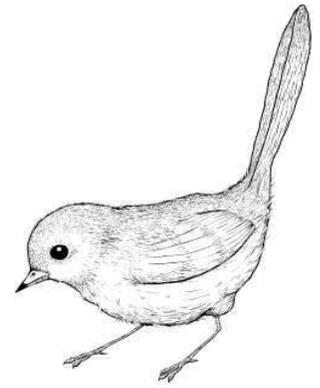




## A garden for birds



### Creating habitats: vegetation structure

All birds require a reliable food source, places to shelter from predators and inclement weather, dense vegetation where they feel safe to breed and a safe water supply. A garden designed to attract birds will have a variety of vegetation layers that will cater for the different foraging needs of different species. (see illustration page 2)

For example, birds such as robins, wrens and scrubwrens mostly forage on the ground or in low understorey vegetation. A variety of grasses, sags and low bushes provide habitat for the insects and other invertebrates which are the main food items for these birds.

Safe sheltering places can be created by planting native daisies and peas, which provide a dense or prickly mid layer of vegetation. This shrub layer is a good source of insect food for many native birds.

In larger gardens that have enough room for eucalypts, pardalotes, Golden Whistlers and endemic honeyeaters may visit to forage on invertebrates they find on the leaves, branches or trunks of the trees.

### Not too many callistemons and grevilleas

A garden designed to attract native birds involves much more than simply planting a selection of nectar producing shrubs. Too many plants like callistemons and grevilleas attract larger birds such as New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds. While these birds are a welcome sight in the garden, they often aggressively exclude other nectar feeders, such as Eastern Spinebills, from a rich food source, and will even chase away smaller insect eaters such as fairy-wrens and thornbills.

### The litter layer

Tidying up can be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of birds and other fauna. When left on the ground rather than being tidied up or burnt, leaf litter, fallen branches and logs enrich the soil with nutrients as they break down. Fungi and bacteria, which are the main agents of decay, are a food source for hundreds of species of insects. As most birds eat insects at some stage in their development, this organic material is essential for their survival.

Logs retain a high moisture content, especially during summer when surrounding vegetation can dry out. This makes them especially important as habitat for frogs and invertebrates and as vital refuges during and after fires.

### Spiders

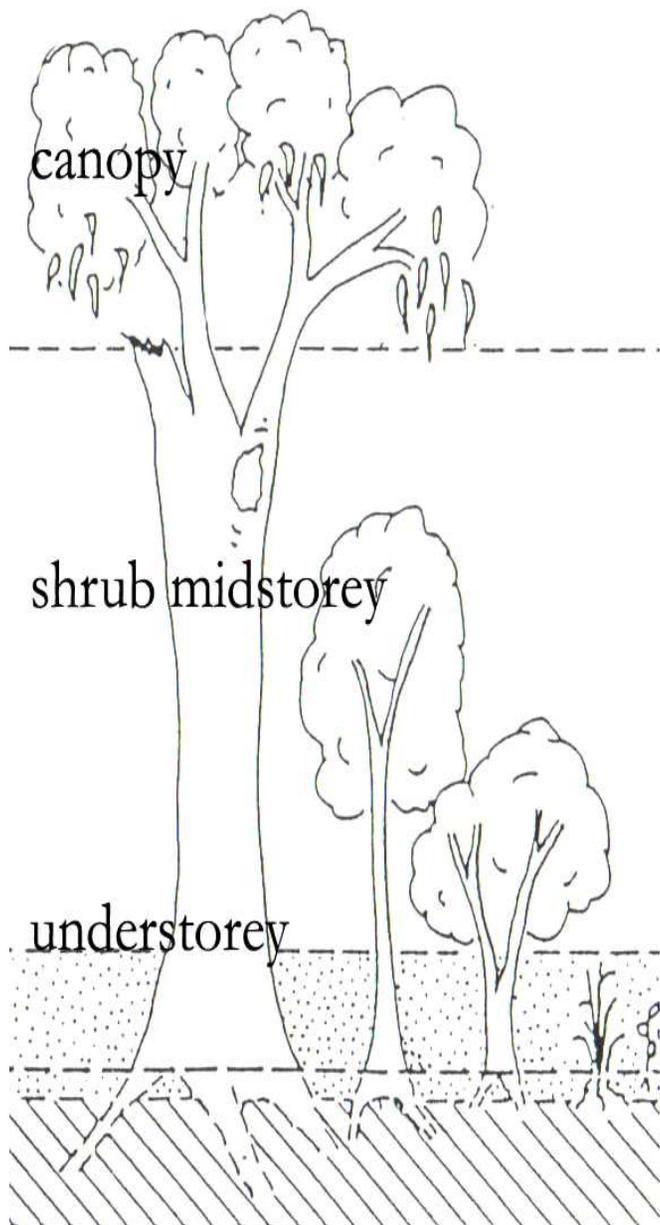
Not only do birds eat spiders, many use spiders' webs in the construction of their nests. Spiders are an important component of any ecosystem; many feed on seed eating insects that are responsible for poor germination. Web building spiders rely on a complex three dimensional structure of leaves, twigs and plants to build and maintain their snares. Spiders' webs that are left around windows are an easy source of nest binding material for birds such as Silveryeyes, robins and Eastern Spinebills.

### Water

A wide shallow dish is suitable for small and medium sized birds, but they will only drink and bathe if they feel safe. Ensure that available water is out of reach of predatory cats and has overhead vegetation which provides a screen from aerial predators like hawks or aggressive birds like butcherbirds, shrike-thrushes or kookaburras.

Compiled by Sarah Lloyd

happy bird gardening



## Feeding requirements of some bush birds

### Invertebrate (insects and spiders) eaters

#### Aerial feeders

Tree Martin  
Welcome Swallow  
Grey Fantail  
Satin Flycatcher

#### Foliage gleaners

Pardalotes  
Cuckoos  
Black-headed Honeyeater  
Golden Whistler  
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

#### Bark probers

Yellow-throated Honeyeater  
Scrubtit  
Grey Shrike-thrush  
Strong-billed Honeyeater

#### Ground foragers

Tasmanian Scrubwren  
Brown Quail  
Superb Fairy-wren  
Bassian Thrush  
Robin  
Brush and Common Bronzewing

### Nectar, fruit and seed eaters

#### Nectar

Musk Lorikeet  
Swift Parrot  
Eastern Spinebill  
Wattlebirds

#### Fruits

Currawongs  
Musk Lorikeets  
Eastern & Green Rosellas  
Silvereye

#### Seeds

Rosellas and Parrots  
Beautiful Firetail

## Some plants for bushbirds

### Canopy trees

Most local eucalypts will be too large for the average garden. For larger gardens suitable plants include  
Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*  
Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon*  
Barber's Gum *Eucalyptus barberi*  
Silver Peppermint *Eucalyptus tenuiramis*  
White Peppermint *Eucalyptus pulchella*

In smaller gardens, where tall trees are not appropriate, smaller trees can form a canopy:

She Oak *Allocasuarina* spp.  
Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata*  
Prickly Box *Bursaria spinosa*  
Native Olive *Notelaea ligustrina*  
Dogwood *Pomaderris apetala*

### Shrub midstorey

Climbing Blueberry *Billardiera longiflora*  
Bottlebrush *Callistemon* spp.  
Daisy Bushes *Cassinia* and *Olearia* spp.  
Native Currant *Coprosma quadrifida*  
Correas *Correa* spp.  
Hop Bush *Dodonaea viscosa*  
Hakea *Hakea* spp.  
Tree Violet *Hymenanthera dentata*  
Tea-tree *Leptospermum* spp.  
Paperbark *Melaleuca* spp.  
Cheesewood *Pittosporum bicolor*  
Prickly Beauty *Pultenaea juniperina*  
Kangaroo Apple *Solanum laciniatum*  
Waratah *Telopea truncata*

### Understorey Plants

Fishbone Water Fern *Blechnum nudum*  
Correa *Correa* spp.  
Flax Lily *Dianella* spp.  
Native Iris *Diplarena morea*  
Heath *Epacrid* spp.  
Cutting Grass *Gabnia grandis*  
Rush *Juncus* spp.  
Running postman *Kennedia prostrata*  
Sagg *Lomandra longifolia*  
Tussock Grasses *Poa* spp.  
Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra*

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also see: [WWW.birdsaustralia.com](http://WWW.birdsaustralia.com)