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About this book

There are about 300 different kinds of birds that live in and visit Melbourne. That’s too many to fit in this book!

This book shows the names and pictures of the most common birds that you can see around Melbourne. These are the ones that we think you’ll see when you’re in your backyard, or visiting a park, or walking in a forest.

Sometimes you might be lucky and see a more unusual bird. There are websites and other bigger books that might help you to learn about those birds.

Helpful websites for birds

Different birds make their own distinct calls. It’s possible to recognise a bird by listening carefully to its call, as well as by looking at it. You can listen to calls on the web at http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/

If you are having trouble recognising a bird you have seen, the bird finder can help you figure out what it is: http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/finder
Special bird words

**Nectar** is a sweet drink inside some flowers.

**Tree hollows** are holes that grow inside old trees. Some birds like to make their home inside a hollow.

A group of birds is called a **flock** of birds.

A bird is **nocturnal** if it is mostly awake at night and mostly asleep in the daytime.

**Tame** birds are relaxed when they are near people. You can get close to them if you move slowly and quietly.

The area where a bird lives is called its **territory**. Some birds don’t like to share their territory.

When a male bird and a female bird become parents together, the birds are **mates**.

When many baby birds are hatched together in a family, they are called a **brood**.

**Native** birds are kinds of birds that have lived here for thousands of years.

Non-native birds have only been **introduced** to our neighbourhoods more recently, when people brought them here from other parts of the world.
Parrots and cockatoos
Rainbow lorikeet

Size: ~30cm

Rainbow lorikeets are the most commonly seen parrot in Melbourne. They often fly over houses and parks in loud groups.

Rainbow lorikeets like sweet foods. They drink nectar from flowering trees, and eat berries and other fruits.
Musk lorikeet

Size: ~22cm

A musk lorikeet is a bit smaller than a rainbow lorikeet and we don’t see them quite as often in Melbourne.

When the gum trees are flowering, you might see big groups of musk lorikeets drinking nectar together.

Musk lorikeets also sound like rainbow lorikeets, but their calls have a higher pitch.
Eastern rosella

Size: ~30cm

We don’t see eastern rosellas in the city as often as we see lorikeets and cockatoos.

Eastern rosellas live and feed together with their families, so you might see groups of 2-6 birds together.

It’s easiest to see eastern rosellas on the ground, because they eat grass seeds. They also like nectar and flowers.
Crimson rosella

Size: ~34cm

Crimson rosellas live in tall, wet forests like the Dandenongs.
Adult crimson rosellas are red and blue. Young birds are green, but they change to red and blue by the time they are one year old.

Crimson rosellas can be tame. If you have interesting food they might even jump on your arm and try to taste it!
Red-rumped parrot

Size: ~26cm

Red-rumped parrots often feed on the ground, so they are also called grass parrots. Look for them at sports fields and parks.

The male bird is light green and yellow with a bright red rump, at the front of the picture. The female at the back of the picture is greeny-brown, not as brightly coloured.
The cockatoo is a big, noisy bird. Cockatoos travel together in large flocks and screech very loudly!

Cockatoos are mostly white, with a bright yellow crest on top of their head. They like to make their crest bigger when they are showing off.

A cockatoo’s beak is very strong. They can chew through wood on a house!
Galah

Size: ~35cm

Galahs also like to fly around in large flocks and call loudly. Their feathers are pink and grey. Male galahs have dark eyes (like in this picture), and female galahs have pink eyes. Galahs eat seeds and fruit, so you can see them both on the ground and in trees.
Little corella

Size: ~38cm

Little corellas are mostly white. They are smaller than sulphur-crested cockatoos and are not quite as loud. They also fly together in large groups and like to call to each other.

Corellas are very playful. You can watch them hanging upside down and being silly.
King parrot

Size: ~42cm

A king parrot is a large bird that lives in wet forests.

Male king parrots have a red head and body and green wings, like in this picture. Female king parrots have a green head.

King parrots have the same mate for their whole life, and you can usually see them together as a pair.
Big birds
Silver gull

Size: ~40cm

Silver gulls are also called seagulls. You can often see them by the beach, and also in other parts of the city.

Silver gulls can eat worms and insects, but they live near people because they also like to take our food! You might notice them picking at rubbish, grabbing leftover food at cafes, and they might even try to steal a chip from you.
Red wattlebird

Size: ~35cm

Red wattlebirds are large grey-brown birds with yellow bellies and a red patch of skin (called a ‘wattle’) on their neck.

They are noisy and their harsh calls are often heard in suburban streets and parks.

Wattlebirds mostly drink nectar, but can sometimes be seen chasing flying insects.
Laughing kookaburra

Size: ~40cm

Laughing kookaburras have calls that sound like a loud cackling laugh. You can find them anywhere there are tall trees and open spaces.

Kookaburras hunt by pouncing down from a branch onto lizards, snakes and insects on the ground.
Sacred kingfishers are related to kookaburras, but they are smaller and less common. Sacred kingfishers have long, sharp bills and hunt lizards and frogs. They are usually found near creeks and ponds.

Sacred kingfishers spend winter in the north of Australia, and only visit Melbourne in summer.
Black-faced cuckoo-shrike

Size: ~35cm

Black-faced cuckoo-shrikes are grey birds with black faces and throats. They are quite common, and you can sometimes see them perching on power lines or TV aerials.

Black-faced cuckoo-shrikes are sometimes called ‘shufflewings’ because of the way they shuffle their wings when they land.
Magpies, crows and more
Australian magpie

Size: ~40cm

Magpies are very common, especially where there is a mix of open space and trees, like in a park. They have a beautiful warbling call.

Magpies are also very smart! They can recognise and remember different human faces.
Magpie lark

Size: ~26cm

Magpie larks are much smaller than magpies, and nearly as common around Melbourne. They are also called a ‘pee-wee’ because that’s what their call sounds like.

You might notice magpie larks on the ground, where they feed on insects and worms.
Little ravens are the only type of crow commonly seen in Melbourne. Their feathers are all black, and they have bright white eyes.

A little raven’s call is loud and rough, like “kaaa kaaa kaaa”!
Pied currawong

Size: ~50cm

A pied currawong looks a bit like a little raven, but it has white feathers in its tail and yellow eyes.

You can often see them together in a big group, calling loudly. Their call sounds a bit like their name – “curr-a-wong”.

Currawongs use their powerful beaks used to hunt lizards and other small animals.
Grey butcherbird

Size: ~27cm

Grey butcherbirds are not as easy to see as the other birds in this chapter, but you might hear them call.

A grey butcherbird has a large bill with a little hook at the tip. These birds swoop down from high perches to hunt small animals on the ground.
Pigeons
Rock doves come from Europe and Africa, and people have kept them as pets for hundreds of years. Europeans first brought rock doves to Australia, and now they are common in cities and towns.

They are very tame, and happy to be near people.
Spotted doves are another non-native species, introduced to Australia hundreds of years ago.

They look similar to rock doves, but have a spotty necklace.

Spotted doves are often near houses and people.
Crested pigeon

Size: ~35cm

Crested pigeons are the most common native pigeon species in Melbourne.

They have a spiky crest on their heads and colourful wings.

When they fly, their feathers make a whistling sound.
Common bronzewing

Size: ~35cm

Common bronzewings are also native to Australia. They have colourful wings and a white line under their eyes. They are less common than crested pigeons, but can be found in parks, forests and near wetlands.
Hunting birds
Tawny frogmouths are nocturnal birds.

At night-time they hunt insects. During the day they sleep perched on tree branches, trying to blend in.
Powerful owl

Size: ~55cm

Powerful owls are Australia’s largest owl. They hunt at night-time, chasing possums and other large animals. During the day they sleep quietly, hidden in tree branches.

Pairs of owls mate for life and chase other owls out of their territory.
Brown goshawk

Size: ~45cm

Brown goshawks have grey and brown feathers.

You can usually see them circling high above open areas like parks, hunting for mice, rats and small birds. Sometimes they perch in trees to rest or eat.
Black-shouldered kite

Size: ~35cm

Black-shouldered kites are mostly white, but you will notice black feathers around their shoulders, and red eyes.

They can often be seen hovering – flapping their wings fast to stay in the same place. While they are hovering, kites are scanning the ground for mice and other small animals.
Medium-sized birds
Common myna

Size: ~25cm

Common mynas are brown birds with black heads and yellow face markings.

People brought common mynas to Australia 150 years ago to eat nuisance insects. Now mynas are very common wherever there are people. You might see them in your backyard!

Common mynas can act like bullies around some native birds.
Common starling

Size: ~20cm

A starling’s feathers are black, but they shine with colours in the sunlight.

Europeans brought starlings to Australia more than 150 years ago.

You can often see starlings around the city in big groups, usually feeding on the ground.
Blackbirds come from Europe and were brought to Australia nearly 200 years ago. They are common in parks and gardens, especially where there are low bushes to hide in.

Blackbirds have a beautiful song, which is often heard in the early morning.
Noisy miner

Size: ~25cm

Noisy miners are common in parks and gardens. They are very tame, and sometimes very cheeky, around people.

Miners live in big groups, make lots of noise, and chase other birds.
Bell miners look like noisy miners, except they are mostly green instead of grey.

They have a clear call that sounds a bit like a bell. You might hear a bell miner before you see it.

Bell miners like to live in trees and bushes along the edge of creeks.
Willie wagtails are black and white, with white eyebrows. They hop around on the ground, wagging their long tails.

Their call is very musical, but they can also chatter angrily if they want you to leave their territory.

Willie wagtails are quite tame, and can be seen in yards and parks.
Grey fantail

Size: ~15cm

Grey fantails look like willie wagtails, but they are more grey than black and a bit smaller.

They are usually seen in trees, fanning their tails out as they hop about.
New Holland honeyeaters have black and white feathers, with yellow patches on their wings and tails. They have bright white eyes.

New Holland honeyeaters feed on nectar, darting around from flower to flower.

They are found in parks and near creeks.
White-plumed honeyeaters have green and grey feathers, with white stripes on their necks.

They are surprisingly common – once you start noticing them you will see them everywhere!

White-plumed honeyeaters feed high in trees, drinking nectar from flowers.
Scarlet robin

Size: ~14cm

Scarlet robins have black and white feathers and bright red chests.

They are most common in Melbourne during winter, when they can be seen in parks and gardens.

Scarlet robins usually perch on bare tree branches and their bright red front makes them easy to see.
Eastern yellow robin

Size: ~15cm

Eastern yellow robins have mostly grey feathers, but their chests and bottoms are bright yellow. They live in tree-filled parks and forests, perching on the side of tree trunks before pouncing on insects and spiders on the ground.
Small birds
House sparrow

Size: ~13cm

House sparrows were brought to Australia from Europe. They live happily around people, stealing crumbs of food from cafés and food courts.

Male sparrows are dark brown with a grey head and black chin (left), while females are plain light brown (right).
Superb fairy-wrens are tiny little puffballs that hop around on the ground or on low branches. You might see them when there is a mix of bushes and grass, like in parks and gardens. Adult males are bright blue and black (right), while females and young birds are mostly brown (left).
White-browed scrub-wren

Size: ~12cm

White-browed scrub-wrens are small grey and brown birds with clear white eyebrows. They often hide in low bushes, chattering away as they dig through leaves looking for food.

Scrub-wrens are quite curious and, if you’re quiet, will sometimes jump out into the open to look at you.
Welcome swallow

Size: ~12cm

Welcome swallows are mostly seen in flight. They swoop around in big flocks, catching tiny insects.

They have forked tails and are common all around Melbourne. They can be seen in places like train stations, as well as in parks and other green areas.
Spotted pardalote

Size: ~10cm

Spotted pardalotes are tiny little birds that spend most of their time high in gum trees. They dig little tunnels to nest in and can sometimes be seen darting in and out of their tunnels to feed young.

Spotted pardalotes can be hard to see, but their calls are loud and easy to remember with a bit of practice.
Red-browed finch

Size: ~12cm

Red-browed finches are small green and grey birds with bright red eyebrows and bottoms.

They feed on grass seeds and are often in weedy areas near creeks or paths, anywhere that doesn’t get mowed much.
Silvereye

Size: ~11cm

Silvereyes are small grey and green birds with bright white rings around their eyes. They are quiet and slightly shy birds, but are quite common in parks and gardens in Melbourne.

Silvereyes like to eat berries and other fruit.
Ducks, swans and grebes
Pacific black duck

Size: ~55cm

The Pacific black duck is the most common duck in Melbourne. Its brown eye-stripe makes it easy to identify.

In spring, Pacific black ducks have large broods of ducklings, and they follow their parents around parks and in the water.
Chestnut teal

Size: ~40cm

Male Chestnut teals have a brown body and a green head that are easy to recognise. Female Chestnut teals look a lot like grey teals (see next page) and can be harder to identify.

Chestnut teals eat plants and small bugs by sticking their head underwater as they swim.
Grey teal

Size: ~40cm

Grey teals and chestnut teals are often in the same places. It can be hard to tell the difference between grey teals and female chestnut teals. Grey teals are lighter coloured, especially on the chin and neck.

Grey teals are very common in creeks and ponds around the city.
The Australian wood duck is brown and grey. Sometimes it is called a ‘maned duck’, because of the small crest on the back of its head.

Australian wood ducks are often together in big groups. Unlike other ducks, you will not often see them swimming! Wood ducks eat grasses and other small plants on the land.
Hardhead

Size: ~50cm

The hardhead is a dark brown duck, with a white bill tip, eyes and underside. Its white eyes are unusual and easy to recognise.

Hardheads can swim underwater for as far as 40 metres.
Black swan

Size: ~130cm

All other swans in the world are mostly white, but the black swan is mostly black.

Black swans can travel long distances, flying at night and resting in the daytime.
An Australasian grebe is a small waterbird, that you will almost never see on the land or flying.

Grebes can dive more than 3 metres down and stay underwater for 30 seconds or more.

After baby grebes hatch, they spend a few weeks riding around on the parents’ backs.
Other waterbirds
The great egret is a tall, white bird, most often seen in ponds and creeks. A great egret’s bill is usually yellow, but turns grey during spring.

Egrets hunt fish by standing very still and then quickly grabbing the fish as they swim past.
Royal spoonbill

Size: ~75cm

Royal spoonbills look a bit like an egret, but have a large spoon-shaped bill instead of a pointed bill.

Spoonbills feed in shallow water, sweeping their bill sideways to scoop up small water animals.
White-faced heron

Size: ~65cm

White-faced herons are the most common herons around Melbourne.

They are all grey, with a splash of white on their head and neck.
White ibis

Size: ~70cm

White ibis are a common waterbird with a long, curved bill. Ibis usually live near swamps or lakes, but have also figured out how to live closely with people. They can feed on human food scraps as well as small water animals.

Ibis sometimes search through garbage for food scraps, and are also known as ‘bin chickens’.
Straw-necked ibis

Size: ~70cm

Straw-necked ibis look similar to white ibis, but have dark wings with flecks of shiny colours.

They can fly thousands of kilometres in big groups. You could see them flying high in the air in a V shape.
Eurasian coot

Size: ~35cm

You can see coots on most lakes and ponds. They are dark grey, with a red eye and a bright white mark on their forehead.

Coots dive under the water to feed.
Moorhens are similar in size and shape to coots, but have red rather than white face markings. They have a red beak with a yellow tip.

Unlike coots, moorhens do not dive deep under the water.
Purple swamphen

Size: ~50cm

Purple swamphens are often near moorhens, but they are much bigger and have thicker beaks.

Swamphens can swim, but more often they wander beside ponds and streams.
Masked lapwings are a common bird, also known as a ‘plover’. Lapwings feed and nest on the ground, but will aggressively fly after anything that threatens them or their babies. Lapwings are found in lots of different places – by water, in parks and along the beach.
Australian pelican

Size: ~170cm

Pelicans are very big, and are usually found by the sea. They have a huge bill that they use to catch fish with.
Little black cormorant

Size: ~60cm

Little black cormorants have black feathers and blue eyes.

They swim in lakes and streams, diving under the water to hunt for small fish.

Between swims they rest on branches over the water, and sometimes spread out their wings to dry.
Little pied cormorant

Size: ~60cm

Little pied cormorants look like little black cormorants, but with white feathers on their front and a yellow bill.

They are found in almost all types of water – lakes, rivers, creeks and the ocean, often in big flocks.
## My Bird List

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