

COMMONLY SEEN BIRDS

BIRD WATCHING THOUGHTS

If you wish to become more aware of the infinite number of birds around here, get a good bird identification book like ***The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*** by Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight. The latter is the man who painted all the birds from real specimens and his paintings are the most accurate you will ever find in a field guide and Pizzey was the expert on Australian birds all his life. Other good books are Michael Morcombe's ***Field Guide to Australian Birds*** - pictures not as good as Knight's, but good info and an excellent section in the back for the nests and eggs of each bird! Some folk like Simpson and Day's field guide, others Slater's- but if you want accurate pictures, then Pizzey and Knight is the one for you.

If you want to really go nuts, and just love eggs and nests of birds, try ***Australian Birds their Nests and Eggs*** by Gordon Beruldsen. This is really a concise bit of work on this subject, illustrated and described fully.

A pair of binoculars are extremely handy and so is a camera - even mobiles have pretty good ability for great shots.

Keeping a list of what birds you see and what month you saw them in is a great idea as you can start to get a picture of when to expect birds (if migratory or seasonal) and note anything of interest (like, how come they never turned up here this year?!) You could start a blog!

And if you are really, really keen, you can join up with **Birds Australia** and become an Altasser and help record the status of bird species around Australia and learn all sorts of interesting stuff. Check it out on www.birdlife.org.au

OR just sit around, musing about life in whatever way you like and enjoy seeing the lovely things doing their stuff in our environment - VERY satisfying.

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The ubiquitous **BRUSH** or **SCRUB TURKEY!**

This grunting, “throat-clearing” bird is a survivor who has been around for a long, long time on this planet - nothing seems to faze it. Not a great flier, yet flaps up ungainly into trees to eat (especially bananas!) and to roost for the night.

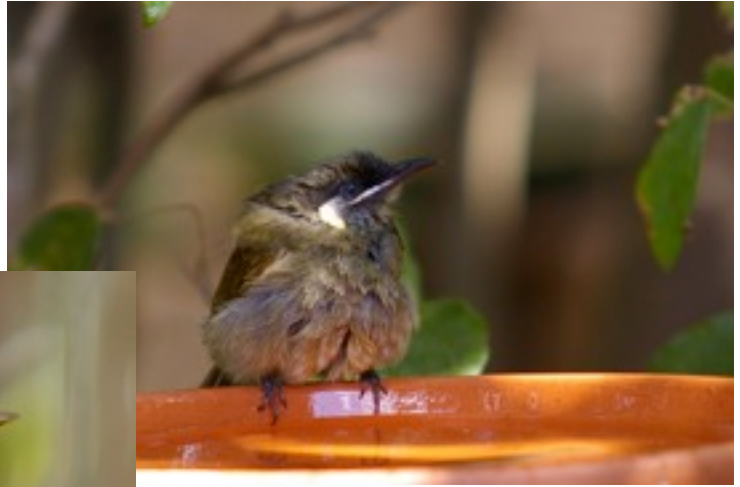
It has no respect for any plantings if there are some “moving things” in the soil it likes to eat, so be aware if planning veggie gardens!

The male is the huge mound builder and regulates the temperature of the mound (average size about 4m across and 1-2 m high) by sticking his beak in and then adding or taking away leaves etc, to get the mound to the right temperature suitable for egg laying. There is often a big increase in local populations at breeding time (May-Nov) as the females come around to check out the suitability of the nest. During breeding periods the males develop huge, bright yellow wattles and you see them parading around to impress the females to check out their nest building style. Females, as usual in the bird world, appear much daggier looking and don't develop any wattles - no need to impress anyone?! Eggs are laid and the hatchling, about 7 weeks later, makes its way unaided from the mound and instantly fends for itself, no parents or relies around to guide or instruct them (do we have something to learn from Brush Turkeys!) They just know what to do and how to survive and have done so, unchanged for millennia. They may drive you crazy as you try to organise veggie gardens and they insist on digging them up with their powerful feet, but you do have to admire their survival skills and tenacity to survive- sometimes!



COMMONLY SEEN BIRDS
LEWIN'S HONEYEATER

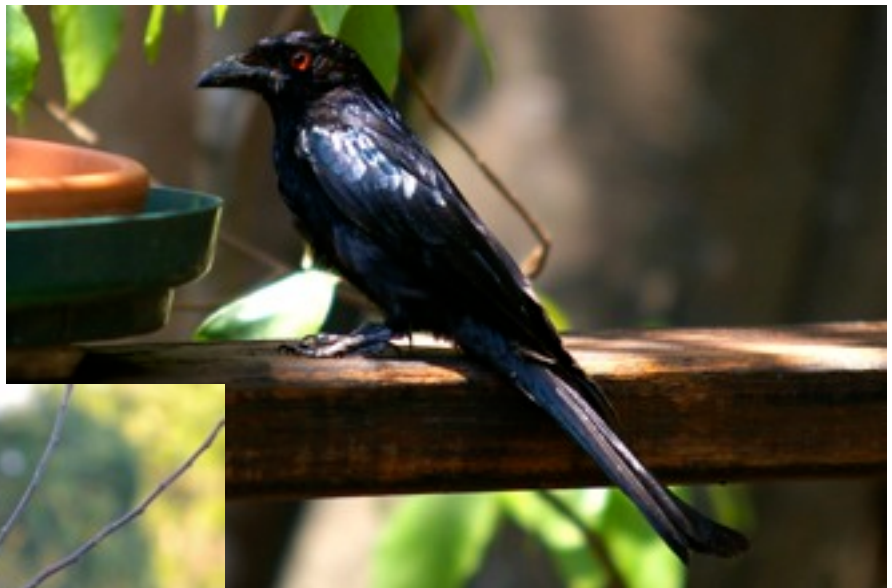
The most common honeyeater here. Easily picked out by its rapid machine gun-like call during the day and one of the earliest in the Dawn Chorus. It is fairly bold and feels comfortable around the place. Eats fruit, anything sweet (being a honeyeater!) and sometimes helps clear those cobwebs away as it flutters up high picking off those insects on your verandahs (doesn't do the job well enough though!) left behind by the spiders.



(wet baby above, daintily sipping adult to left)

The Spangled Drongo

Not always around in the year as it is a summer breeding migratory bird from Cape York, arriving sometime in spring. A distinctive flicking fishtail as it settles and that sharp



red eye makes this bird easy to spot. Also making him obvious are some weird calls, including one like a tight fence wire being twanged. Lots of noisy sharp, tearing sounds, rasps, and rackety chattering.

If you have troubles with those orange bugs

on your citrus, these guys just love them. So be happy when they turn up!

Note the fishtail here and also the metallic greenish sheen that is visible at times when the light is right. The head/ tail is a dull black, but the wings/ tail is more glossy. The "spangles" refers to the highly reflective iridescent green/blue spots through its feathers.

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The Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo.



Here doing its favourite activity - tearing at the sapwood of old trees to get those yummy white grubs out. They feed also on seed capsules of species of *Casuarina*, *Eucalypt*, *Banksias* and *Hakea* and exotic pines of all sorts. You actually hear them tearing and dropping bark as they feed! Big and noisy!

They are seasonally migratory or nomadic and are most widespread here in autumn-winter. When they turn up their squealing voices can be heard from afar as they fly in flocks, pairs or families searching for food.