

ATTRACTING NATIVE BIRDS INTO YOUR YARD

BY LISA TREEN



feed and be safe from predators, they're more likely to visit and stick around. Apparently, native birds are more attracted to red and yellow

If your garden is anything like mine, it's a work in progress. The previous owners took great care in making it kid-friendly. That's a nice spin on what I would call stark and not very attractive. Over the course of two years, we've planted some attractive plants that fit the feel of the backyard we want. Pretty plants like bird of paradise, frangipani and bottlebrush add to the semi-tropical look we want to create. They also attract our most valued neighbours—native birds.

Even though we're only 12 kilometres from the centre of Sydney, we're inundated with an abundance of native birds. Most commonly our visitors are Rainbow Lorikeets, Cockatoos, Little Corella's and Kookaburra's. We sometimes get small flock of Black Cockatoos and recently had a White Faced Crane who was shopping for lizards.

Part of the reason why we have so many native visitors is because the area borders parklands that are brimming with native plants. It's one of Sydney's best-kept secrets as it contains the only bushland of any size left in the inner south-west of Sydney.

Regardless of where you live, you can attract native birds to your backyard. In the bird world, the big motivators are survival and procreation. If birds know they can get a

flowers so *Grevilleas* are a smart plant choice and thrive throughout the East Coast.

Little nesting boxes are another way you can attract native birds—Australian natives are drawn to nest in hollows of trees. Nesting boxes—available at places like Bunnings—can easily be put into a tree. You can attract guests by adding some seed—just put enough feed to attract birds, not enough to make them dependent on you.

Another way of attracting the nectar feeding birds (like Rainbow Lorikeets) is to find a balanced mix that you can add a little water to and leave in a place high enough that cats can't get to. Do not try to feed bread with honey on it! It's not healthy.

If offering seed, make sure it's been stored in an airtight container to keep out bugs and flour moths and larvae. And always make sure that when offering seed, you're not leaving out so much that it attracts the wrong kind of neighbours—rats and mice. You can also find seed blocks or cones that have a variety of seed to attract either small or large natives. These have hooks that you can hang high in a tree, away from predators. These blocks make birds work for their supper!



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Create a haven for native birds in your garden.

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Feeding wild birds in your garden can be a very enjoyable pastime, bringing nature to your world and delighting the whole family. If you've decided it's for you, then it's important to do it responsibly.

Providing wild birds with a supplementary food source during winter or drier months can be a very positive endeavour, especially if you keep in mind a few handy hints:

Not all birds are seed eaters, so fresh fruit or nectar mixes are great for nectar eating species

Correct nutrition is critical – as an example, black sunflower seeds are high in fat, so look for mixes that use grey-striped sunflower seeds, which have much lower fat levels

A diet of seeds alone is not a complete, nutritional diet, so try to find high quality seeds with added nutrients or fruit and nuts

Different species of birds eat different sizes and types of seeds, so once again, look for good quality mixes that will meet their dietary needs

Don't leave food out permanently; once or twice a day for a short period of time is ample, otherwise birds may over eat or become dependent on you

Birds need water as well, so a clean dish of fresh water or a bird bath, in a nice cool spot is ideal

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