

Kings Park Volunteer Guides - Training Course 2026

About Birds

Visitors may ask you about birds when you are in the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and on any walk. The nearest inner-metropolitan birding spots are Lake Monger (black swans), South Perth foreshore lakes and Lakes Claremont and Herdsman, where there are always interesting water birds around.

BirdLife Australia has carried out 22 surveys of Kings Park since 1989. The results indicate you might see up to 50 different species of birds in Kings Park. There is a brochure with coloured illustrations for both Kings Park and Bold Park. They are expensive and in short supply, so please do not hand them out indiscriminately. A bird brochure is a handy reference to keep in your bag when on walks.

If you are observant when taking a walk in the Botanic Garden, you might see about 12 species. Practically, you'll only be likely to have five birds close enough, and staying still enough, to indicate their features clearly to visitors. You will no doubt have your mind full of botany and history, so ask visitors who show an interest in birds to point them out to you. When you are taking a walk, try lifting your eyes from nearby plants etc and use your ears for the bird calls.

If you can't find a picture of the bird you are looking at, it's probably because it's in juvenile plumage. There are some excellent mobile phone apps that also play bird calls and these are a useful resource when you are doing your research.

Noongar people have a deep respect for *Djirda* (birds) and the role they play within their spirit and physical world and environment. *Djirda* are often messengers in Noongar **boodjar** (country). The Noongar names for birds often come from their calls. Next time you hear a bird call, think about their name in Noongar. Some Noongar bird names are italicised, in blue, in brackets beside the English common name. (The Marribank spelling system is used. See Sharon Gregory reference below.)

Some of the more likely birds to be found in the park:

BLACK-COCKATOO – both RED-TAILED and CARNABY'S (*ngoolyarak*), which is white-tailed. You can show visitors some of the discarded gumnuts and compare them with the drawings in the 'Chewed Gumnut' handout. Carnaby's is a Western Australian endemic species.

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE Large black and white bird you might initially confuse with the magpie. Usually found perching in the open on dead trees.

BROWN and SINGING HONEYEATERS Small brownish birds found around flowers, often noisy.

CORELLA (*manatj*) A white cockatoo, very noisy in groups. Could be any one of three species.

GALAH (*djarkal ngarkal*) Noisy pink and grey clowns! Hence used in Aussie slang, galah.

GREY FANTAIL They look the same size and shape as a willie wagtail but are brown coloured, with pretty facial markings.

KOOKABURRA – LAUGHING Although not from Noongar country, it does have a Noongar name (*kaa-kaa*). It was introduced to WA over a hundred years ago as a snake killer, but unfortunately now kills our small birds.

MAGPIE (*koolbardi*) Has a beautiful melodic warble. There are different markings between sexes. Markings on WA birds are different to eastern states birds. Not related to the magpies found overseas.

MAGPIE-LARK A common black and white bird with many different names. It is also called a peewee, peewit, mudlark or little magpie. Its name ‘magpie-lark’ is also confusing because it is neither a magpie nor a lark. It is more closely related to monarchs, fantails and drongos.

OSPREY (*yoondordoo*) This is a magnificent fish eagle and can often be seen from the Law Walk. It nests on top of a Norfolk Island pine near the Swan Brewery.

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK (*yet*) Found dabbling on the Women’s Pioneer Memorial Lake and resting on the grass. It has darker plumage, lighter head and distinctive darker ‘eye-liners’.

RAINBOW BEE-EATER Beautifully coloured bird which is quite common, that migrates from the north, staying in the south-west of Western Australia from October to March. It digs tunnels in the sand all over the park and builds its nests up to a metre inside. Keep an eye out for the tunnel entrances along the bush paths and even the Broadwalk in summer. Distinctive calling voice.

RAINBOW LORIKEET Very beautiful, but a problem! Always in Kings Park, usually in small noisy groups. They were introduced to WA about 40 years ago and there is now estimated to be a population of 25,000 in and around Perth. The latest information is that they will spread further afield and peak at 125,000!

RAVEN (*wardon*) No, it is not a crow. In Perth it’s always a RAVEN. Adults have white eyes; juveniles have black eyes.

RED WATTLEBIRD (*wadjarak*) The largest of the honeyeaters with red facial ‘wattles’, raucous! Learn how to demonstrate its method of pollenating a kangaroo paw.

RINGNECK PARROT (*doonart*) Four species found in Australia. Two are found locally and may interbreed, resulting in confusing variations to be found in the park. The true ‘twenty-eight’ has a red dot on its forehead and totally green underside. The other is the Port Lincoln parrot with a green chest and a bright yellow belly and no red dot.

RUFIOUS WHISTLER The male has a bold rufous chest and a white bib. In springtime one can be treated to a loud song of whistles and warbles in the bushland areas.

SILVEREYE, WESTERN GERYGONE, THORNBILL, PARDALOTE and SITTELLA All are very small birds with small bills and are found in mixed groups amongst the treetop canopies. They can be very difficult to differentiate (even with binoculars), so knowing their different calls can be very helpful in telling them apart.

TAWNY FROGMOUTH It is a night bird that, once you have been told where it is roosting in the daytime, is a delight to point out to visitors. It is believed that frogmouths never drink water as such, but obtain sufficient liquid from what they eat. Also, they have the extraordinary ability to move and focus each eye independently of the other.

TURTLE-DOVES Either the LAUGHING or the larger SPOTTED, which were both introduced from overseas.

WEEBILL The world's second smallest bird, 8 - 9 cm and weighs 6 grams. (The smallest is a bee hummingbird from Cuba, 5 - 6 cm and weighs 1.6 - 1.8 grams.) The weebill is often heard, but difficult to get a clear view of, as it feeds on blossoms and sweet tasting lerp bugs higher up on the treetop foliage. It has a distinctive calling voice. Keep a leaf with lerp on it in your bag to demonstrate.

WELCOME SWALLOW and **TREE MARTIN** These birds spend most of their days on the wing. They are most easily seen when they come down to water to drink, and have a distinctive calling voice.

WESTERN WATTLEBIRD Similar to but not as common as the red wattlebird. It has no visible wattles. It is a WA endemic.

WHITE-CHEEKED and **NEW HOLLAND (*bandin*) HONEYEATERS** Quite similar looking black and white birds with yellow on the wings. Often seen on flowering shrubs. Photograph well.

WILLIE WAGTAIL (*djidi-djidi*) Regularly sighted in the park and found all over Australia. Perhaps point out its white eyebrows and its ability to enlarge them when feeling aggressive.

WOOD DUCK (*marangana*) Found grazing around the Pioneer Fountain. Beautifully speckled light plumage with darker head. Female has white 'eye-liners'.

Some other information to share:

There are just under 800 species of birds in Australia, approximately 300 of which are found in the south-west of WA, which has about 16 endemic species. The Carnaby's and the western wattlebird are the only endemic species likely to be found in and around Kings Park.

Birds and plants rely on each other! Birds need the plants to provide them with nectar and the plants need the birds to energetically spread their pollen and seeds over as wide an area as possible. Many plants can't survive without specific birds and many birds can't survive without specific plants. In most parts of the world, the smaller birds only eat insects and seeds. However, in Australia, birds and flowers have evolved alongside each other; the birds, especially the honeyeaters, collect nectar as a high energy reward for pollinating the flowers! Unlike plants, which are still being discovered all the time in Australia, it is thought that all bird species in Australia have been identified. If you can't find a bird in a bird book, then you are most likely looking at a juvenile bird.

Birds' eyes are equipped to see the same three basic colours as human eyes, plus they are capable of seeing UV light. It is probable that in the many species where we are unable to see the difference between the sexes, they do so by using the UV spectrum. Also, they will see more subtle colours in the detail of flowers.

The noisy scrub-bird is probably WA's most famous and sought-after bird. Missing for 70 years, then rediscovered in 1961, it is only to be found around Two Peoples Bay near Albany. It is ranked 25th on the list of internationally most threatened species. It is very difficult to see, can't fly, lives in thick scrub and is very noisy!

Recommended books that you might find interesting and useful:

Simon Nevill, *Birds of Western Australia*

Tim Low, *Where Song Began*

Sharon Gregory, *Noongar Language Dictionary*, 2017

Useful websites include:

<https://birdlife.org.au/>

<https://www.canning.wa.gov.au/about-us/about-the-area/aboriginal-culture-and-heritage/birds-of-country>

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