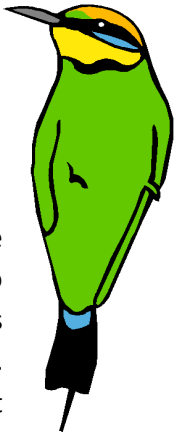


GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Birds you may see in your gardens over winter



Hello to all at Garden for Wildlife! I'd like to take this chance to introduce myself. My name is Ilse Pickerd and, alongside Heidi, I will soon be your new Land for Wildlife coordinator. I would like to take a moment to thank Danielle on her retirement from the coordinator's position for the efforts she has put into the Land for Wildlife and Garden For Wildlife programs over the last 18 months. Both groups have grown considerably under her stimulation and tutelage reflecting both her interest and your interest in conservation of flora and fauna in our continuously urbanising environment. We wish her well in her travels overseas over the coming year.

I have previously been working at the Alice Springs Desert Park as a keeper of the avian collection, having moved up from Melbourne where I have worked with invertebrates and the Australian mammal collection at Melbourne Zoo. I have a background in zoology and environmental conservation, and have also had varied work in education and in taxidermy/exhibition preparation at Museum Victoria. I have worked in national parks and animal refuges whilst travelling through India and South America, facing issues such as habitat destruction and illegal animal trades. I'm very excited to be part of Land for Wildlife and helping to encourage desert life back into our yards and town. There is such a unique natural history here; it's inspiring to be able to all do our part to help protect it. My previous job at the Desert Park may hint that I am quite fond of birds, and birds can be a great indicator of a healthy landscape, so I would like to talk a bit about the birds you may notice on your properties and around town these coming months.

I'm going to talk a bit about resident and migratory birds, but before doing so I might clarify a little. I have chosen the term 'resident' over another common term, 'sedentary', as sedentary brings images of very still creatures, like barnacles, to mind, and birds are rarely still! The other point to consider is that a single species may have resident and migratory populations. A classic example of this the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, there is a resident population in town, but there will also be cuckoo-shrikes moving through town to warmer climates, supplementing the local population.

The cold weather has stuck its claws in and many migratory birds have left for the north where the weather is warmer and the insects plentiful. Many birds are moving through Alice Springs from the south to the north, and some birds are staying. You may have noticed that the Rainbow Bee-eater is no longer in the area; their chirping is definitely missed in my garden. As their main diet consists of insects, and our bug supply in Alice is drying up with the frosty weather, the flashy little avians have gone north. The same goes for the White-winged Triller, Sacred and Red-backed Kingfisher and Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo.

Many birds in transit from south to north are staying a while in Alice Springs. You may notice an increase in Black Kite numbers as the local resident population is boosted by migrating birds heading north. Similarly the Black-faced Woodswallow have stuck around for a little while taking advantage of the flowering trees. They feed on nectar even though they are largely insectivorous. Their near cousins, the Masked Woodswallow have already long gone.



Black-faced Woodswallow (Source: Wikipedia)



White-winged Triller (Source: Wikipedia)

Before I start talking about what birds we will be seeing, I might mention a few more we probably won't. After all that rain we had, many plants sprung up and flowered and seeded, and caterpillars, grasshoppers and all sorts of insects appeared en masse. Water will dictate the presence of many nomadic birds, we had a big turn out over summer, now they gradually are leaving us. Along with the Triller, Bee-eater and Kingfisher, it is unlikely that we will see things like the Cockatiel, Mulga parrot, and Budgerigar over the colder months.

Some birds, however, will stick around for some of the flowering plants and seed. You may have noticed some *Acacia* have started flowering, the Bloodwoods will flower soon too. With flowering trees comes lerps. Salt bush is fruiting at the moment – an essential food source for periods without rain. Water can always be found in town i.e. bird baths in urban gardens and many opportunist birds will take advantage of these available resources. So let's now focus on the birds we will be seeing over the winter in town.

The Port Lincoln Ringneck Parrot will enjoy the wattleseed, as well as the local Little Corella population, and of course the Galah. Don't begrudge the pruning these parrots do on Ironwoods and Eremophilas while they get new growth to eat. They are doing the trees, if not you, a favour by reducing the foliage on the trees in anticipation of drier times that invariably follow after the rains. If you're lucky enough or have planned a corner of your garden where the sharp seeds of copper burrs and Caltrop can survive, you may even have Red-tailed Black Cockatoos turn up on your property.



Little Corella (Source: Wikipedia)

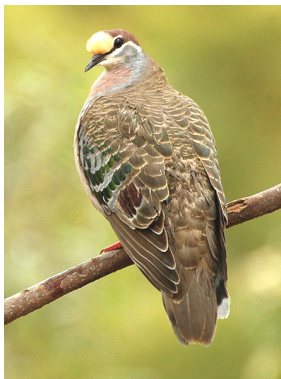
Flowering trees provide nectar for many honeyeaters. Our resident species include the Singing Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, and White-



plumed Honeyeater. The Grey-headed Honeyeater has also arrived and will stay with us over the winter.

We manage to sustain resident populations of a variety of species in town. These include the Spotted Bowerbird, Pied and Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Magpie-lark, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous Whistler, Richard's Pipit, Common Bronzewing, White-browed Babbler, and the Masked Lapwing. If you are living out in the Ilparpa Valley you can add Varied Sitella, Peaceful Dove and Diamond dove to this list.

Grey-headed Honeyeater
(Source: Wikipedia)



Common Bronzewing
(Source: Wikipedia)

Unfortunately the smaller bird species don't do so well in town. The habitat for them is not there (yet!) and the competition with the larger more aggressive species, particularly the Spotted Turtle-dove, is too great. An unwelcome resident to include on our bird list is the introduced Spotted Turtle-dove.

As for Birds of Prey their story mirrors their smaller non raptorial counterparts. The Peregrine Falcon will move through town in the early autumn, as will the Australian Hobby and Brown Goshawk, to escape the cold winter of the south. It is possible to see these species all year round as there are resident individuals. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is territorial and therefore will not budge, but you may notice young dispersing to find a mate and territory of their own as well as the big increase in numbers of southern migrants over the winter.

This is not a comprehensive list; you may spot some other birds flitting about your gardens. If you need help identifying birds, Field Guides are always great. I would recommend Morcombe or Simpson & Day. There is plenty of information and photographs on the internet or you can call us at Land for Wildlife and we can give you all sorts of advice on birds, binoculars, resources, or plants to grow in your garden to encourage wildlife. I hope to be meeting you all soon and happy bird watching!

Upcoming Workshop

On the 20th of June Garden for Wildlife will hold a workshop on Feral Dove trap making. Come along to learn how to make a feral dove trap for your own backyard! We will be making the example trap shown on the Parks and Wildlife Feral Dove information sheet, however alternative trap models will also be discussed. There will also be the opportunity to discuss ways GfW members can collaboratively reduce the number of feral doves in Alice Springs. Tangentyere Nursery has kindly donated materials, although feel free to bring stuff from home. The

workshop will be held at Lot 1858 Heffernan Rd. (enter off Brunonia Rd), with a 9am start.

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