



NORTH RIDGE COMMITTEE
SOME COMMON BIRDS OF COOMA

White-Winged Chough. (Pronounced ‘chuff’) This is of a similar species and size (43–47 cm) to the Pied Currawong but very different in behaviour. It is gregarious in nature and most commonly seen in groups of five to ten, thus giving rise to them sometimes being mistakenly referred to as ‘Apostle’ birds.



The White-Winged Chough feeds mostly on the ground. If it is disturbed, take note of the large white patch on the flight feathers. They tend to flap from branch to branch as a group continuing a noisy ‘hass’ sound until the disturbance passes. Parties of Choughs are known to kidnap young birds from neighbouring groups.



Silvereye. The Silvereye is a small (10-12.5 cm) bird with green head, and conspicuous ring of white feathers around the eye, reinforced with a thin black outer rim. When feeding it works through foliage searching for insects, berries and fruit. A brush tipped tongue is used to eat nectar. Its movements are bouncy and rapid, accompanied by a rapid succession of high-pitched notes, trills, and warbles.



Yellow-Tailed Black-Cockatoo. This cockatoo is native to the South-east of Australia and is the largest of the cockatoos, and of all Australian parrots, measuring 55-65 cm.



They feed in small to large flocks, favouring eucalypt woodland and pine plantations. On North Ridge there are Black Cypress Pines, Manna or Ribbon Gum, Broad-leaved Peppermint and the Inland Scribbly Gum. They can be seen ripping bark off the eucalypts to obtain the wood-boring larvae found under the bark and biting into pine cones to get the tiny seed within.

Small to large flocks can be seen in these areas, either perched or flying on slowly flapping wings, generally calling with their weird, far-carrying squealing.

Grey Fantail. Another small bird 14-17 cm. It is grey with short white eyebrows with white marks behind the eyes and white tips to wing coverts.

During waking hours the bird is almost never still. It flits from perch to perch, sometimes on the ground, but mostly on the twigs of a tree or any other convenient object, looking out for flying insects.



The birds are inquisitive and will often flit within a few metres of humans, with a characteristic flutter. They may even follow people for short distances especially in

forested areas. In doing so, they are able to catch any small flying insects that may have been disturbed by human activities such as walking or digging.

The nest is a beautiful small grey cup, tailed like a wineglass without a base, of fine grass, bark-strips, plant-fibre and spiders' web.



Grey Butcherbird. The Butcherbird (24-30 cm) is a member of the same family that includes the Australian Magpie, the Currawong and the Woodswallow.

The Grey Butcherbird is a resident of North Ridge Reserve and nearby suburbia. It has one of the most beautiful whistles of all Australian birds and is described variously as rollicking, rich piping, melodic, sometimes with harsher notes. It is often started by the male and continued by the females. The Butcherbird preys on small vertebrates including other birds. It gets its name from its

practice of hanging captured prey on a hook or thorn or wedged in a crevice, creating a larder for later convenient use. This also attracts mates. The butcherbird has a comparatively large bill with a distinct hook on the tip of the upper bill.

Pied Currawong. The Pied Currawong is a large (44-51 cm), mostly black bird, with a bright yellow eye. Small patches of white are confined to the under tail, the tips and bases of the tail feathers and a small patch towards the tip of each wing (visible in flight). The bill is large and black and the legs are dark grey-black. Both sexes are similar, although the female may sometimes be greyer on the underparts. Young Pied Currawongs are duller and browner than the adults.

It prefers forests and woodlands, and has become well adapted to suburban areas. Its food includes small lizards, insects, caterpillars and berries. However it also takes a large number of small and young birds, especially around urban areas where suitable cover is scarce. Larger prey, up to the size of a young possum, is sometimes also taken, and birds will occasionally hunt as a group. Prey may be stored in a 'larder' (hung on a hook or in a tree fork or crevice) to be either eaten straight away or, in the case of larger prey, over a period of time.

Throughout its range it is common and familiar. The main call sounds like 'currar-currar' or another 'jabaok! jabawok!'



White-backed Magpie. The White-backed magpie (38-44 cm) which is seen on the North Ridge Reserve is one of the two principal mainland races of the Australian magpie. The other is the Black-backed magpie. These two races readily hybridise, producing intermediates with varying amounts of black and/or white on their backs.

The song is rich and mellow, and often sung by two or three birds. Nests are made of a compact shallow bowl of sticks, and lined with grass, wool, or hair. These can be seen in a fork or branch in the outer part of a tree, 5-6 metres high above the ground. These birds are highly territorial and will defend their nests during the breeding season, from August to October, by swooping at cyclists or walkers. However they are not generally aggressive and in most cases will swoop low as a warning, giving you time to make haste.



They live in family groups of 3-20 birds and walk along the ground during the day in search of insects such as grasshoppers. Grubs and worms are found by jabbing their strong, straight, triangular white beaks into the ground. Insects are swallowed whole but their beak is used to break up larger food before eating it. Birds can become tame and able to be hand fed.

Crimson Rosella. The Crimson Rosella (32-37 cm) is native to Eastern and South-eastern Australia. This is a showy common parrot, crimson with blue cheeks, shoulders and tail. The back is mottled black. The immature birds usually outnumber the adults and are golden-olive with patchy crimson forehead, throat and under the tail coverts. The juvenile gradually attains mature plumage over a period of 15 months.



They can be found in eucalypt forests, alpine and other woodlands, parks and gardens, and are easily attracted to garden seed trays. Normally they are found in pairs or small flocks, feeding on foliage, cracking seed-capsules, and flower seeds and eating some tree blossoms.

Their call is varied, a bell-like contact note, a 'kussik, kussik', or a shrill alarm call.



Tawny Frog Mouth. Although the Tawny Frog Mouth is a large bird (33-50 cm) it is rarely seen during the day. Their grey mottled to dark plumage camouflage them as they roost branch-like in the tree. They become active at dusk gliding silently down like a Kookaburra to seize prey. They are generally found in pairs.



The Tawny Frog Mouth is the most widespread frogmouth, others being the Marbled and the Papuan. It has a wide range of habitats including forest, rainforest margins; tracks, clearings; and open woodlands. It is found in all parts of Australia.

It can be heard at night with a resonant, low, pulsing 'oom-oom-oom-oom', slow or rapid, and difficult to locate. Its nests are flimsy, made of sticks and leaves built on a horizontal fork 5-10 m high above the ground.