



No.11 Limiting access to food to reduce bird damage

Many species of bird feed around properties and on roadsides where they can cause a nuisance and damage. For example, parrots, cockatoos and ducks consume cereal and/or weed seed which they find in stubble, around sheds, along roadsides, where livestock have been fed and along the edges of crops. Australian ravens (*Corvus coronoides*) and wedge-tailed eagles (*Aquila audax*) consume animal flesh, mostly from road kills, dead lambs and after-birth. In urban areas, ravens, magpies and other birds are sometimes fed by people or scavenge food from rubbish bins and landfill sites. Common food items for damage-causing birds is shown in the table below.

Limiting access to these sources of food over the long term may reduce the damage caused by birds to crops and livestock, lower bird numbers around farm buildings and settlements and reduce the nuisance caused by large numbers of birds in urban areas.

For general information on bird biology and control methods, refer to the information listed under further reading.

Long-term management of bird numbers

Access to food by birds should be limited at all times because sudden removal of food, particularly when there are many birds and limited food supplies, may cause them to seek alternatives.

Unavoidable grain-spilling activities and landfill sites should be situated well away from where the birds will damage crops or cause a nuisance.

Cereal and weed seeds:

- Enclose all stored grain.
- Clean-up spillages around silos and self-feeders as soon as possible.
- Reduce the amount of feed remaining in old stubble by grazing livestock over it.
- Hand-feed livestock in the late afternoon or at dusk to maximise the amount eaten by stock and minimise that eaten by birds.
- Cut back on the grain fed to livestock as soon as they start to leave some on the ground.
- Bird-proof intensive feed hoppers by placing hoods over them or movable flaps on the entrances.

- Cultivate, mow or spray pastures to prevent the production of weed seeds.
- Carefully time the entry of grazing animals onto pasture that has not been grazed for an extended period. Weed seeds flourish in such areas and grazing them may cause the birds to go elsewhere for food.

Other foods:

- Remove carcasses as soon as possible.
- Install bird-proof bins in public areas and industrial sites and ensure that dumped rubbish is wrapped and/or covered at all times.
- Install signs discouraging the feeding of birds, including the reasons for the request.
- Discourage the feeding of birds at home, in recreation areas and at school.

Successful case study

Through careful management, a Darkan farmer reduced the amount of grain available to Australian ringneck birds. This resulted in a considerable reduction in bird numbers. After working with grain, the farmer brought his sheep into the area to clean up spillages. The farmer never placed cereal grains in open storage – always in sealed silos. This not only discouraged birds but also reduced weevil numbers.

Further reading

- Fauna note no. 3. Netting to reduce bird damage. DEC, Western Australia.
- [Bird Management in Grain Storage Facilities](#). CSIRO, Canberra.
- [Reducing Cockatoo Damage to Crops](#). Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria.
- [Reducing Cockatoo Damage to Stored Fodder, Ripening Crops and Feedlots](#). Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria.
- [Problems Caused by Predatory Birds](#). Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria.

Food items of pest birds in the south-west of Western Australia

(Dark shading = bulk of diet, Horizontal lines = minor part of diet)

		Cultivated cereals	Seeds of cultivated fruits	Marri <i>Corymbia calophylla</i> seed	Other native plant seed	Storksbill <i>Erodium</i> sp. seed	Grass, herb or melon seed	Corns/tubers dug from ground	Insects	Live animals	Carrion (road kills, paddock carcasses)	Food from humans or land fill
Australian ringneck		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
red-capped parrot		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Baudin's cockatoo		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Galah		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Little corella (Wheatbelt)		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Little corella (Pilbara/Murchison)		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Little corella (Kimberley)		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Butler's corella		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Muir's corella		Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark	Dark			
Wedge-tailed eagle									Horizontal		Dark	
Australian raven	Rural	Horizontal							Dark		Dark	
	Urban								Horizontal			Dark
Australian shelduck	Rural	Dark					Dark	Horizontal				
	Urban						Horizontal					Horizontal
Australian wood duck	Rural	Dark					Dark	Horizontal				
	Urban	Dark					Horizontal					Horizontal

References

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Long, J.L. (1984) The diets of three species of parrots in the south of Western Australia. *Aust. Wildl. Res.* 11:357-371.

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Further Information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the Department's website for the latest information: www.dec.wa.gov.au.

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