

# Birds in Your Garden

## How to bring back the little ones...

Australia-wide, populations of many of our small bird species are declining. Once common birds such as finches, fairy-wrens, silvereyes and small honeyeaters, are becoming rare or, in some places, are no longer seen at all. There are many reasons for this, the biggest being the loss of places for them to live (habitat) and successfully raise their families.

The situation exists in both rural farmlands and in built-up urban areas; from big cities to rural townships. That means that we can all contribute towards saving our small birds irrespective of where we live or how big our gardens are. We just need to do things a little differently.

## Small changes for a big difference...

### Garden design and structure:

Simple open gardens provide little shelter or food for birds. We need to plant:

- dense shrubs close together so they form protective thickets.
- shrubs that provide a range of foods: nectar, seeds, fruit and habitat for insects.
- local plants that provide what the birds in our local areas need.
- below trees, creating a dense protective understory.
- less grass for mowing, but rather use native grasses that can seed and only need cutting occasionally.

We should:

- avoid using chemical sprays or applying chemical fertilizers.
- use lawn clippings and leaf litter on garden beds as mulch.

## Providing water:

Birds need fresh water, but they are vulnerable when they are drinking or bathing and need to feel safe.

We should:

- place birdbaths beyond the reach of cats, and in dappled shade.
- grow plants close to birdbaths so birds can perch and observe the area first.
- replace the water and clean the water container regularly.
- ask a neighbour to add water when we're away, so the birds don't lose their water supply.

## Provision of supplementary food:

It is much healthier for birds to glean natural food from our gardens than to be fed directly by people. However, many people really enjoy the contact they have with birds that they provide food for. If you want to provide extra food for birds make sure that:

- the feeding area is kept really clean.
- you don't feed meat-eating birds - encourage the small birds that are declining, not their predators.
- only provide good quality natural foods, e.g. finch seed rather than bread.

## Be a responsible pet owner:

Keep your cat inside or within an outside enclosure. This is safer for the cat as well as other wildlife.

- De-sexing prevents unwanted kittens.
- Deter other cats from entering your yard by spraying them with water.

**To find out more about the birds in your area**, creating gardens and habitat for birds at home, in school grounds or any open spaces, or undertaking bird surveys in your own garden or local area, see the Birds in Backyards website [www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

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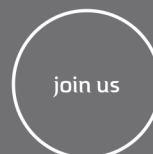
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With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

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Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats

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