

Willy Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)



(Photo copyright A.G. Wells)

One of Australia's most familiar birds, the little Willy Wagtail can be found almost anywhere in the country, except in dense forests or on open, treeless plains. They are common in inhabited areas, parklands and even cities, and their numbers have probably increased significantly as a result of man's clearing the bush for cultivation.

At rest, the Willy Wagtail sways its body and tail constantly from side to side, before flitting about restlessly in search of prey. It has been known to take insects and occasional worms, and also picks spiders off the outside of buildings.

Willy Wagtails are particularly aggressive when breeding. They have been seen to attack and drive away such large birds as Wedge-tailed Eagles, Brown Hawks, Laughing Kookaburras and Magpies. Both male and female birds help to build the nest which is generally made of fine grass and spiders, webs and placed on a horizontal branch close to the ground. However, nests may be placed in sheds or verandahs.

Several clutches of 3 to 4 eggs may be laid in one season and incubation takes about 13 days. The bird breeds between June and February.

The Willy Wagtail may be confused with the Restless Flycatcher which inhabits similar open country. However, the latter has no white eyebrow but has a white throat.