



ESTABLISHING NATIVE BIRD HABITAT IN YOUR GARDEN



Collectively, domestic gardens constitute one of the largest areas of vegetation remaining within our man-made landscapes and are therefore vitally important as potential refuges for native birds and other wildlife. While we do have a diverse range of native birds in our urbanised environments, there has also been a noticeable change in the make-up of species and types of birds which use our gardens. Small native birds such as the Red-browed Finch and Superb Fairy-wren are becoming less common, replaced by more dominant and aggressive species such as the Noisy Miner, Pied Currawong and the Rainbow Lorikeet. This indicates that gardens are not always bird friendly, and that birds are often exposed to a wide range of challenging conditions, and potentially harmful disturbances.

Understanding the resource needs of native birds will help you to develop suitable habitats in the garden. This fact sheet will provide you with useful hints on how you can maximise your garden's potential to support a healthy native bird community.

THINGS YOU CAN DO....

- **Assess your garden. Consider:**

What vegetation currently exists?

Which bird species do you want to attract?

What kind of habitat and resources do they require? E.g. food, shelter, nesting site & materials

- **Use local native plant species**

Plants which occur naturally in your area will be more successful as they are adapted to local conditions and have existing relationships with local fauna

- **Develop structural diversity in your garden**

Choose for variety and complexity. A diverse range of plants with a mix of native herbs, shrubs and trees will provide a range of habitats and resources for the local bird community.

- **Reduce lawn area**

Exotic species such as the Indian myna prefer a simplistic garden structure, which is open and devoid of dense shrubbery. Converting lawn into garden will also reduce lawn mowing and maintenance.

- **Build and maintain nest boxes**

Nest boxes can provide hollowing-dwelling native birds with much needed shelter. Ensure your box is built to be Indian myna-proof and is regularly maintained.

- **Provide a bird bath**

Ensure baths are kept clean and maintained regularly.

THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID....

- **Feeding birds**

The birds we feed are usually already dominant species which do not need help finding food. It is much more beneficial to establish a garden with a diverse range of native plants which can provide natural food resources for an array of native birdlife.

- **Planting exotic species**

*Plant species such as Cocos Palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) are ideal habitat for feral animals such as the Indian Myna and Common Rat. Many attractive local plant alternatives are available (refer overleaf).*

- **Planting hybrid natives**

Many of the large-flowered hybrid varieties of Grevilleas encourage large and aggressive honeyeaters such as the Noisy Miner and Red Wattlebird. Selecting non-hybrid species which produce smaller flowers will attract less common nectar feeders to your garden.

- **Over-clearing vegetation**

Remove weeds from your garden in gradual stages to minimise disturbance. Ensure there are existing established patches of intact vegetation before clearing large areas. Many birds will abandon a garden if shelter is inadequate.

- **Feeding pets outside**

Feeding your pet dog or cat indoors will reduce the amount of available food for pests such as the Indian Myna bird. Chooks and rabbits can also be fed inside their enclosure to discourage opportunistic scavengers.

Requirements of many local birds

Bird Type	Habitat Preference	Recommended Local Plant Species (Clarence Valley)
Large Nectar Feeders Honeyeaters and some parrots e.g. Noisy miner, Little wattlebirds, Rainbow and Scaly-breasted lorikeets	Shrubs and trees for foraging, perching and nesting. Some also require hollows for nesting	Paperbark (<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> , <i>M. alternifolia</i>), Banksia (<i>B. spinulosa</i> , <i>B. ericifolia</i> <i>B. integrifolia</i>), Willow-leaved Hakea (<i>H. salicifolia</i>), Eucalyptus most species.
Small Nectar Feeders Honeyeaters e.g. Eastern spinebill, New Holland honeyeater, Brown honeyeater	Spend most time foraging and perching in shrubs, but also use trees. Generally nest in dense shrubs	Linear-leaf Grevillea (<i>Grevillea humilis</i>), Honey Myrtle (<i>Melaleuca thymifolia</i>), Coastal Beard-heath (<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>), Common Correa (<i>Correa reflexa</i>)
Seed Eaters Parrots, finches and pigeons e.g. Eastern rosella, Pale-headed rosella, Common bronzewing, Red-browed finch, Double-barred finch, Chestnut-breasted manikin	Utilise shrubs and trees for perching, nesting and foraging, but also forage on mature grasses	Trees & shrubs: Wattles (<i>Acacia fimbriata</i> , <i>A. suaveolens</i>), Forest Oak (<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i>), Tea Trees (<i>Leptospermum brachyandrum</i> , <i>L. polygalifolium</i>) Grasses: Wiry Panic (<i>Entolasia stricta</i>), Basket Grass (<i>Opismenus aemulus</i>), Wire Grass (<i>Aristida</i> sp.), Plumegrass (<i>Dichelachne crinita</i>), Hedgehog Grass (<i>Echinopogon</i> sp), Weeping Grass (<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>), Kangaroo Grass (<i>Themeda australis</i>)
Fruit Eaters Pigeons and Cuckoos e.g. Wonga pigeon, Common koel, Silvereye, Satin bowerbird	Trees and shrubs for shelter and protection.	Figs (<i>Ficus fraseri</i> , <i>F. rubiginosa</i>), Lillypillis (<i>Syzygium most species & Acmena most species</i>), Blueberry Ash (<i>Eleocarpus reticulatus</i>), Walking-stick Palm (<i>Linospadix monostachya</i>)
Insect Eaters e.g. Superb fairy-wren, Eastern yellow robin, Spotted & Striated pardalotes, Willie wagtail	Dense shrubs important for protection and nest sites, as well as some open areas for foraging. Insects and invertebrates found in bark and foliage, as well as on the ground	Mat Rush (<i>Lomandra hystrix</i> , <i>L. longifolia</i>), Banksia sp, Tea Tree sp, Hakea sp, Guinea Flower (<i>Hibbertia scandens</i> , <i>H. dentata</i>), Coastal Beard-heath (<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>)
Meat Eaters e.g. Laughing kookaburra, Grey & Pied butcherbirds, Currawongs, Powerful owl, Black-shouldered kite, Peregrine falcon	Tall trees for perching, roosting and nesting. Some require hollows for nesting. Food source includes other birds, reptiles, frogs, small mammals and invertebrates	Eucalypts, Paperbarks, Figs, Tukeroo (<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>), <i>Guioa</i> (<i>Guioa semiglauc</i>), Native Frangipani (<i>Hymenosporum flavum</i>)

Adapted from "Guidelines for the Development of Bird Habitat", *Birds in Backyards*

Do You Have a Native Bird Friendly Garden?



A garden with simple structure and species composition containing exotic Cocos palms and open lawn – the preferred habitat of feral birds such as the Common or Indian Myna.



A garden with complex structure, containing a diverse mix of local natives which provides ample shelter and natural food resources for native wildlife.