give some emphasis to how our local politicians, councils, and organisations can support and encourage residents' action in maximising both bird diversity and populations. With appropriate leadership some, or all, of our urban areas could become bird cities. And in doing so become far more biodiverse; benefiting a range of biota!

## **An aside:**

*For many, birds are wonderful creatures in their own right, however they also can symbolise nature and biodiversity. As a child I loved all wildlife, but it was birds that I eventually gravitated towards. Why? To some degree the process of elimination. Our mammals are often small, shy and nocturnal. Our reptiles equally shy and private. To focus on these groups exclusively, it seemed to me, was to invite disappointment. On the other end of the spectrum were insects... Moth species in the thousands. Beetles the same. Far too many for my little brain to conquer. Birds, numbering in just a few hundred in south-east Queensland, seemed to be a good yet do-able challenge. Additionally, they are [mostly] diurnal, common, colourful, conspicuous; all qualities one needs in a decent representative for our biota.*

***If we, as cities and communities, set ourselves to make a bird city, we are in fact, improving our areas for all biodiversity. As you read the description below of the qualities of a bird city try swapping the word bird with biodiversity.***

*Ken Cross*

## **An aside:**

*Nature is not 'over there'. It is not remote. It surrounds us. And while many places within a city are biodiversity diminished they need not remain so. Cities in nature are starting to emerge! Singapore has changed its slogan from the Garden City to the City in the Garden and matched that transformation with action!*

*If it can happen there, why not here? Why not everywhere?*

*While I am fascinated with all biodiversity, my central fascination, my specialty remains plants. Thousands of them! Unlike birds or animals they do not fly or run away! Cities occupy large areas of land with corresponding diverse geology and soils, and elevations which offer incredible opportunities for the establishment of a huge diversity of native plant life. **This plant life can form the ecological base for a full and rich biodiversity. We have the knowledge, we just need the will!***

*John Birbeck*

**Check out the following web site for more information about Cities for Biodiversity:**  
**[Biophilic Cities](#)**

# What is a Bird City?

## Could Brisbane or other urban areas in south-east Queensland become a bird city?

### A Bird City is a city with

- A city bird strategy
- A comprehensive or general future plan that specifically involves increasing the number of birds & bird species. And a planning scheme which partners with developers to achieve this aim.
- Mandatory bird safe building and behaviour standards, such as minimising bird strike, and controlling feral [or pet] animals
- Designation of one or more official city birds
- A standing bird advisory & implementation committee
- Government providing assistance in public education regarding birds and biodiversity
- Urban parks, indeed, all council-controlled land, planted for birds [and biodiversity] using local native plants.
- Street trees, again locally native species, planted.
- Provision of green space, for example, roof top gardens, planted foot paths and the like.
- Many recognised and publicised trails and venues for bird & nature walks.
- Recognised and publicised bird watching sites and hot spots.
- Opportunities to connect with birds in real time, for example, bird cams
- At least one bird / wildlife rehabilitation centre
- An emphasis on preserving existing natural habitats and establishing habitat links and corridors for a variety of birds to move through the landscape

### Where...

- Citizens can identify local bird species
- Many residents are engaged in watching and caring for birds
- Many organised bird walks + public education events
- There are a variety of ways to engage with and enjoy birds such as art, nature journaling, birding, bird feeding, information, signage etc
- Large numbers of residents engaged in creating bird friendly habitat in their gardens and nature strips.
- There are many citizen science opportunities.

The reasons why a city might venture in this direction are many but include reasons of environment, economic and social health.

### Efforts to boost birds

- involve conserving and /or re-establishing biodiversity
- encourages planting trees to mitigate climate change
- creates green, sustainable jobs
- increases property values adjacent to green infrastructure
- improves city aesthetics
- constructs wetlands which help with flood mitigation
- allows and encourages resident connection to nature, which in turn encourages stress reduction and reduces depression
- supplies clean air and filtered water
- reintroduces natural sounds of bird song.

***Birds symbolise all Biodiversity!***