



GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
QUEENSLAND



*Birds of the Fernberg Estate*





## Foreword

Through this delightful guide, I am very pleased to introduce you to the established avian residents of the Government House Estate and to some of the nomads who visit this inner-city sanctuary to rest, feed or breed.

Over the many years since *Fernberg* and its surrounding bushland first became the Government House estate in 1910, Governors of Queensland and their families, together with Government House staff, have contributed to the gathering information on the flora and fauna of the estate.

Sir John and Lady Goodwin took a particularly strong interest, having the estate declared a Sanctuary for Animals and Birds in the 1920s. In the early 1990s, another vice-regal couple, Sir Walter and Lady Campbell, oversaw the design and construction of The Ponds which have become a vital waterbird habitat.

As one of the few original bushland reserves in metropolitan Brisbane, the *Fernberg* estate is an important breeding and nesting site and safe rest area for many native bird species. Government House staff today take great pride in continuing the legacy of past Governors and staff in presenting, conserving, and actively managing the 14 hectares of natural bushland and formal grounds so that more than 60 species identified in this booklet have an appropriate and sustainable habitat, now and into the future.

In the years since the first edition of *Birds of the Fernberg Estate* was launched in June 2016, nine new species have visited or raised chicks on the estate, due in part to the installation and surveillance of nesting boxes in safe locations.

As current custodians of this wonderful, heritage-listed estate, Kaye and I are very pleased to see the publication of a second edition of this guide and trust you enjoy exploring this peaceful reserve with it in hand.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul de Jersey".

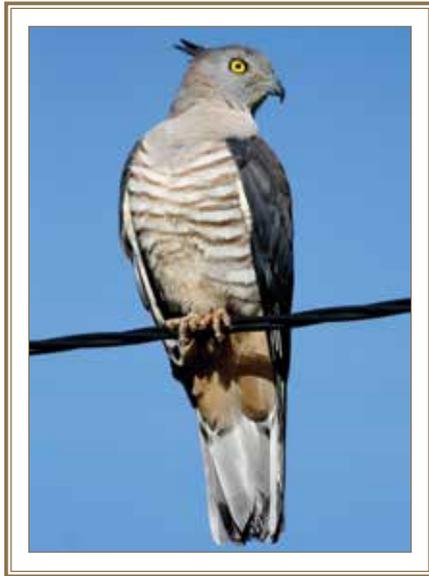
*His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC*  
Governor of Queensland





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## *Baza, Pacific*

*(Aviceda subcristata)*

**A medium sized (35–45 cm), long tailed, bar-bellied hawk with a small crest and mainly grey/brown wings.**

The Pacific Baza or Crested Hawk is found in small flocks in tropical and sub-tropical forests, woodlands, farmlands and urban areas. They eat larger insects and frogs, their slow wingbeats giving them a distinctive stealth advantage which does not alarm prey.



## *Boobook, Southern*

*(Ninox boobook)*

**A small owl (25–36 cm) with large yellowish eyes, distinctive pale ‘eyebrows’, and heavily streaked and spotted chocolate brown feathers.**

So-called because of its voice, the Boobook or Mopoke is the smallest and most common of the Australian owls (the female is larger than the male). They prefer eucalypt forests and are found throughout Australia and on islands to the north, including Timor and New Guinea. They are carnivores, hunting at night for small mammals, birds and invertebrates, and are very skilled, silent fliers, catching most of their prey on the wing. A family of ‘Mopokes’ has resident status in the wooded areas on the Government House estate.



## Brush-turkey, Australian

(*Alectura lathami*)

**A medium-sized (60–70 cm) black megapode (mound-builder) with a bare red head, yellow wattles, and a vertically flattened tail, like a ship's rudder.**

Found along the east coast from Cape York to Sydney, Brush-turkeys have stout legs with powerful claws which the male uses to scratch up earth and leaves into an incubating mound, typically four metres across and a metre high. A male can have up to a dozen females lay eggs in 'his' nest, but the fertilised females test the temperature of the nest repeatedly until satisfied that the nest is at the correct temperature before laying. Once hatched, the chicks fend for themselves. Government House records note that there were no Brush-turkeys on the *Fernberg* estate in the 1970s. Professor Darryl Jones, Griffith University's School of Environment and Science, reports that, in the early 1980s, they were uncommon because they had been shot as game birds for many years until blanket protection of all native species was introduced in the 1970s. From the small population in Brisbane's far western suburbs in the 1980s, they rapidly expanded their number and range, aided by the popularity of native and rainforest garden styles in homes and public spaces. The gazebo near the ponds on the Government House estate features a whimsical roof-top wind-vane in the shape of a Brush-turkey.



## Butcherbird, Grey

(*Cracticus torquatus*)

**A small (24–32 cm) white-throated butcherbird with a grey back and a greyish wash to the underparts.**

The Grey Butcherbird is found throughout southern Australia and in most of Queensland, inhabiting timbered farmland, parks and gardens, woodland and urban areas. It feeds on mice, lizards, snakes, insects and nestlings. Its call is vigorous, melodious piping and soft mimicry, particularly during rain. The male bird is larger than the female and the nest is an untidy cup of twigs lined with grass, usually in a fork of a sapling.



## *Butcherbird, Pied*

*(Cracticus nigrogularis)*

**A medium-sized (32–36 cm) black and white pied bird with a black throat, head and neck, white underbelly, and black and white wings.**

The Pied Butcherbird lives in small family groups in timbered farmland, parks and open woodland throughout Australia, except for Tasmania and most of Victoria (present in the north-west). It will accept food from humans, but usually feeds on mice, reptiles, insects and nestlings of other species, earning the name 'butcher' from its practice of impaling large prey on a broken branch or wedging it into a tree-fork in order to tear it apart. Its song consists of beautiful fluting and piping as well as mimicry.

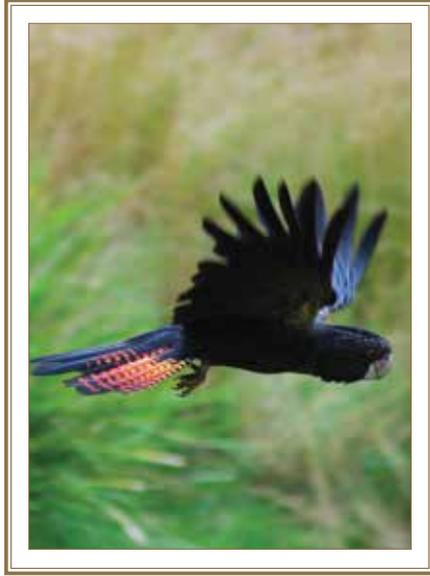


## *Button-quail, Painted*

*(Turnix varius)*

**A large (17–23 cm) button-quail with reddish shoulder patches, heavily mottled back, and a fine, black bill.**

Button-quails are less bulky and have a larger head than true quails (*Coturnix* spp.). Found in open forest and on stony ridges in the south-east and east of mainland Australia, they generally remain hidden, running when disturbed or flying rapidly to cover, zig-zagging through the trees. Their well-hidden nest is a lined scrape under a grass clump or a fallen branch, and they have a low, booming call.

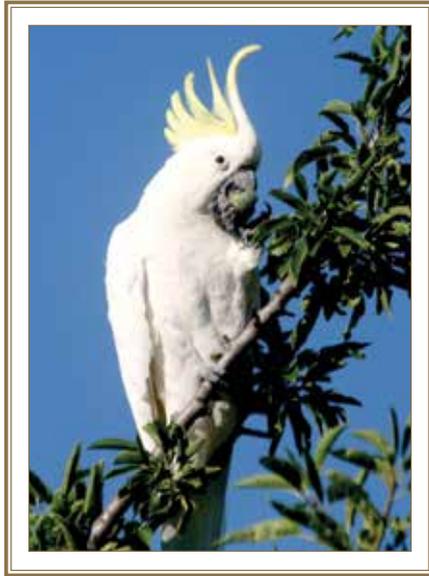


## Cockatoo, Red-tailed Black-

*(Calyptorhynchus banksii)*

**A large glossy black cockatoo (50–65 cm) with a large crest, striking red or barred orange feathers under the tail (male and female respectively).**

Flying in flocks with a slow, funereal wingbeat, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos have a harsh, metallic call. They are commonly seen and heard in the woodlands in the north and north-east of Australia and along wooded watercourses in arid country. They feed on gum-nuts, seeds and bark, and nest in hollow limbs of eucalypts. Hatchlings take three months to leave the nest.



## Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested

(*Cacatua galerita*)

**A large white cockatoo (44–50 cm) with a long yellow crest, yellow patches under the wings, and a distinctive, raucous call.**

Usually seen in noisy flocks, the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo is common in wooded habitats in northern and eastern Australia, including Tasmania, and is often seen in the tops of eucalypts on the Government House estate and in tree hollows during the nesting season. It feeds on seeds, roots, grains and nuts, usually foraged off the ground, and while it is considered a pest by grain farmers, it is a popular family pet. Individuals have been known to live for 90 years and one former pet from the Paddington area, released in the mid-1980s, was often seen near the estate.



## Corella, Little

(*Cacatua sanguinea*)

**A large (38–41 cm) white cockatoo with a short white crest, long bill, and pale pink feathers near the eye but little or no pink showing on the throat (cf. Long-billed Corella).**

Like all cockatoos, Corellas have a loud, screeching call and often occur in large noisy flocks. Much of their food is taken on the ground but they nest in tree hollows. The Little Corella is common in eastern, western and northern Australia and often found in cities on golf courses and in parks.

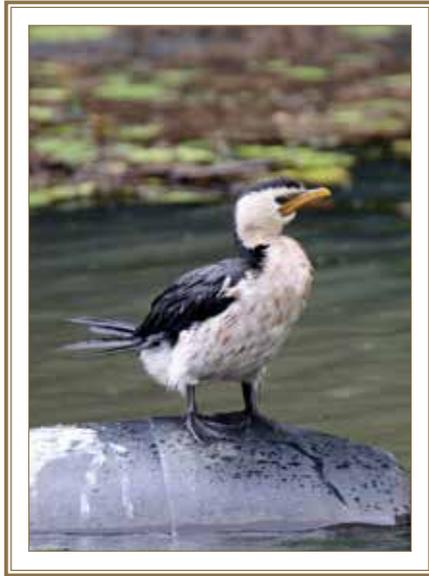


## Cormorant, Little Black

(*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

**A small (55–65 cm) glossy black cormorant with a black face and a long bill.**

The Little Black Cormorant is found in rivers, lakes, dams, creeks, swamps and reservoirs throughout Australia, except in the most arid areas, sharing their range with the Little Pied Cormorant. They feed predominantly on fish, crustaceans and aquatic insects, sometimes swimming in large flocks, rounding up shoals of fish. They build bulky stick nests in colonies in trees over water, and fly in a V formation.

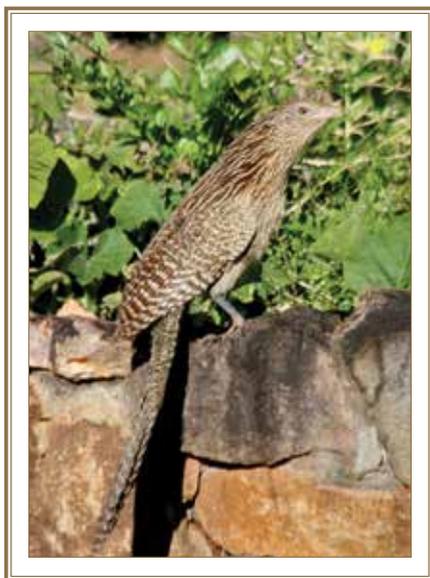


## *Cormorant, Little Pied*

*(Microcarbo melanoleucos)*

**A small (50–64 cm) black and white pied cormorant with a yellow or brownish-yellow bill, a white face, neck and belly, and black wings.**

The Little Pied Cormorant is widely distributed, sharing its range and food sources with the Little Black Cormorant. Unlike the Little Black Cormorant, it is often solitary and does not fly in a V formation.

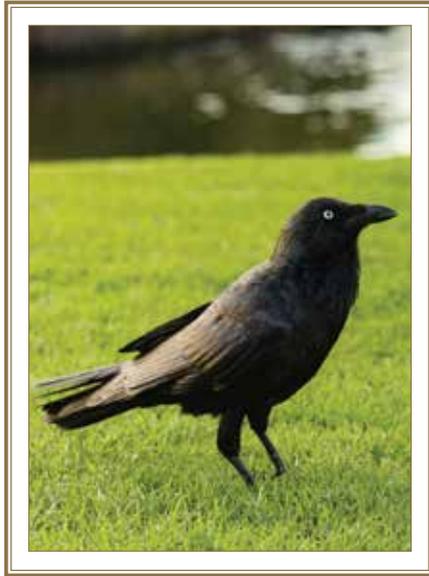


## Coucal, Pheasant

*(Centropus phasianinus)*

**A large (50–80 cm) long-tailed cuckoo with a black or brown body and rufous barred wings and tail.**

The Pheasant Coucal is a common resident in long grass in woodland in north-western, northern and eastern Australia. It feeds on insects, frogs, lizards, bird eggs and sometimes small mammals, and is usually seen running across the road or (in wet weather) perched on a fencepost or dead tree near long grass. Its distinctive call is a deep, hollow 'oop oop oop oop'. While it belongs to the cuckoo family, it is the only Australian cuckoo to build its own nest — a grass cup, concealed in long grass. Unlike other cuckoos, it also incubates its own eggs and feeds its young.



## Crow, Torresian

(*Corvus orru*)

**A large (48–53 cm) glossy-black corvid with white eyes.**

The Torresian Crow is difficult to distinguish from the Australian Raven, but the Raven has specialised hackle feathers on the throat and its call is less nasal. The Crow is very common throughout the northern half of the Australian continent, living in most habitats and feeding on various small creatures and insects. Because it also eats carrion, it is sometimes referred to as 'God's little dustman'.

RESIDENT

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## Cuckoo, Brush

*(Cacomantis variolosus)*

**A medium-sized (22–26 cm) grey-headed cuckoo with a pale breast, grey eye-ring, and slightly down-curved beak with unusual, slightly-raised, circular nostrils.**

The Brush Cuckoo usually sits unobtrusively, attracting attention by its rising call which becomes progressively louder and more persistent. It is found in northern and eastern Australia from Derby in WA to Melbourne. Like parrots, cuckoos have two forward-facing and two backward-facing toes, but, unlike parrots, they do not use their feet to hold food. Like other cuckoos, Brush Cuckoos parasitise the nests of other species.



## Cuckoo, Channel-billed

(*Scythrops novaehollandiae*)

**A large grey cuckoo (58–67 cm) with long wings and tail, barring on the rump and tail, red skin around the eye, and a heavy, curved bill.**

A common migrant in spring and summer, the Channel-billed Cuckoo inhabits tall trees, feeding on figs, small fruits and leaves. They parasitise the nests of other large birds (including the crows at Government House), depending on the hosts to raise their young. Described in 'The Slater Field Guide' as 'a flying walking stick', the Channel-billed Cuckoo is also distinctive for its loud, raucous call and is often seen being chased by crows.



## *Cuckoo, Fan-tailed*

*(Cacomantis flabelliformis)*

**A slender cuckoo (24–28 cm) with dark, slate-grey back and wings, a boldly barred black and white under-tail, and a striking, yellow eye-ring.**

Like most other Australian cuckoos, the Fan-tailed Cuckoo is known as a “brood parasite”, laying a single egg in the nest of an unsuspecting host bird, after removing one of its eggs. It particularly enjoys hairy caterpillars but also eats a variety of other insects and larvae, locating its prey from an exposed perch and catching it in flight or on the ground.



## Cuckoo, Shining Bronze

(*Chalcites lucidus*)

**A small (15–18 cm) cuckoo with iridescent green plumage and barred underparts.**

The Bronze-cuckoo is the world's smallest cuckoo and occurs in two forms. The Shining form, seen at Government House, is a common migrant which breeds in New Zealand and visits forests and woodlands in the east and south-west of mainland Australia and Tasmania. The Golden form breeds in Australia and chiefly parasitises the nests of gerygones (warblers), thornbills and scrubwrens.



## Currawong, Pied

(*Strepera graculina*)

**A large (41–51 cm) black currawong with yellow eyes and white in the wing, rump and undertail coverts and at the base and tip of the tail.**

The Pied Currawong is a common nomad or migrant in eastern Australia, from Cape York to south-western Victoria, inhabiting woodlands, farmlands and suburbs, and often seen in flocks of up to 100 birds. They feed on insects, small creatures, berries and nestlings of other species and have also become very tame, readily accepting food from humans. They are distinguished from magpies by their distinctive call ('curra-wong') and by their characteristic, looping wing-beats, often closing their wings in flight.



## Dollarbird

(*Eurystomus orientalis*)

**A red-billed roller (25–30 cm) with blue-green back and wing coverts, dark blue flight feathers, a bluish-white ‘dollar’ window on its wings, a grey/brown head, and a black-tipped pink bill. (Immature birds have a black bill.)**

The Dollarbird is a migrant from Papua New Guinea, commonly seen from September to April in forest and woodland in northern and eastern Australia. It can be seen sitting on tall dead trees or telephone wires, frequently flying out to hawk for insects. (It is the sole Australian representative of the Roller family, so named because of their rolling courtship display flight.)



## Drongo, Spangled

*(Dicrurus bracteatus)*

**A small black drongo (28–32 cm) with iridescent blue ‘spangles’ on the breast, bright red eyes, and elongated tail feathers curling outwards, giving a ‘fish-tail’ effect.**

Found on the north and east coasts of Australia in forests, parks and suburban gardens, this is the only Drongo species in Australia. It is a noisy and obvious bird with a loud, harsh call, frequent tail-flicking when perched, and an erratic, darting flight. It hawks on flying insects and also feeds on nectar. It builds a neat, cup-shaped nest of twigs and tendrils, suspended from the end of an outer tree branch. The common name is originally from the indigenous language of Madagascar, where it refers to local species. It has nothing to do with the celebrated Australian slang term for a ‘no-hoper’ or fool — that purportedly derives from a racehorse of that name in the 1920s that failed to win a single race out of 37 starts.



## *Duck, Australian Wood*

*(Chenonetta jubata)*

**A greyish duck (44–60 cm) with a brown, maned head, and black undertail coverts. The female has distinctive pale eye stripes.**

The Australian Wood Duck is found in swamps, lakes, dams and ponds throughout Australia, except in the most arid of places. It prefers to feed on seeds and grasses on the edges of waterways, and nests in a hole in a tree, lined with down. The species frequently raises ducklings on the estate. Because of its mane, it is also known as the maned duck and as the maned goose because of its goose-like stance. It is the only living species in the genus *Chenonetta*.



## Duck, Pacific Black

(*Anas superciliosa*)

**A large (47–61 cm) dark duck with two characteristic dark lines on a buff face, and a green or purple speculum (colour patch) on the wings.**

The Pacific Black Duck is arguably Australia's most common duck. It is a resident or nomad on wetlands throughout the continent, except for some desert areas in south-east Western Australia. It feeds on plants and grass and builds a down-lined nest in a tree hollow or a grass cup in grass or reeds. The species frequently breeds successfully on the estate.



## Duck, White-eyed (Hardhead)

(*Aythya australis*)

**A streamlined brown diving duck (41–60 cm) with a dark head, white-tipped bill and white patch under the tail. The male has a white eye and the female a dark eye.**

Commonly known as the 'Hardhead', the White-eyed Duck is found throughout Australia in deep-water streams, ponds or swamps. It is a bottom feeder, diving for vegetation and fish, and is Australia's only true diving duck (pochard). Usually silent, it has a soft 'quack' and its nest is a neat, well-hidden cup of reeds and other waterside vegetation. During one period of prolonged drought, Hardheads visited the Government House ponds where they rested for three weeks before leaving. They have never returned.



## *Eagle, Wedge-tailed*

*(Aquila audax)*

**A large (90–110 cm) brown or black eagle with a long, wedge-shaped tail and fully feathered legs. (Colour darkens with age.)**

The Wedge-tailed Eagle is Australia's largest raptor, with a wing span of up to 2.8 metres. It is found across the country except in rain forests, and feeds on small animals and reptiles as well as other birds, and is often seen feeding on roadside carrion. It makes an enormous stick nest in a large tree and lays between one and three large white eggs. Its tail is distinctive in flight and it can soar to great heights (2,000 m) on upswept wings. A Wedge-tail has visited Government House, roosting in the tall eucalypts, and was accompanied by a juvenile on one occasion. The species is often seen soaring above the estate in early spring.

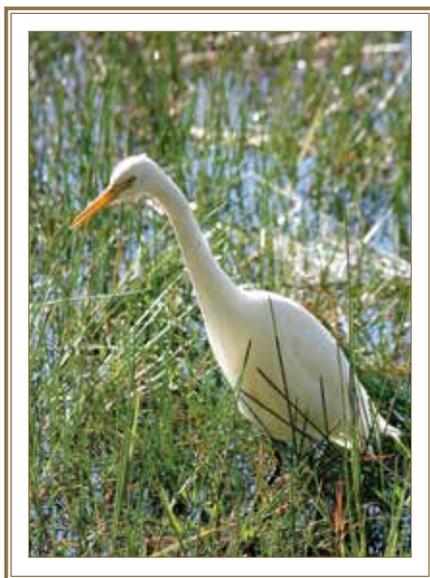


## Egret, Eastern Cattle

*(Bubulcus coromandus)*

**A relatively small, white egret (48–53 cm), distinguished from other species during the breeding season by its orange-buff crown, neck, breast, and long neck plumes, and by its bright red beak and legs.**

A gregarious bird, the Cattle Egret is a citizen of the world, found on every continent except Antarctica. First found in Australia in 1948, it is now commonly seen in wetland areas such as The Ponds on the Fernberg estate or on farmland, foraging with grazing stock. It earned its name from its habit of perching on the backs of grazing cattle or following them to catch the insects they disturb as they move. Cattle Egret pairs are monogamous for the breeding season and both parents share responsibility for building the nest and incubating the eggs.



## Egret, Intermediate

(*Ardea intermedia*)

**A large yellow-beaked white heron (55–70 cm) which develops a red bill and fine plumes on the back and breast in the breeding season.**

The Intermediate Egret is found throughout eastern Australia and significant coastal areas of the Northern Territory, but is absent from most arid areas. It feeds in shallow wetlands and the shallows of inland rivers and lakes and tends to stand straight (unlike the Great Heron which often stands with its neck in the 'question mark' position). Plumed Egret (*Ardea plumifera*) has recently emerged as an alternative name.



## Fairy-wren, Superb

(*Malurus cyaneus*)

**A tiny (15 cm) species of warbler, the male of which has a striking blue cap, ear coverts and tail which gave the species its name 'cyaneus' ('blue'). Non-breeding males are grey-brown like the females, but are distinguishable by their black beak.**

Voted the winner of Birdlife Australia's inaugural competition to name Australia's favourite bird, the Superb Fairy-wren is one of 11 Fairy-wren species endemic to Australia and New Guinea and is common and familiar throughout eastern Australia, south of the Tropic of Capricorn. They are usually seen in the dense understorey in places such as the Camellia Grove on the Fernberg estate where they can forage for insects, protected from predators. New research has revealed that, in common with many songbirds, Fairy-wrens sing to their eggs with the result that the chicks emerge recognising their parents' unique song. The species was once assumed to be monogamous, but DNA research has revealed that up to three quarters of all Fairy-wren broods are sired by males other than the assumed father, earning the species the label of 'least faithful bird in the world'.



## *Fantail, Grey*

*(Rhipidura albiscapa)*

**A small (14–17 cm) grey flycatcher with white throat, white markings over the eye, and a characteristic habit of fanning its tail.**

A very active bird, the Grey Fantail is easily recognised as it constantly hawks for insects and its call is a melodious, sweet chatter. Its nest is a neat cup made from grasses, bark and cobwebs and has an attached 'tail' which may serve to aid run-off in wet weather. It is common throughout Australia.

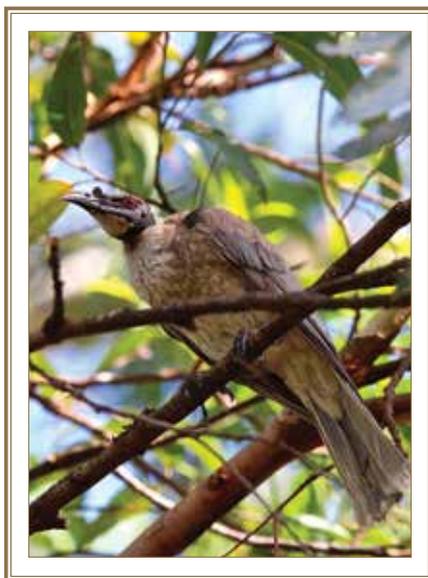


## *Figbird, Australasian*

*(Sphecothebes vieilloti)*

**A large, stocky oriole (27–30 cm) with an olive-green/grey body and a stout bill. The male has a black head and red or pink skin around the eye while the female has more muted colours and grey skin around the eye.**

The sociable Australasian Figbird is a common nomad found in fruit-bearing trees in eastern and northern Australia. It nests in loose colonies, and its sparse cup nests, in the outer branches of fig or paperbark trees, are a common target for cuckoos. Its calls include pleasant warbling and mimicry. There are three races of Figbird, *vieilloti* or the Green Figbird, being predominant in south-east Queensland.



## *Friarbird, Noisy*

*(Philemon corniculatus)*

**A large bird (up to 35 cm) with a distinctive, naked black head, a strong bill with a prominent casque (bump) at the base, dark brown to grey upper parts, off-white underbody, silver-white feathers around the throat and upper breast, and a white-tipped tail.**

Like all friarbirds, the Noisy Friarbird has earned its common name because its bare head is reminiscent of the tonsure of a mediaeval monk, but its scientific name derives from the Latin 'corniculum' – having a little horn – in reference to the casque on its bill. Its bare head has also earned it its alternative common name, Leatherhead, and its characteristic harsh, discordant, honking call gave rise to the epithet, 'noisy'. A member of the honeyeater family, it is widespread in eastern Australia and is conspicuous and active in the outer canopy of flowering trees, especially eucalypts, where noisy flocks often congregate to feed on nectar and insects. The female builds a large, deep cup-shaped nest from bark and grass, bound with spider web.

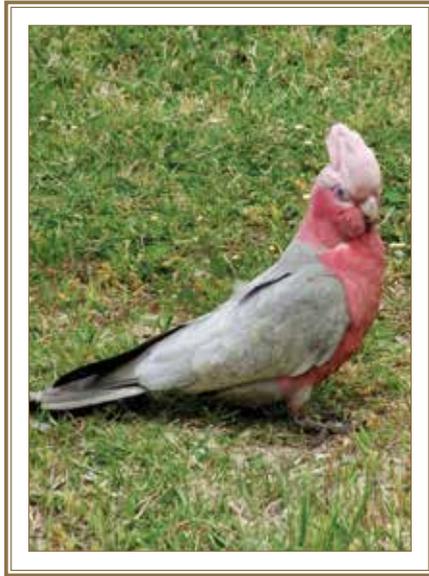


## Frogmouth, Tawny

(*Podargus strigoides*)

**A large bird (32–52 cm) with a powerful, frog-like beak, fiery yellow/orange eyes, and cryptic grey-brown colouration.**

Found Australia-wide, the Tawny Frogmouth is nocturnal, feeding on insects, worms, slugs and snails. Its coloration makes it almost invisible when roosting during the day on tree branches close to the trunk. There are several breeding pairs on the estate.

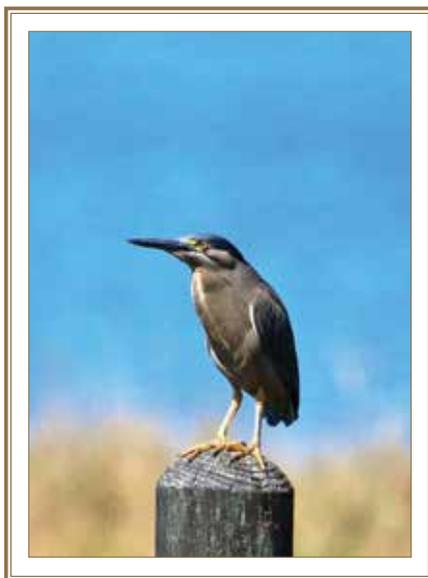


## Galah

*(Eolophus roseicapilla)*

**A small cockatoo (34–38 cm) with a pink body, grey wings and a white crown.**

Common and increasing throughout Australia, Galahs feed and breed on the Government House estate. Flying in loud, noisy flocks, they feed predominantly on seeds and are considered a pest by grain farmers.

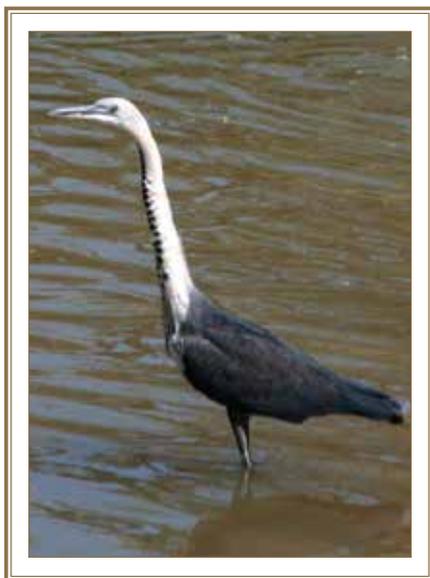


## *Heron, Striated*

*(Butorides striata)*

**A small water bird with a black crown, a small drooping crest, short yellow/orange legs, blue-grey back, face, throat and neck, yellow eyes, and black bill.**

Also known as the Mangrove Heron, the Striated Heron is often regarded as a bittern (a nocturnal heron) but it also hunts in daylight, foraging quietly for fish, crabs and marine invertebrates on mudflats and among mangrove roots in eastern, northern and north-western Australia. It has a characteristic hunched posture with its head and neck drawn closely into the body.



## *Heron, White-necked*

*(Ardea pacifica)*

**A large (75–106 cm), glossy black heron with white neck, spotted down the centre, and with white spots on the leading edge of the wings.**

A long-legged, long-necked waterbird, the White-necked Heron is also known as the Pacific Heron and occurs throughout Australia, feeding in shallow, marshy water but also frequenting rivers, dams, lakes and pastures. It builds an untidy cup of sticks as a nest, laying three to five blue eggs, and may nest in small, loose groups of up to a dozen pairs. Food is regurgitated for the chicks.

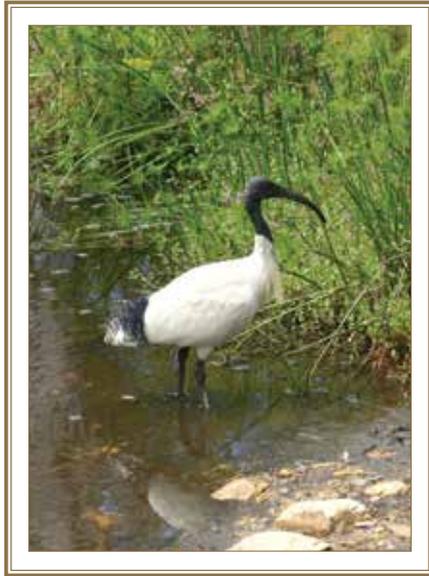


## Honeyeater, Blue-faced

(*Entomyzon cyanotis*)

**A large honeyeater (25–32 cm) with olive-green back, white chest and an extensive area of blue skin around the eye.**

A very sociable and vocal bird, the Blue-faced Honeyeater is common in small noisy flocks in open woodland to the edges of rainforests, mangroves and paperbark swamps in northern and eastern Australia. They feed on insects, spiders and nectar and rarely build their own nests, preferring to lay their eggs in abandoned nests of the Grey-crowned Babbler.



## *Ibis, Australian White*

*(Threskiornis molucca)*

**An ibis (65–76 cm) with almost entirely white body plumage and black head and neck. The head is featherless and the black bill is long and down-curved.**

The Australian White Ibis is common and widespread in swamps, lagoons, floodplains and grasslands in northern and eastern Australia, but it has also become a successful inhabitant of urban parks and gardens. Its food includes terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates and human scraps. The most favoured foods are crayfish and mussels, which the bird obtains by digging with its long bill and hammering them open on a hard surface. The male presents a noisy courtship display on a branch of a tall tree and presents the female with a twig before they preen one another and fly off to build a nest in a large colony, often with the Straw-necked Ibis, *T. spinicollis*.

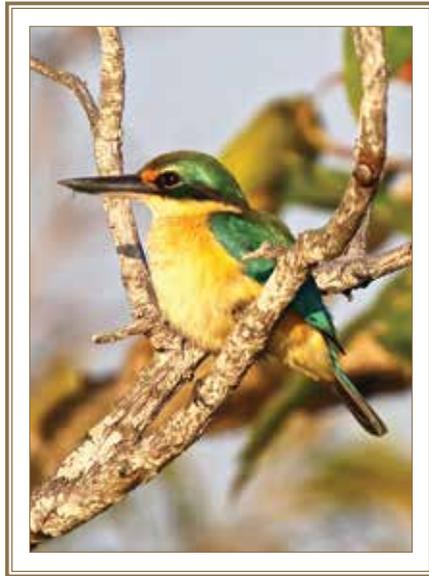


## *Ibis, Straw-necked*

*(Threskiornis spinicollis)*

**A pied ibis (58–76 cm) with a black head, long yellow straw-like plumes on the neck, iridescent black wings and back, white belly, and red legs.**

The Straw-necked Ibis is a great traveller and is found in shallow wetlands and pastoral lands throughout Australia, except for the most arid areas. It feeds in large flocks on grasshoppers, amphibians and small reptiles in pastures and marshes, often together with Sacred Ibis. They build large cup-shaped nests in dense colonies.

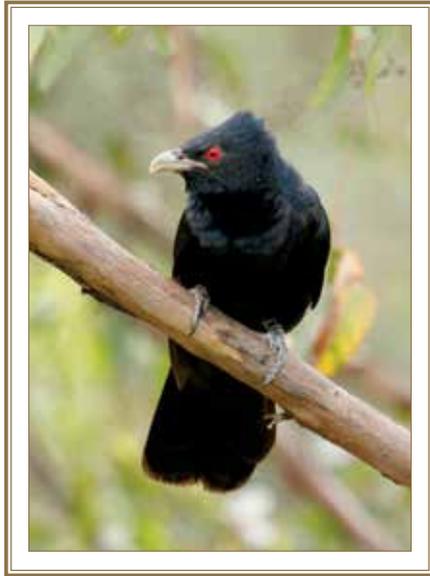


## Kingfisher, Sacred

*(Todiramphus sanctus)*

**A medium-sized (19 to 24 cm) woodland kingfisher with a distinctive turquoise-blue back, rump and tail, buff-white underparts, and a broad black eye stripe extending from the bill to the nape of the neck.**

First described and named almost 200 years ago, the Sacred Kingfisher is common and familiar in the coastal regions of mainland Australia, as well as in New Zealand and on Australasian islands. It was given the name “sacred” (“sanctus”) because Polynesian peoples believed it was a holy bird that controlled the waves. The tall, open eucalypt forest of the *Fernberg* estate is an ideal habitat but it is also found frequently in mangroves and Melaleuca forests. Despite its name, it seldom eats fish, preferring to forage on land where it perches on a low, exposed branch, swooping on small reptiles and insects and catching them in its beak before returning to the perch to eat. Mainly solitary, it pairs only for the breeding season when both male and female excavate a nest in a termite mound, river bank or hollow tree branch.

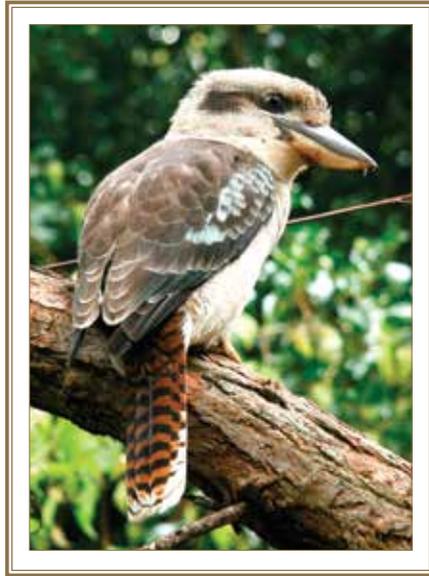


## Koel, Eastern

*(Eudynamys orientalis)*

**A large, long-tailed cuckoo (39–46 cm) which is either black (male) or barred and spotted brown (female), and which has a distinctive red eye.**

A common annual migrant from South East Asia and New Guinea, the Eastern Koel is found from September to March in the rainforest, forest and woodland of northern and eastern Australia where it parasitises the cup-shaped nests of large honeyeaters, orioles and magpie larks. As its loud, repetitive ‘koo-el’ call is often heard before rain, it is also referred to as the Stormbird.

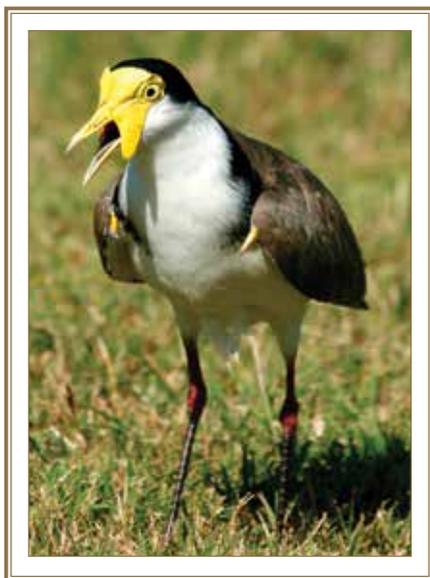


## *Kookaburra, Laughing*

*(Dacelo novaeguineae)*

**A large kingfisher (40–47 cm) with a dark patch behind the eyes and touches of silver-blue on the shoulders.**

Instantly recognised by its distinctive call, the Laughing Kookaburra ranges from Cape York, through most of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. They occur and nest in small parties, wherever there are suitable nesting trees, and are believed to mate for life. There are breeding pairs on the estate. They feed on insects, reptiles and small invertebrates but are also known to eat crustaceans, small mammals, and smaller birds and to accept food from humans.

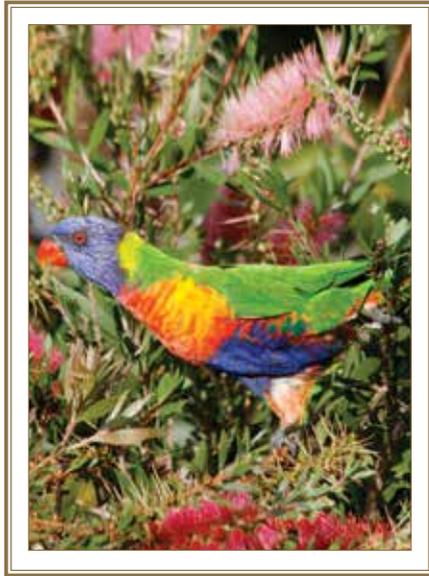


## *Lapwing, Masked*

*(Vanellus miles)*

**A large plover (35–39 cm) with long, dark red legs, noticeable yellow wattles around the eyes, grey back and wings, white chest and underparts, and a black cap.**

This ground-dwelling bird (also known as the Masked or Spur-winged Plover) is widespread across Australia. It feeds on insects, worms and other small creatures and has a wide repertoire of calls. It is best known for its bold nesting habits, creating nests on almost any stretch of open ground, including suburban parks and gardens, school ovals, and even supermarket carparks and flat rooftops. There are breeding pairs on the estate. The nesting pair defend their territory by calling loudly, spreading their wings, swooping fast and low, even striking with their feet, and attacking animals on the ground with the yellow 'spurs' on the wings. They also use tactics such as fiercely protecting a non-existent nest, or a 'distraction display' of hopping on a single leg, to attract a potential predator's attention away from the nest.



## *Lorikeet, Rainbow*

*(Trichglossus moluccanus)*

**A large, blue-headed lorikeet (25–32 cm) with a green back and wings, red or orange breast, and red beak.**

The Rainbow Lorikeet is found in rain forests, open forests, parklands and gardens in northern and eastern Australia and as far as Victoria and South Australia. It feeds on nectar, leaves and seeds in large, noisy, fast-moving flocks, often in company with Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, and nests in unlined tree hollows.



## *Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted*

*(Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus)*

**A medium-sized parrot (22–24 cm) with a long neck, pointed tail and wings, and distinctive green colouring. (It is the only lorikeet with a plain green head and a red bill.)**

Common in forests, woodlands and heaths down the east coast, the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet feeds on nectar and seeds. In common with other nectar-eating lorikeets, it has a brush-tipped tongue and feeds in flocks, often together with Rainbow Lorikeets.

When in flower, the eucalypts and other trees on the Government House Estate attract large noisy congregations of lorikeets. It breeds on the estate.



## Magpie, Australian

(*Cracticus tibicen*)

**A large (34–44 cm) pied bird with black and white plumage, a black bill and feet, a white nape, and a white patch on the wing.**

Several different ‘races’ of the Australian Magpie have developed in forest and woodland areas throughout the continent except in the far north of Cape York and Arnhem Land. Small groups of up to 20 birds occupy and defend a territory, feeding on insects, and small reptiles and invertebrates. They have a loud, melodious warble and are also excellent mimics. In settled areas, they have become very tame, readily accepting food from humans, but are known to be aggressive when nesting.

The nest is an untidy cup of twigs (even wire), lined with grass and other soft material. It breeds on the estate. The alternative classification, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, has recently emerged.



## Magpie-lark

(*Grallina cyanoleuca*)

**A small (26–30 cm) black and white bird with a white bill and eyes, and either a black throat and white eyebrow (male) or white face and throat and no white eyebrow (female).**

The Magpie-lark is found across Australia (except Tasmania where it is rare) in open areas, parks, gardens and backyards, and is usually found foraging on the ground for worms, larvae and insects. They are commonly seen in pairs or small families and build a substantial mud nest on a horizontal branch, windmill or utility pole. It has been observed nesting in a Melaleuca on the island in The Ponds. Its distinctive ‘pee-o-wit’ call has earned it the common name of ‘Peewee’ in Queensland.

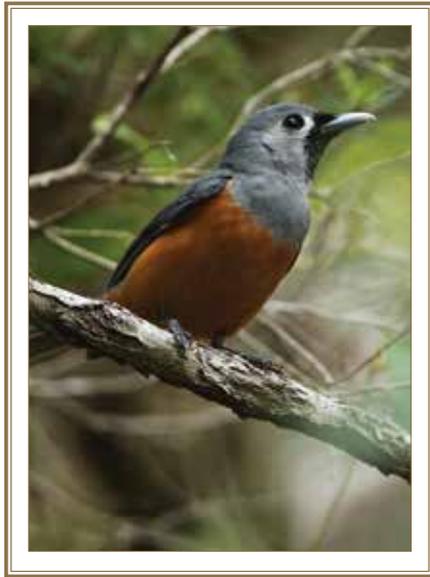


## *Miner, Noisy*

*(Acridotheres tristis)*

**A sociable, grey-brown honeyeater (24–28 cm) with a white forehead, black crown, and yellow bill and eye patch.**

The Noisy Miner is a native Australian bird, common in flocks of up to 30 in eucalypt woodlands down the east coast, as far as South Australia. It feeds on insects and grubs, and builds a sparse, untidy cup-nest of grasses, lined with hair and fur. It has an extensive repertoire of calls, including a lovely pre-dawn song. It is currently threatened by the Common Myna.



## *Monarch, Black-faced*

*(Monarcha melanopsis)*

**A medium-sized (15–20 cm) flycatcher with a black face, rufous belly, grey wings, and a grey tail which is often wagged.**

The Black-faced Monarch has a distinctive, whistler-like call and builds a nest in the fork of a sapling, decorating it beautifully with moss. It is common in rainforest, sclerophyll forests and woodland over eastern Australia from Cape York in Queensland to Dandenong in Victoria.



## Moorhen, Dusky

(*Gallinula tenebrosa*)

**A medium-sized (35–42 cm) dusky brown gallinule (water fowl) with a red facial shield, a thin yellow-tipped bill, and white patches on each side of the undertail.**

The Dusky Moorhen is found in wetlands, marshes, swamplands and dams throughout Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Usually seen swimming close to cover, they often perch in groups on half-submerged logs. They are a communal bird, with groups looking after the large, well-hidden nest in the reeds, and sharing responsibility for feeding the young. The species breeds on the estate, producing numerous chicks in summer.



## Myna, Common

(*Sturnus tristis*)

**A black-headed myna (23–25 cm) with brown body, large white ‘windows’ in the wings, and yellow bill and legs.**

Mynas are related to starlings and were introduced into Australia from India in the 1860s. An aggressive bird, its range now extends up the east coast, often displacing native birds. It inhabits areas around Government House, but has not survived in the grounds.



## Oriole, Olive-backed

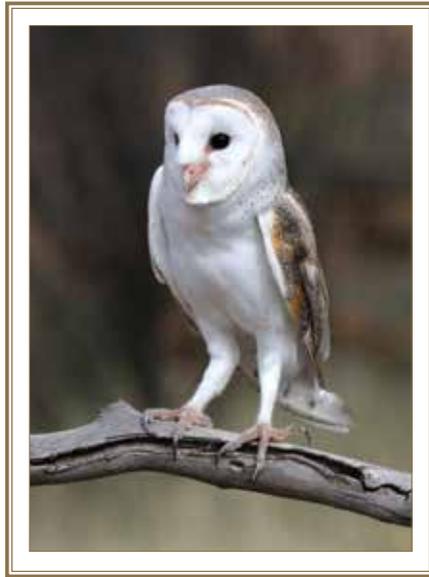
(*Oriolus sagittatus*)

**A medium-sized (26–28 cm) oriole with an olive-green head and back, grey wings and tail, cream underparts streaked with brown, and a distinctive bright red eye and reddish beak.**

One of three Australian species of a world-wide family (Oriolidae), the Olive-backed

Oriole is the noisiest, most conspicuous and most wide-ranging of the three. It is attracted to open woodland like the *Fernberg* estate as well as urban parks and golf courses where there are fruit-bearing trees. It shares this habitat preference with the Australasian Figbird (*Sphecothebes vieilloti* – see page 31) but is readily distinguished

by its red eye and beak. The female builds a cup-shaped nest of bark and grass, bound with spider web and attached by the rim to a horizontal branch, high above the ground. The male does not build the nest or incubate the eggs, but feeds the young once they hatch.



## Owl, Eastern Barn

(*Tyto alba delicatula*)

**A slim, medium-sized owl (28–39 cm) with a characteristic white, heart-shaped facial disc and sandy to grey upperparts and white to cream underparts.**

The Barn Owl is the most widespread and familiar of owls in Australia, its distribution being limited only by the availability of food and suitable habitat. It roosts in hollow logs and prefers dry, open forest such as that found on the *Fernberg* estate. Like all owls of the *Tyto* species, it hunts in flight, locating prey by using its exceptional hearing, enhanced by the facial disc which channels sound waves towards its ears. Its pale feathers and silent flight have also earned it the common names of Ghostbird and Ghost Owl.

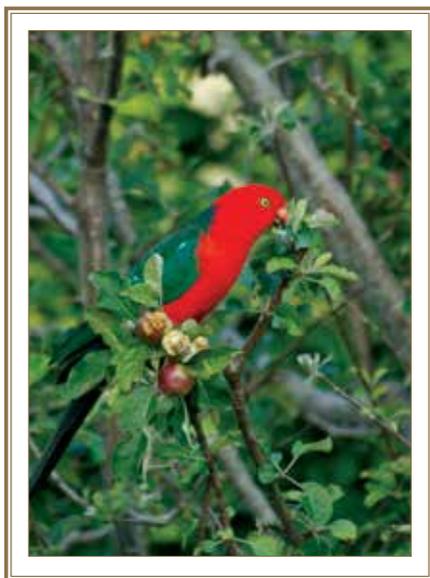


## *Pardalote, Spotted*

*(Pardalotus punctatus)*

**A tiny (8–10 cm) bird with a short tail, red rump, distinct white spots on the back and wings, strong legs, and a stout, blunt bill. Male: bright yellow throat and black crown with white spots; female: more muted coloration.**

One of Australia's smallest birds, the Spotted Pardalote is also known as the diamond bird because of its profuse, bright white spots. ('Pardalote' derives from the Greek word meaning 'spotted'). It is found in east-coast eucalypt forest and woodlands where it finds its favoured food — sap-sucking insects and lerps (the crystal-like honeydew casing created by the insects). It breeds in burrows excavated into creek banks and cliffs and both parents build the nest and sit on the eggs. During the breeding season, their normal, three-note song changes to a repetitive, monotonous call which has earned it the nickname, the Headache Bird.

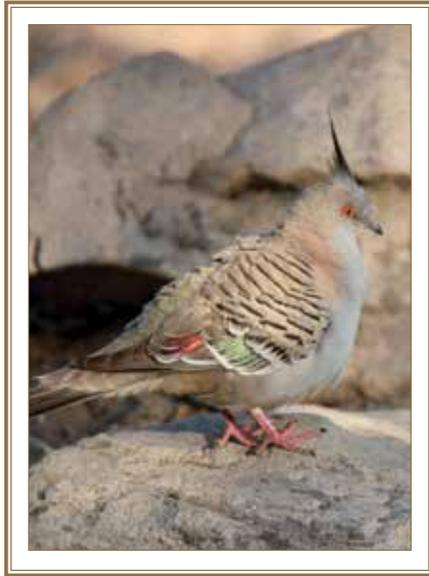


## *Parrot, Australian King*

*(Alisterus scapularis)*

**A large, long-tailed parrot (41–44 cm) with a red belly. Males have a red head and bright green back; females have a brownish-green head and back.**

Found in forests along the east coast, from north Queensland to southern Victoria, the Australian King Parrot is usually seen in small flocks. They breed in Spring/Summer and prefer to nest in hollow, upright trunks, laying three to five eggs.



## Pigeon, Crested

(*Ocyphaps lophotes*)

**A brownish-grey bronzewing (31–35 cm) with a fine, upright crest and distinctive red around the eye. (Bronzewings are ground-feeding pigeons with iridescent patches in the wing feathers.)**

This pigeon is found in grasslands, farmlands, scrublands and suburban areas Australia wide, except for the far northern tip of Cape York and Arnhem Land. It feeds on seeds, grass and split grain and is easily identified by its crest and the distinctive whistle of its wings as it takes flight. It builds a flimsy platform of sticks in a tree as a nest.



## Pigeon, White-headed

(*Columba leucomela*)

**A large pigeon (38–41 cm) with a distinctive white head, neck and breast, dark grey to black back, wings and tail, and a pink to dark red eye ring and legs. The male has a metallic green or purple sheen.**

Shy and wary, the White-headed Pigeon was once shot in great numbers for food and sport, but has recovered exceptionally well since the 1960s when it gained protection from hunting. Its recovery was inadvertently aided by widespread planting of Camphor Laurel trees (*Cinnamomum camphora*), the berries of which quickly became one of the bird's favoured foods. It prefers coastal forest and remnants such as the *Fernberg* estate, but also likes suburban gardens — especially those with Camphor Laurels.



## Quail, Brown

(*Coturnix ypsilophora*)

**A large quail (16–22 cm) with variable plumage but always with finely barred underparts and yellow legs.**

The Brown Quail is found in thick grasslands, scrubland and marshes in most non-arid areas of Australia. When flushed, it jumps high, flies a short distance, and runs with its neck outstretched, giraffe-like. Its nest is a lined scrape in long grass where it lays between four and seven spotted eggs. It breeds year round. The alternative classification, *Synoicus ypsilophorus*, has recently emerged.

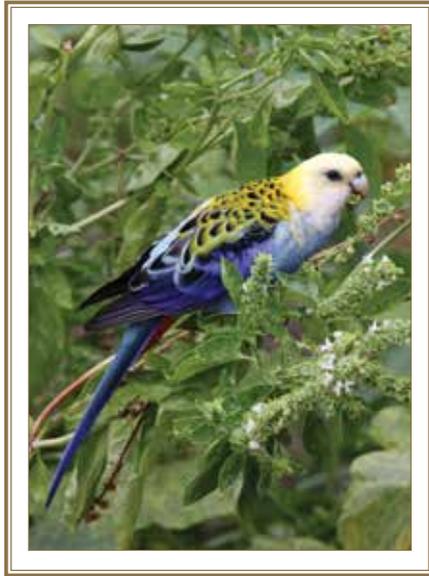


## Raven, Australian

(*Corvus coronoides*)

**A large (48–52 cm) glossy-black corvid with white eyes and long throat feathers (hackles) which are extended when calling.**

Found throughout eastern, southern and central Australia, the Australian Raven has a wide-ranging diet including grains, fruits, insects, and eggs, but it is mainly carnivorous, eating small animals and carrion. Australian Ravens are usually seen in pairs and construct a large stick nest in a substantial fork of a large tree.

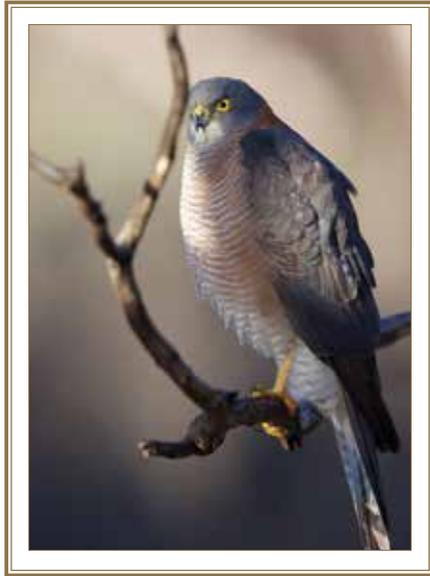


## *Rosella, Pale-headed*

*(Platycercus adscitus)*

**A colourful, medium-sized parrot (28–32 cm) with a broad tail, white cheek patches, a pale yellow head, blue and yellow wings and belly, and red under the tail.**

Distributed along the east coast, the Pale-headed Rosella is found in open forests, farmland, parks and gardens, searching for fruit, nectar and seeds. They breed from spring to mid-summer and mate for life. They commonly nest in hollow limbs of eucalypts at Government House and have been known to use the hollows in Besser bricks near the tennis court.



## Sparrowhawk, Collared

(*Accipter cirrhocephalus*)

**A medium-sized, finely built raptor (30–40 cm), with slate-grey upperparts, finely barred underparts, a chestnut collar, bright yellow eye, and distinctive long, fine yellow legs with very long toes.**

Very similar in appearance to the Brown Goshawk (*Accipter fasciatus*), the Collared Sparrowhawk is widespread but uncommon across Australia. It will live near human habitation where there are suitable trees available for nesting and hunting and will even follow prey into houses. It feeds on small introduced birds such as House Sparrows, using its very long middle toe to clutch its prey. It builds a nest of twigs and sticks in the fork of a tree, high among the foliage, and lines the nest with fresh leaves. It is also known as the Chickenhawk.



## *Spoonbill, Royal*

*(Platalea regia)*

**A white, long-legged deepwater wader (74–80 cm) with a black face, and a long black spatulate bill. (Long plumes emerge on the head during the breeding season.)**

The Royal Spoonbill is widespread throughout mainland Australia, except in the most arid areas of Western Australia and South Australia. It inhabits fresh and saltwater wetlands and feeds on crustaceans and molluscs by sweeping the spoon-shaped bill from side to side through the water. It builds a large stick nest in colonies in trees.



## Stone-curlew, Bush

(*Burhinus grallarius*)

**A large, ground-dwelling thick-knee (55–60 cm) with cryptic plumage, a streaked neck, and very long legs.**

The Bush Stone-curlew is found in most parts of Australia, except the most arid areas. They are nocturnal; feeding on insects, small lizards and smaller nocturnal creatures, and nest on the ground. At night, their distinctive loud, wailing call is often heard, and when disturbed, they freeze motionless, often in odd-looking postures. They are fast and agile on the ground, and although they seldom fly during daylight hours, they are far from clumsy in the air. When the nest is threatened, they raise their wings wide and high in an impressive threat posture and emit a loud, hoarse hissing noise.



## Swallow, Welcome

(*Hirundo neoxena*)

**A small (14–15 cm) rusty-throated swallow with grey underparts and no breast-band, but distinctive white spots in its forked tail.**

The Welcome Swallow is common around habitations in southern and eastern mainland Australia and in Tasmania. It is usually seen on utility wires or flying about towns and cities, hawking for insects, and makes a mud cup nest among rafters, under eaves or under bridges or overhanging rocks.



## *Nesting Boxes*

In accordance with the Government House Bushland Management Plan, a total of 30 nesting boxes were placed in nine species of native trees in the bushland area during the 2018–2019 year. The project was undertaken with a view to enhancing the habitat value and consequently the biodiversity and environmental health of the estate by encouraging additional species of native birds to shelter, nest and breed on the estate. The boxes are of various sizes to attract lorikeets, larger parrot species, owls, and ducks, as well as sugar gliders and microbats. The estate's dedicated horticultural staff manage a busy schedule of other works, including weed eradication and improving water retention and soil integrity, to increase the biodiversity and therefore the environmental health of the bushland.









GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
QUEENSLAND