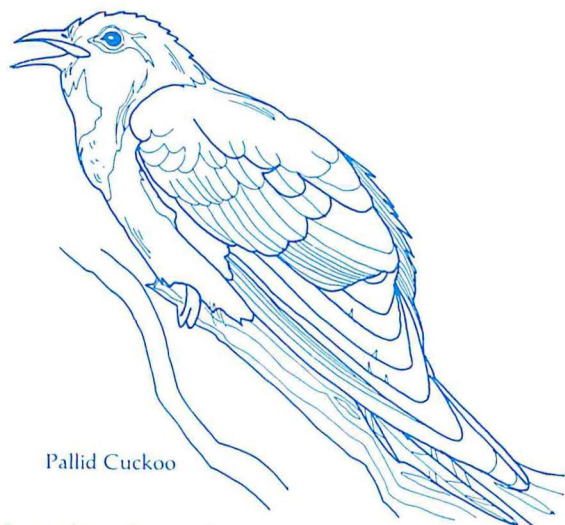


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Pallid Cuckoo

Cuckoos (*Cuculus* spp.)

Cuckoos are usually grey or slightly metallic coloured birds, smaller than a magpie and larger than a wagtail. They are most noticeable when calling insistently from the tops of dead trees, or in noisy courtship flight. They feed in foliage or in the open, often perching on stumps and flying down to take food on or near the ground. Cuckoos are well known as brood parasites—they deposit their eggs in the nests of other birds, often removing an egg of the host species at the same time.

Over a hundred species of Australian birds are known to play host to cuckoo eggs, but we don't know how many eggs cuckoos lay in season. Both the cuckoos described below can also be found in the karri forest.

Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*)

A graceful, long-tailed cuckoo, which is about the size of an elongated dove. This species is a non-resident; it only visits the area.

Colour: brown-grey above, light grey or brownish underneath, tail prominently white toothed on brown.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cuculus pyrrhophanus*)

The most common cuckoo in the area; it is slender and graceful, with a fairly long and slim, not obviously fan-like tail. At 24-28 cms, it is smaller than the above species.

Colour: grey back, rufous breast, tail toothed and tipped white, white spot on wing shoulder.

Western Thornbill (*Acanthiza inornata*)

One of the plainest of the thornbills, or 'little brown birds', this species is comparatively rare in the karri forest. It prefers the more open jarrah forest, where it feeds in the foliage of the mid-storey and upper shrub layer. It has no distinguishing marks.

Colour: grey-brown above, creamy buff underneath, tawny-olive on the rump, buff-brown tail which has a blackish band just near the end.

Inland Thornbill (*Acanthiza apicalis*)

Sometimes known as the Broad-tailed Thornbill, this bird's usual habitat is the dry scrub and woodlands in sub-inland Australia, but it also lives in the heavier forests, wet coastal scrubs and heaths in the moist south-west of W.A. Although it might forage over low bushes and saplings, it is basically a tree inhabitant. It often holds its tail erect in the same way as the wren.

Colour: olive-brown with reddish rump, forehead and ears freckled; throat and breast white and streaked strongly with blackish-brown; rest of the underneath is pale brown or brownish-white.

Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*)

This beautiful bird is also common in the upper shrub and canopy levels of the karri forest. This bird is the most easily identified by its call, which is typically a rising 'wheat-wheat-wheat whittle!'

Colour: adult male—bright yellow belly and lower breast, white throat with narrow black bib which runs up and over the head, olive green back, grey-to-black wings and tail; female—grey above, grey throat and upper breast, buff on lower breast.



Golden Whistler

B. Forest Floor

Western Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria griseogularis*)

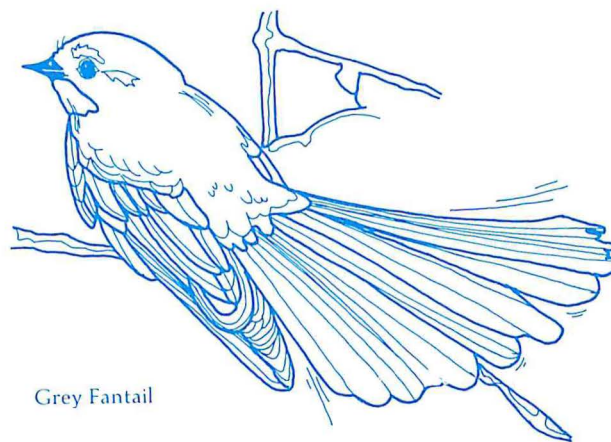
This bird is similar to the Golden Whistler, except it doesn't have a black cap and breastband.

Colour: dark grey above, with yellow rump, yellow breast and belly, white throat and grey upper chest.

Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*)

The fantails are easily recognised by their tails, which are always raised, opened and swayed with the body from side to side. These birds often dart out from perches and catch insects in the air. They are very common in both jarrah and karri forest.

Colour: grey above, buff underneath, white chin, grey throat, white eyebrow, wingbars and outer tail feathers.



Grey Fantail

Scarlet Robin (*Petroica multicolor*)

Often known as 'Robin Redbreast', this bird is common in the jarrah forest after a fire.

Colour: male—very distinctive jet black above, with white forehead, bold white slash on the wing, white outer tail feathers and scarlet breast; female—grey above, and a paler red breast.

3. LOW WOODLAND

The low woodland area has high numbers of different species, many of which also occur in the karri and jarrah forests and/or in the flats and scrub of the southern Shannon. Honeyeaters, for instance, which like the karri overstorey may also feed on the nectar-producing banksias and bottle-brushes common in the low woodlands; and many of the birds of prey which live in the southern flats are also found in the low woodland.

Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*)

This bird is about the size of a pigeon.

Colour: brown above, with extensive bronze on the wing, a white forehead and a grey breast.

Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*)

Commonly called the 'Greenie', this small bird moves rapidly through the bush, often in flocks.

Colour: grey and olive-green, a conspicuous white eyering, pale yellow upper breast, grey underneath and buff flanks.



Silvereye

Western Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus superciliosus*)

This is a small-to-medium sized honeyeater (15 cms av.), with a long, slender bill.

Colour: reddish throat and chest with black and white bands below, buff underneath, white outer tail feathers; the female is a duller colour, and lacks the breast pattern.



Little Wattlebird

Little Wattlebird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*)

The Little Wattlebird is a honeyeater, one of the most common birds in this type of vegetation. It favours open woodland where banksias are present. Despite its name, it is a long (16-30 cms), slim bird, with a longish tail. Its flight pattern is active and darting, with occasional long glides.

Colour: dull brown tail, paler chest, fine silvery streaks above and underneath, more densely silvered on the sides of the neck and a red patch on the wing visible when the bird is in flight.

4. SHRUBLANDS, HERBLANDS AND SEDGELANDS

The most common habitat for birds of prey is the coastal flats of the southern Shannon.

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

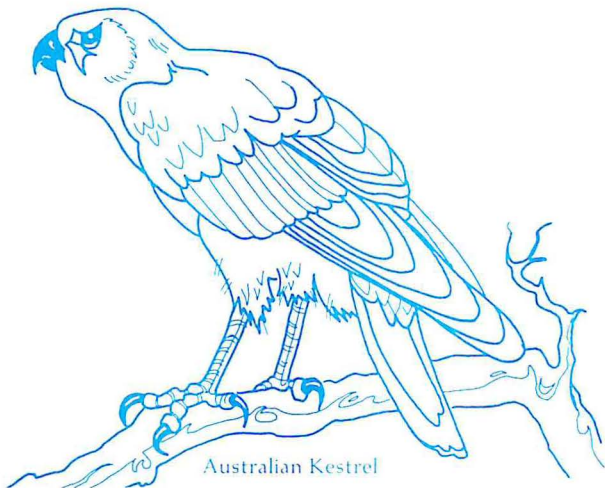
This long-winged hawk (1.2 metre span) is common in the open, flat sedgeland. It is beautiful to watch in flight as it sails low on upswept wings, rocking slightly, or hovers heavily in search of prey.

Colour: dark brown, paler to white below, streaked brown with a white rump, broad, shadowy bars on the flight and tail feathers.

Australian Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

This bird is noticeable hovering over coastal flats and dunes before it drops on its prey.

Colour: chestnut brown above, with contrasting black flight feathers, very pale underneath.



Australian Kestrel

Richard's Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*)

Colour: this small bird is streaky brown with a pale breast and throat, white outer tail feathers, long fawn eyebrows, a double fine dark streak down either side of the throat, slender, pale-brown bill and long, pale pinkish legs.

Southern Emu Wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*)

A very shy bird with a tail like emu feathers. It moves through thick low cover in swampy heaths and sedges, occasionally climbing to exposed positions on tussocks.

Colour: grey and black streaky body, buff belly, almost colourless grey tail, and, on the male, a bright blue throat and belly.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris melanops*)

An elegant, slender (14-18 cms long) bird, with a fine curved bill.

Colour: brown above, dull white underneath, tawny to cream crown, black eyepatch outlined with white, salmon pink to buff under wing and possibly a yellow patch on the throat.

5. WATERWAYS AND SWAMPS

This habitat includes areas of permanent water such as the Shannon river and dam, various swamps and lakes in the catchment and the Broke Inlet. The Broke Inlet supports large numbers of waders and seabirds, all of which are listed in pamphlet 4b.

Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)

A conspicuous bird (45 cms) which lives in swamps, as its name implies, and roosts in vegetation over water.

Colour: dark blue, black wings and tail, prominent white under the tail, massive red bill and shield, and red legs.

Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)

This species is found on all kinds of water.

Colour: dark brown with pale feather margins, blackish crown, whitish to yellow-buff throat with two black stripes.

Australian Shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

Another name for this species is the Mountain Duck.

Colour: black body and head; male—white neck ring and buff breast; female—chestnut breast, white eyering and white base of bill.

Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*)

A very strange looking duck which swims (nearly submerged like a cormorant or platypus) and dives in lakes and swamps. The male is very large (47-72 cms), and has a curious leathery bill flap which is absent on the smaller female.

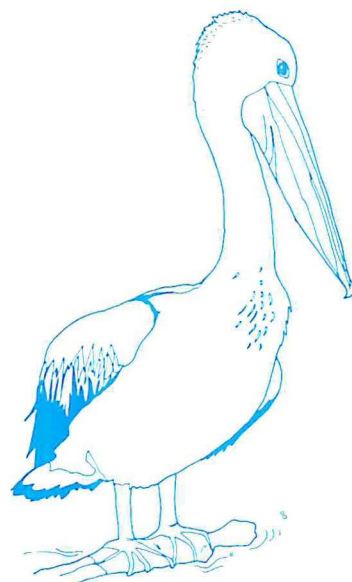


Darter

For precise identification of the full list of species represented in the Shannon, one should refer to one of the number of field guides available.

These include:

1. Graham Pizzey (1982). *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*;
2. D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell (1976). *Birds in Western Australia*; and
3. G. M. Storr and R. E. Johnstone (1979). *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Australia*;

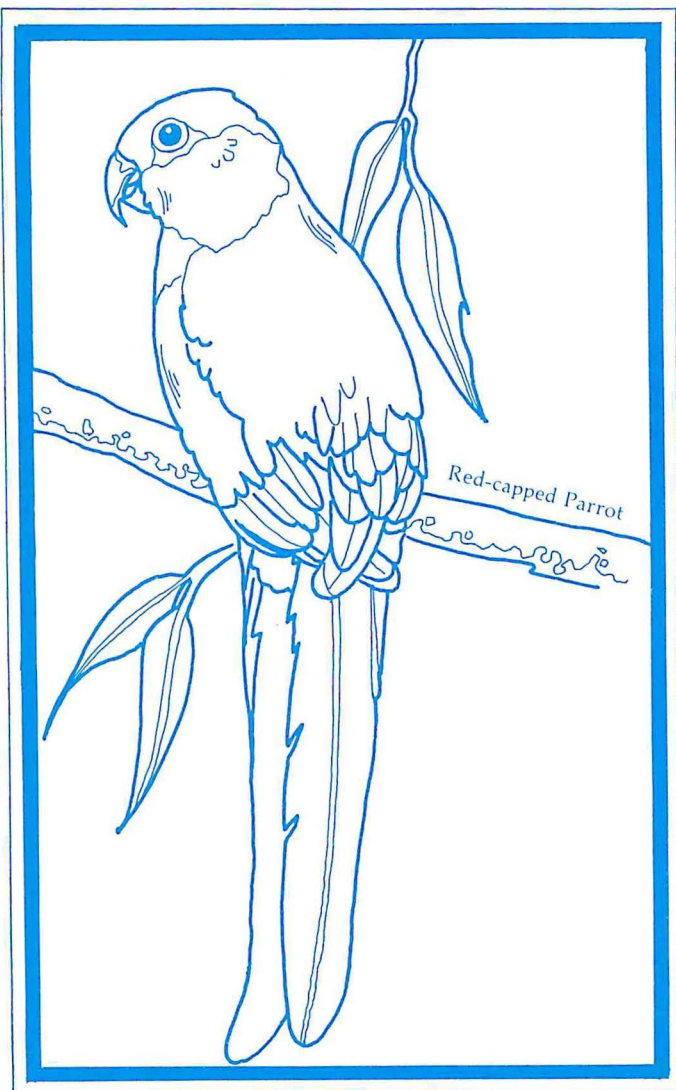


Text prepared by Di Ward.

Graphics by Kellee Norman.

Prepared by the Shannon Planning Group for the National Parks Authority and the Forests Department of Western Australia.

Common Birds of the Shannon



The Shannon River Basin is a wonderland of forests and plants, riverlands and coastal flats. It is not surprising, then, that over 80 species of birds have been identified in the Shannon—it contains such a variety of habitats. In fact, if you are keen to identify some birds while visiting the Shannon the first thing to do is take a close look at the countryside you are in. The walk trail up to the dam, for example, will take you through karri forest. In the tops of these majestic trees you are very likely to see parrots and cockatoos. There is more to karri forest than karri trees, however, and each layer of plants and scrub will be home to different species of birds. It is almost like a four storey block of flats—although much prettier! Some birds will be resident on the top floor (overstorey), but they may go visiting on the lower floors (mid-storey and understorey). Other birds, particularly those resident in the understorey and on the forest floor, never go visiting at all. Not all birds you see in a habitat will be resident there—they might just be visiting; some waders you can see on the Broke Inlet, for example, are seasonally migratory.

Unless you sit down in one spot very quietly for an hour or so, you are unlikely to get a long look at any bird, but even a glimpse can give you lots of information if you know what to look for—practice makes great improvements! First, estimate the size of the bird by comparing it with a species you know well: is it the same size as a magpie or a swallow? Second, note its most obvious features:

- Colour—general colour, any outstanding markings, colour of legs.
- Size and shape of bill.
- Other striking characteristics, for example, the way the bird flies or hovers, and whether it is solitary or in a flock.

Third, observe the type of trees or scrub and whether the bird was on the forest floor, in the tree tops or on the water. When you begin to recognise common bird calls it will also be a great help in identifying species you see and hear. Finally, you can look up the following list of the most easily identified birds of the Shannon, which are grouped according to the habitat they prefer. If you can identify most of these you will certainly impress your friends and family! You might even wish to progress to the complete species checklist in pamphlet 4b.

1. HIGH OPEN FOREST (KARRI AND KARRI-MARRI FOREST)

A. Overstorey

The overstorey of this forest type is the stronghold of parrots and cockatoos, because they forage among the leaves, and nest in the hollow tree branches and trunks found there.

Port Lincoln Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*)

Often called the 'Twenty-eight', this is W.A.'s most widespread and best-known species of parrot.

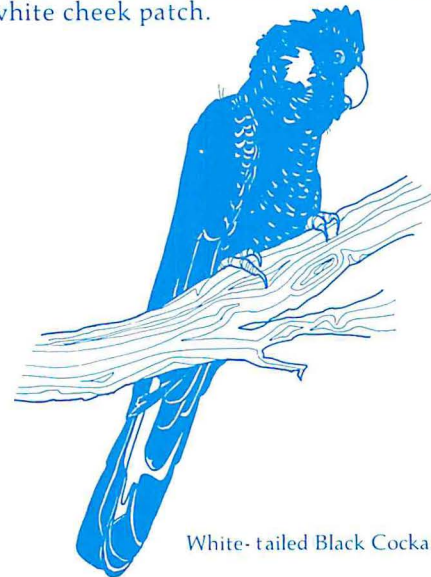
It feeds on the pulp of green eucalypt capsules, especially those of marri trees, and it forms large flocks. Its call is a distinct ringing triple note which sometimes sounds like 'twenty-eight', hence the name.

Colour: green back, a paler green belly, black head with blue cheeks and a yellow collar.

White-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus baudinii*)

A large bird (50-60 cm) with a bill adapted to extract seeds from the fruit capsules of marri and to tear wood in search of wood-boring larvae. During the breeding season, you can see them in pairs or small flocks but they form larger flocks in the non-breeding season.

Colour: brownish-black with a white band on the tail and a white cheek patch.



White-tailed Black Cockatoo

Purple-crowned Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*)

At only 15-17 cms long, this is the smallest member of the parrot tribe in W.A.. A short-tailed, fast-flying parrot which follows the nectar and pollen supplies of flowering eucalypts, it is most abundant when karri is flowering. It is often called the 'zit' parrot because of its characteristic 'zit-zit' call.

Colour: green above, pale blue below, and purple and red on the head.

Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*)

Colour: crown, wings and tail are black with white or yellow spots; back is spotted black on buff; underside is buff or yellow.



Spotted Pardalote

Striated Pardalote (*Pardalotus striatus*)

The distinctive 'chip-chip' of its call is only heard in spring.

Colour: similar to the above species, but with a grey, unspotted back, and a white wing band with a red spot at the elbow.

Both pardalotes forage in the overstorey gleaning leaves, and gather nest materials on the ground. The Striated Pardalote nests in hollows in trees, whereas the Spotted Pardalote nests on the ground in a chamber at the end of a burrow—in bulldozer pushings, along tracks, and along river banks where a tree has fallen down, for example.

B. Mid-storey

Western Rosella (*Platycercus icterotis*)

A smallish parrot (25-30 cms) which visits the understorey to feed on shoots and seeds of shrubs and small trees, but flies up to the nearest tree when disturbed.

Colour: red, with greenish scalloped black back and wings.



New Holland Honeyeater

New Holland Honey-eater (*Phylidonyris novaehollandia*)

This is the most common honeyeater in the area, and is most easily observed when it is feeding. It is widely distributed, and occurs in all the main vegetation types from the coastal heath to the high open karri forest, and is particularly prevalent when the yellow kangaroo paw and chorileana are in flower.

It is a medium sized honeyeater (14-15 cms), and it is frequently seen in flocks.

Colour: black and white, yellow and white over black tail, white ring behind black head cap, yellow wing patch on outer wing, white eyes.

White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunatus*)

This is a medium sized honey-eater (14-15 cms) which feeds in the overstorey and mid-storey. It moves rapidly, often acrobatically, through the overstorey in pairs or small flocks. It is generally part of a colony. Its distinctive voice is a scratchy 'shirp shirp'.

Colour: bright olive-green above, white below, white ring behind black head cap and white ring around eye.

C. Understorey

White-breasted Robin (*Eopsaltria georgiana*)

This species is only found in the south-west of W.A., where it is very common. Although it has a reputation for being shy and secretive, if you sit down very quietly in one spot it will often alight on a nearby branch. You will probably only see this bird after you have noted the harsh 'chit' of its call.

Colour: dark blue-grey above, pure white underneath, a narrow white mark along the bend of the wing and a distinct white wingbar in flight.

White-browed Scrubwren (*Sericornis frontalis*)

This wren is particularly dependent on the dense stick layer of the karri understorey. Usually secretive and wary, it can sometimes be seen when it hops on the ground or logs, or moves through the undergrowth and lower level of the trees, either singly or in pairs and parties. You are more likely to hear than see this bird. Its characteristic scolding call is a deep insistent zizzing.

Colour: dark to greyish-brown above, creamy-yellow below, white eyebrow and 'whiskers', whitish throat slightly streaked with black.

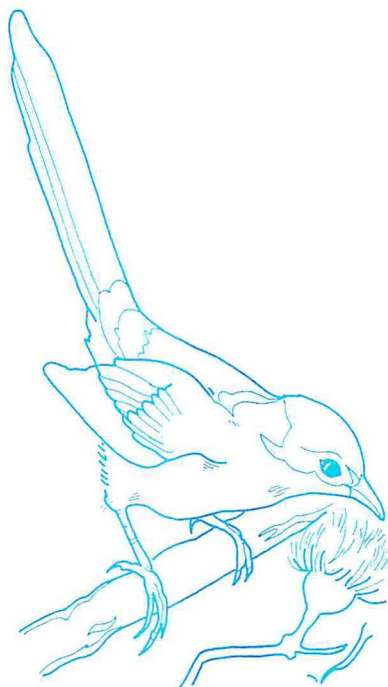


White-browed Scrub Wren

Red-winged Fairy Wren (*Malurus elegans*)

Often called the marsh wren, this species lives in the dense sword grass layer along watercourses, and in damp spots in karri forest and dense melaleuca shrublands.

Colour: male—blue and black, with chestnut shoulder patches and white abdomen, a patch of black across the upper back, and another across the rump, with blue and white between; female—brown above and whitish below.



Red-winged Fairy Wren

Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

The Emu is immediately recognizable, and needs no description here. The Emu is widespread in the south-west, and prefers karri to jarrah forest. It avoids, however, the very thick understorey of karri, and is most often sighted in clearings, areas of regeneration and along bush tracks. Among other things, it eats the fleshy fruits of the emu bush, the red rind of zamia nuts, and casuarina fruits.

2. OPEN FOREST (JARRAH FOREST)

Although many of the bird species occurring in the jarrah forest can also be seen in the karri, the jarrah forest has a greater variety of plant species, and, therefore, a greater variety of birds. Here are some of the well-known ones:

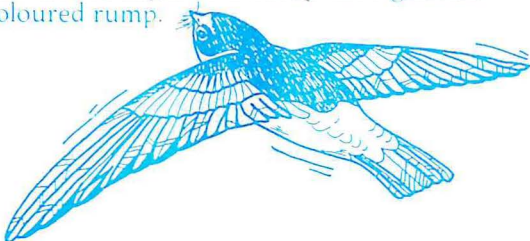
A. Overstorey

The hollow-nesting parrots and cockatoos, as well as the leaf-gleaning birds, live in the overstorey. In addition to the species described for the karri forest, there are the:

Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*)

The most gaudily plumaged of W.A.'s larger parrots, the Red-capped Parrot is sometimes known as the King Parrot.

Colour: green above, purple underneath, red cap, yellow-green cheek and rump. Although similar to the Twenty-eight when in flight, it is easily distinguished by its light coloured rump.



Tree Martin

Tree Martin (*Cecropis nigricans*)

This is the most common bush swallow, and is also found in the karri overstorey; it nests in hollow trees. Its tail is square cut, not forked.

Colour: black with white tail above, grey to white underneath, black cap with a reddish forehead.

Western Gerygone (*Gerygone fusca*)

This bird has a very long and sweet song which sounds like the singer is going to sleep, hence its nickname 'Sleepy Dick'. A small (9-11 cms), rather plain bird, its main charm seems to be its song, which has been described as "a falling silvery thread of sound that seems to finish before the end".

Colour: grey-brown above, white underneath, dark brown tail with white end band, inconspicuous white eyebrow and red eye.