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Male



Male



Male

### Dirk Hartog rufous fieldwren

*Calamanthus campestris hartogi*

**WA status:** Vulnerable

**Size:** 11–14cm in length (including tail).

**Male:** upperparts greyish olive coarsely streaked with blackish brown. A white stripe extends over the eye. The tail is reddish brown tipped white. Underparts mostly white streaked with blackish brown.

**Female:** differs from male in being slightly duller, with the streaks paler and narrower.

**Voice:** a loud spirited song usually uttered from the top of a bush.

**Breeding:** June to August.

**Nest:** dome shaped with a circular side entrance.

This species is the most commonly encountered wren on the island. Found in most habitats including heaths, low scrubs and samphire flats.

### White-browed scrubwren

*Sericornis frontalis balstoni*

**WA status:** Secure

**Size:** 11–13cm in length (including tail).

**Male:** greyish brown with black lores (feathers between bill and eye), and a white line above the eye.

**Female:** similar to male but with brown lores.

**Voice:** distinctive call, a high pitched ‘tseer-tseer-tseer’ and ‘seet-you, seet-you’.

**Breeding:** June to August.

**Nest:** untidy dome of grass, bark, leaves and flower heads lined with feathers and with a circular side entrance.

Common on the island usually in pairs and small parties in dense shrubland. Inquisitive and commonly approaches birdwatchers.

### Thick-billed grasswren

*Amytornis textilis*

**WA status:** In need of monitoring

**Size:** 17–19cm in length (including tail).

**Male:** dull reddish brown, finely streaked with white on the head, back and breast.

**Female:** similar to males but has chestnut flanks.

**Voice:** a series of high-pitched whistles and trills.

**Breeding:** from late June to early September.

**Nest:** cup or part dome with hood reduced or absent.

This species was formerly found on Dirk Hartog Island, but is now believed to be locally extinct. Surveys are continuing. It is still locally common on the Peron Peninsula.



Illustrations and text courtesy of Western Australian Museum  
Front cover photo: thick-billed grasswren. Photo – Babs and Bert Wells/DPaW

Information current at May 2014

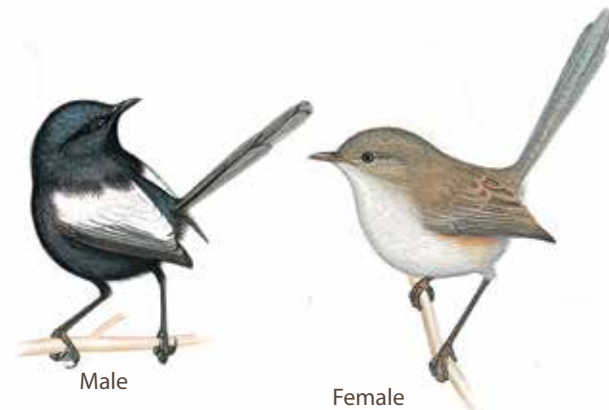
# The wrens of Dirk Hartog Island National Park

## Identification guide



20140440-0414-500





### Black and white fairy-wren

*Malurus leucopterus leucopterus*

**WA status:** Vulnerable

**Size:** 11–13cm in length (including tail).

**Breeding male:** mostly glossy black, except for the wings, which are largely white, dull blue tail.

**Non-breeding male:** similar to female except for a blackish bill and slightly brighter dull blue tail.

**Adult female:** mostly greyish brown with a greyish-white eye ring and light brown bill.

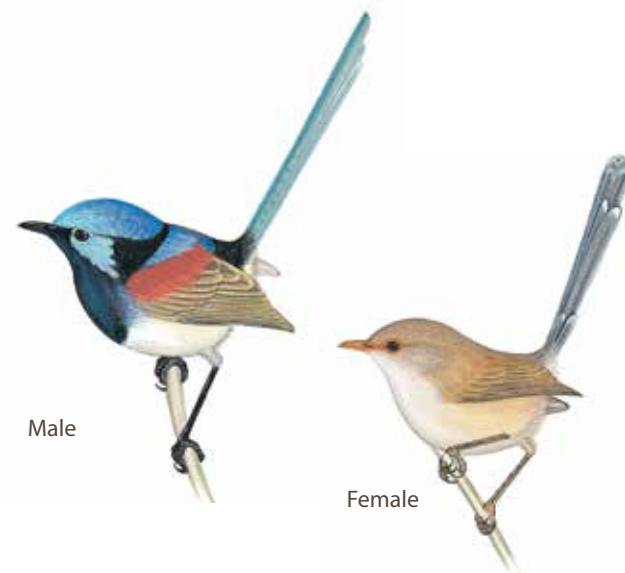
**Juvenile:** like female.

**Breeding:** July to August.

**Voice:** Prolonged, undulating reel, like a sewing machine.

**Nest:** small compact dome with a side entrance made of wind-blown seagrass, insect cocoons and flower heads, bound together with spider web and built near the ground in dense bushes.

This subspecies is endemic to the island and is common in heaths and chenopod (saltbush) flats and spinifex throughout the island. It is closely related to the blue plumaged, white-winged fairy-wren *Malurus leucopterus leuconotus* found on the mainland.



### Variegated fairy-wren

*Malurus lamberti*

**WA status:** Secure

**Size:** 12–14cm in length (including tail).

**Breeding male:** head and back bright blue; shoulders chestnut; wings brown; tail dull blue.

**Non-breeding male:** tail dull blue and rest of upperparts are brown and the underparts are white.

**Female:** differs from non-breeding male in having a brown instead of a black bill and a reddish brown eye-ring.

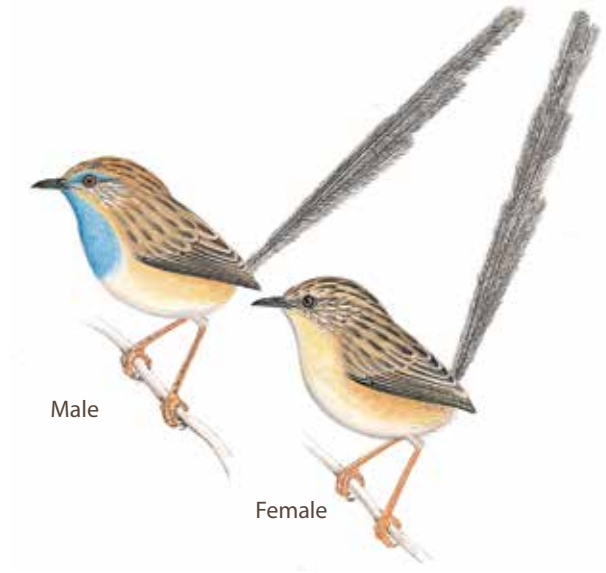
**Juvenile:** like female but duller.

**Breeding:** late July to early September.

**Nest:** small coarsely made dome with a side entrance near the top.

**Voice:** territorial song is a high-pitched whirring, reel and a sharp 'tseep' contact call.

This species is common, occurring throughout the island favouring all kinds of shrubland and heath including melaleuca, acacia (wattles) and saltbush flats. Often encountered in small groups.



### Southern emu-wren

*Stipiturus malachurus hartogi*

**WA status:** Vulnerable

**Size:** 16–18cm in length (including tail).

**Male:** tiny greyish brown bird, with a pale blue breast and stripe over eye and a very long filamentous tail that resembles emu feathers.

**Female:** similar to male but lacks blue colouring.

**Voice:** territorial call is a high-pitched descending trill.

**Breeding:** July to August

**Nest:** small dome placed low down in a bush in dense heath.

Moderately common on the island though very difficult to detect. Usually in pairs or small parties and favouring low shrubs and spinifex heaths.

The wrens of Dirk Hartog Island comprise six species: two fairy-wrens, an emu-wren, a grasswren, scrubwren and a fieldwren.

They are a group of small, thin-billed, mainly insectivorous birds that live on or near the ground in shrubs, heaths and thickets.

They are called 'wrens' because their cocked or upright tails give them the appearance or resemblance to the true wrens of the Americas, Europe and northern Asia.

The conservation of these birds is ongoing. This guide should help avian enthusiasts and conservationists alike understand the fragile nature of these species on Dirk Hartog Island and how the identification of these birds will help save them for future generations to enjoy.

### Contacts

If you have seen a thick-billed grasswren on Dirk Hartog Island, please contact the Department of Parks and Wildlife office in Denham and provide details of the location, date and any photos taken.

**Phone:** (08) 9948 2226

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