

Grey Butcherbird (*Cracticus torquatus*)



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The Grey Butcherbird is common in wooded country throughout the southern half of Australia and its loud and musical calls are frequently heard in Perth. These calls are often sung as a duet between pairs of adult birds, the birds singing alternately while bobbing up and down in turn.

The common name of this bird relates to its habit of wedging food, such as insects, lizards, mice or sometimes smaller birds, in a fork of a tree or impaling it on a twig or thorn before pulling it apart with its hooked bill. This action is necessary as the Butcherbird's feet are too small to enable it to hold down prey and tear it up in the manner of a hawk.

Between July and November are the main breeding months with the female Grey Butcherbird usually laying a clutch of 3-4 eggs in a shallow nest made of small twigs and grass in the vertical fork of a tree. The eggs are pale brown with small reddish-brown blotches at one end. Grey Butcherbirds tend to live in permanent territories and have been reported nesting in much the same place year after year.

Young birds are rather brown in appearance and may still be with their parents up to 12 months after leaving the nest. They do not attain full adult plumage until their second year.

Common Birds of Perth Number 5