

“Hail to thee, blythe spirit”

Joanna Seabrook



BIRDS have been the stuff of many poets and legends down the ages and yet today many of us hardly notice their existence, or perhaps only noticing them as pests, whereas in reality the world of nature would suffer if they were not around to do the jobs that are their part in the ecosystem.

The deterioration in bird numbers has been well documented. It is obvious that many of the once most common species are now seldom seen and others are taking their place. This is largely due to habitat removal and the best we can do in our efforts to “Look after Australia” is to refrain from doing further damage to habitat and try to improve and enhance what there is left.

It is seriously necessary to think what it is the birds need for food, especially the little birds - robins and wrens, thornbills, pardalotes and weebills, willie wagtails, honeyeaters, finches and warblers which should inhabit our gardens and roadsides.

Amongst these birds we have insectivorous and nectar eating birds. As insects like nectar as well, it can mean that the same plants suit both kinds of birds. Because the metabolism of these small birds is so fast and they use so much energy they need to eat often, so whatever it is they need it has to be available all the time. We can't have the birds without the right flora.

The countryside looks great with patches of vegetation amongst the paddocks, however when looked at more closely many of the patches of vegetation are not really bush but

just trees, unfenced and with no understorey but grass. Sadly these patches have no future as they are unable to regenerate. They are sometimes referred to as the “living dead” because they are the last generation. So patches of real bush are a lot scarcer than we think.

This is about how to attract and sustain these delightful small creatures in country townships by using native Australian plants throughout all public open spaces. Many of the country towns are situated on rivers or creeks which are vegetated with Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*). These can act as corridors for the flightpaths of some of the small birds which are unable to travel without shelter and food. The towns could quite easily be made into oases of habitat for these little birds simply by growing the local native plants and trees in streetscapes and gardens (it's much easier than growing roses). The rivers and creeks and also road verges and rail reserves could be connections between the towns.

In providing a habitat for these little birds the benefits spread to everything else in the local ecosystems. Is this just a dream, or could we do it? It would not be hard to do with all we know about seeding and with help from everyone. It needs the will and the agreement and organisation - any volunteers?

Are there any readers involved with rural towns - perhaps on the Shire - who would like to work with Joanna to develop this idea? She can be contacted on:

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