

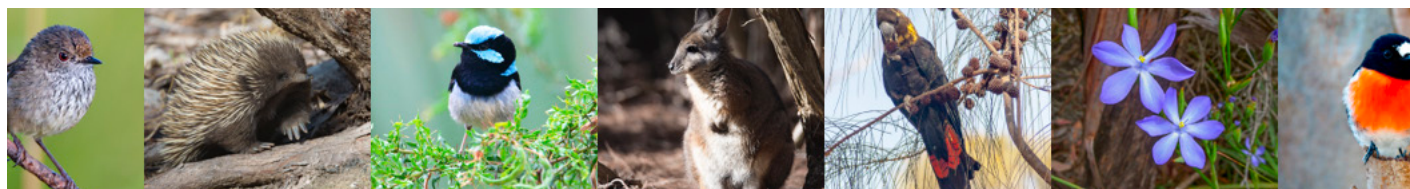
WILDSCAPING YOUR TOURISM BUSINESS

Ideas, tools and approaches to
elevate wildlife elements into the
Kangaroo Island visitor experience

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INTRODUCTION

The Wildscaping your Tourism Business toolkit was developed by the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance as part of the Australian Government Regional Recovery Fund for Tourism. It provides you as a tourism operator with a set of tools to make the wildlife elements of your business more accessible to customers. It also offers plenty of opportunities for community members and business hosts to improve their knowledge, get further involved in nature and to support sustainable wildlife encounters.

Some of these sections are written for operators, giving ideas to better engage visitors in our nature. Other sections are written directly for visitors, so businesses can share these fact sheets and information with travellers before or during a visit, or provide them to agents and distribution partners to enhance their services. The format provided should make it an easy process to personalise with your own logo and contact details to further enhance your brand.

There is no expectation that you implement all of this - but it is presented to show you ways you can align with a key Kangaroo Island brand pillar. Becoming more active in encouraging our visitors to engage with our wildlife will help ensure your business stays appealing and delivers on our current and future visitor aspirations.

Every business is different. Our recommendation is that you adopt a few of the ideas presented to improve your guest experience and also listen and respond to your visitors to see what else you may be able to do - these ideas are just a start. It is also worthwhile chatting to other tourism colleagues - we have an excellent network of operators and by sharing experiences and observations we all learn and grow.

This project has a strong focus on birdwatching, partly as it is increasingly recognised as a major interest for many visitors, but also because birds are active during the day and plentiful in a range of landscapes. Birdwatching is an easy way for guests to slow down, look around them and spend time enjoying nature. As they start looking at birds, they might see other things that engage them, such as flowers the birds are visiting, some of our skinks and other small creatures, and perhaps even the insects that surround us. By slowing down guests will have a better chance of spotting a passing echidna, or goanna sunning itself, or a koala sitting quietly in a tree.

Even if guests do not consider themselves birdwatchers, this activity is a simple way to start increasing our visitor's enjoyment of the Island's natural experiences. If they are birdwatchers - you have just aligned your business with a major global travel segment.

Note on hyperlinks

We have included many hyperlinks to examples showing how others are showcasing their wildlife to visitors. There are also links to helpful web sites giving greater detail on the suggestions that have been made. Hyperlinks are always altering, so over time many of these may not function. If you encounter a broken link, first try to look at the primary landing page. For example <https://www.nestingboxes.com.au/Eastern-Barn-Owl> might be updated and that link lost. In this case if you simply try www.nestingboxes.com.au you would probably still find what you are seeking. Alternatively you should be able find some appropriate content through a quick web search for "Barn Owl Nestbox Design" or similar..

WILDLIFE THROUGH THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Before we launch into your visitor experience, it is worth thinking about the whole customer journey. A big part of leisure travel is the anticipation of the holiday - and at the other end, the great memories that persist long after guests return home.. So it is important to consider how you might structure your business engagement so you can weave the wildlife experience into every part of the customer journey. Take a minute to consider this information throughout the whole customer journey: dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing and sharing.

Dreaming

Does your website have inspirational videos and photos? Are these available for distribution partners if you are trade-focused? Do you promote positive reviews that mention wildlife encounters available at your business? Are there species you often see which might entice someone to include you on their KI visit, which you can use on social posts - FaceBook, Instagram and YouTube? Is the experience the same year-round? You could review your website and other channels to ensure that you give a sense of seasonal changes.

Planning

Are there seasonal events you could highlight so potential guests know what their experiences might be at a particular time of year? Can you provide lists of birds and animals seen all year (echidnas, kangaroos, blue wrens) or seasonal (goannas, long-nosed fur-seals, chance of whales)? Can you suggest a “what to bring” list so guests know what would help them see and learn more? Things like binoculars, bird books or downloadable bird lists. It would be a welcome addition to someone’s planning if they know you supply these for their use. The Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance has a suite of wildlife and fact sheets which are a great complement to the information contained in this toolkit. These can be used as they are or re-branded with your business information.

Can you share links from your website or social pages, so guests engage with common interest groups before they visit? For example, guests interested in a particular bird can ask on the Kangaroo Island Birding Facebook site, with 800+ members (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/910883692309729>). If this link does not work - search for Kangaroo Island Birding on Facebook. Keen photographers might want to know the best places to photograph sunset across the water - they could link to Kangaroo Island Photography www.facebook.com/groups/762742613760795. If this link does not work - search for Kangaroo Island Photography on Facebook.

Booking

Can you suggest additional experiences that guests bundle in with your services when booking? Particularly at busy times, pre-booking key experiences could be a helpful value-add, so guests do not miss out. Depending on your business type, you could partner with tour operators, attractions, and experiences, which might increase the length of stay. If you do not already have relationships with operators whose services might align well with your own, have a look at www.tourkangarooisland.com.au or speak to the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance team.

Can guests download [iNaturalist](#) or similar Apps in advance, so they are ready to explore, learn and share when they get to you? Are there fact sheets you might attach to your confirmation so they can read up in advance? What about suggesting guests download Apps to assist in identification like [FrogID](#), which allows you to identify frogs by sounds. Another way of getting guests involved in advance is with the [Echidna CSI App](#).

Linking future guests to the Passport to Recovery programme (unsure of most appropriate link) and Island Guardians (ditto appropriate link) are other ways to drive further engagement.



Experiencing

Think about how you can enhance guest experiences when they are with you. You could remind guests they are free to use your books, watercolours, binoculars or bird lists. Encourage them to document their experiences to add to the information you can share. You might print off some touring itineraries as a personalised experience. For example this could include:

- the osprey nest at the Bay of Shoals boat ramp
- bird hides at American River, Duck Lagoon and Reeves Point
- the silo art with the Glossy Black-Cockatoo
- Stokes Bay toilets with its' creative Hooded Plover artwork
- walking trails including reference to likely wildlife encounters
- Your favourite birding spots (check the Kangaroo Island Birdwatching Guide for inspiration)

You could also write a welcome letter that points out all of the resources guests can use - checklists, birdbaths, nest boxes and walking trails. Plus booking with a guide/expert to ensure they make the most of their time.

Sharing

Given the digital elements are so important, are you set up to encourage reviews (TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google, TrustPilot) and share the experiences guests have with you? Are there specific hashtags you use? Give guests your Instagram, Facebook and YouTube links, so their reviews go to your business, not a generic Kangaroo Island page. Does your guest book have a statement that allows the use of guest testimonials in your marketing?

DIGITAL RESOURCES

There is a range of digital tools to interact with past, present and future customers. These are your website, blogs, social media channels, Apps for identification and Citizen-science participation, images and videos, electronic brochures, fact sheets, welcome letters, and reviews.

Websites

Your website is one of the most important and trustworthy channels to market in communicating to travellers directly and to any trade partners you may have. By including information on wildlife on your property and nearby, you align yourself with the interests of many Island visitors. Examples are linked to websites of businesses that have done this in [Cairns](#), [Bruny Island](#) and the [Barossa Valley](#). Consider adding a date to images so seasonality becomes apparent through your online image or video library.

Blogs

Blogs are a great way to tell deeper stories about your place, your business, and the characters who bring your business to life. There is significant upside to blogs from a Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) perspective, as blogs are deliberately chock-full of keywords your targeted audience searches for. Some good examples of wildlife-oriented blogs for you to consider are [Australian Wildlife Journeys](#), [Australian Geographic](#), [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#), [the Wildlife Diaries](#), and one from a winery, [Helen and Joey Estate](#). You can blog on seasonal sightings, updating them every year and including significant one-off sightings or natural events like observing an echidna train in winter.

Social Media

Social media channels LOVE wildlife stories - and you can go wild with video, images, “how-to” posts, and even music. “How-to” posts are those helpful posts where you might put up a post “best way to plan a family wildlife holiday on Kangaroo Island” or “Can you see echidnas on Kangaroo Island”. Often the images or video snippets you get might drive the topic and you then think of a creative way to turn that into a helpful post for travellers. You can post to your own channels but also consider posting on other sites where potential customers interact and engage to amplify your voice and reach. One useful structure is to establish a seasonal blog on your website that addresses each season and can be updated, and then link seasonal social media posts back to that to give context. This will work to build your website traffic and improve your chances to have a year-round business.

Facebook

You should have your own Facebook site for your business - and get into a rhythm of regular posting of relevant information. A good example is [Conmurra](#) near Bathurst - as well as having a good site, they recognise invertebrates are part of the wildlife mix. One post picked up by Tourism Australia and shared on [Australia.com](#) is from [Allure Beach Retreat](#) at Pennington Bay (Search Allure Beach Retreat on Facebook). Make sure your site is set up to accept FaceBook [reviews](#). Another opportunity with Facebook is for you to join special interest groups. These link you to like-minded people who are potential customers, can share your observations, and even assist with identification. You can share these sites with guests as part of a booking confirmation so they can start their experience before they arrive. Links are provided for [bird identification](#), a [local birdwatching group](#), [photography](#), [mammals](#) and even a fun one for those [untroubled by photographic skills](#) (search Crap Bird Photography on Facebook). There are groups for [frog ID](#), [reptiles](#), and [fungi](#). A local group shares interpretation of [fire ecology and recovery](#) (search KI Guides - Bushfire Recovery Interp on Facebook).

Instagram

Different demographics engage on other platforms - with Instagram being a preferred medium for younger travellers. It is an image-driven platform - initially photographs, but now video is a crucial component, as is editing the post to add text and music. Instagram is where hashtags come into their own. Look at [#kangarooislandaccommodation](#) as an example or [#kangarooislandwildlife](#) as another. [Kangaroo Island Coastal Villas](#) use this platform creatively, as do [Sealoft](#), [Stowaway](#), [Hanson Bay Sanctuary](#) and [Emu Bay Lavender Farm](#).

Tiktok

Another platform favoured by a younger demographic where users generate a lot of content. Examples showcase **Australian birds**, **Stowaway**, **Ecopia Retreats**, a cold **Tassie wombat** in the wild, and **Exceptional Kangaroo Island** having fun with music choice. This channel has room to add enterprise-generated content, as a majority is user generated.

Youtube

Not only a place to host your video content but a critical search engine used by potential customers. You can curate a playlist and encourage guests to share their videos. You do not need highly crafted video content - travellers expect to see content from real people. They would not expect a glossy fully-produced video as they relate well to the same style of content they might generate themselves.

Webcams

Webcams are a more specialist way of giving a window into the lives of the birds and animals surrounding us. A selection of different settings and species can be found at www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/. A simple way to do this with a bird hide or a birdbath is to set up a camera, take a video, and then edit it down to a highlights reel of 2-3 minutes. The actual webcam might have long periods with not much happening. If your online viewers are in a different time zone, they may be looking at a black screen as it is the middle of the night!

Apps

In addition to social media already mentioned, many apps and websites useful for identification can be used by businesses and shared with guests. Some are free, and others are available for purchase. A good bird identification App is Morcombe and Stewart eGuide to the Birds of Australia (apps.apple.com/au/app/morcombe-stewart-guide/id397979505 or play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.coolideas.eproducts.ausbirds&hl=en_AU&gl=US) which includes pictures, distribution maps, description and bird calls.

The Australian Museum Frog Identification website www.frogid.net.au has links to an Apple and Android Frog ID App with all-important calls so helpful in identifying our hopping neighbours. The South Australian Museum has an App covering various animal species ([field-guide-to-south-australian-fauna](#)).

Plants are more of a challenge, given the vast number of species, and most Apps are international in focus. You might have to go old-school and refer to Ann Prescott's excellent book "Blue with Five Petals". If you want to join in with a collaborative community and add to the knowledge base of Australia's natural history, an excellent App is iNaturalist. Whilst it was developed in the US, it has impressive local content. The information feeds into the Atlas of Living Australia - find out more at www.inaturalist.org - there are Android and Apple Apps. The concept is signing up as a user, photographing a plant, fungi or animal and uploading the image with an ID if you know it or even a close guess. Once the community agrees or improves your identification, the status is upgraded to Research grade, and your observation is shared publicly. A similar function for survey and census is the eBird App - details are accessed at ebird.org/home.

Other apps are:

- Pizzey and Knight - Birds of Australia \$49.99 Stewart
- Australian Bird Calls \$34.99
- Vertebrates & Terrestrial Invertebrates (free)
- Wetland Birds Field Guide: Birdlife Australia (free)

"Birds in Backyards" is an annual survey with a website and app - details can be found at www.birdsinbackyards.net. This count will be from 17-23 October 2022, but the tools can be used anytime to find a bird.

Pre-visit welcome letter with links

By suggesting guests bring binoculars, guidebooks, reusable water bottles, daypacks and cameras, they will start to think about exploring and observing wildlife. If you provide these on-site, guests will appreciate knowing they do not need to bring their own.

Think about including things from this toolkit that you have implemented - like “remember to ask us about keeping the birdbath full” or you might like to advise that you have installed nest boxes and any tips about getting the best experience around the nestboxes and whether there are sensitive times when you want to avoid disturbance. You might also include links to some of the Apps or websites mentioned so guests can access these in advance or use them for planning their visit.

Reviews and testimonials

These can be digital - using sites like: TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com.au), Google Reviews (support.google.com/business/answer), Trustpilot (trustpilot.com) or Facebook (Review Trackers provide some excellent advice for Facebook reviews at reviewtrackers.com/blog/facebook-reviews).

A more traditional source of reviews and testimonials is your visitor book is a potential source of testimonials to publish on your website, choosing those which align with or amplify elements of your business you wish to promote.

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY ELEMENTS

There are many things you can do to enhance the environment in and around your tourism business.

Birdbath or water feature

By putting out water for birds, you can guarantee your guests will be rewarded with their enthusiastic drinking and bathing. Birdbaths also provide excellent photo and video opportunities. Birds need fresh water, but they are vulnerable when drinking or bathing and need to feel safe. There are some easy tips to ensure birds have a safe, clean birdbath.

Place your birdbath so birds can perch nearby to observe the surrounding areas before bathing. If you have dense shrubs or trees nearby, they can seek cover if necessary. Hanging a birdbath from a tree or using a pedestal bath minimises the risks of feral cats. A pot saucer on the ground makes a suitable birdbath if cats are not a problem. Keep the water cool. Birds prefer baths that are placed in dappled shade. Replace the water regularly, so it is always fresh and clean the birdbath regularly by scrubbing with a nylon brush and rinsing with clean water. Avoid using chemical agents.

If the bath is deep or has a smooth base (such as a glazed pot), place pebbles or a brick in it so that if a bird or lizard falls in, it can grip onto it and climb out. Alternatively, place an old branch or stick in the water. Provide different water levels because different bird species use different depths of water. Multiple birdbaths will attract a variety of bird species. Birdbaths placed on rocks are also great for attracting other wildlife, especially frogs. Providing water is all you will need to attract birds to your garden. Putting out food such as seeds, breadcrumbs or coconut can attract mice and rats to your property.

Going away? Ask a neighbour to add water so your birds don't lose their water supply - you do not want to get a reputation as an unreliable host! Or engage your visitors and leave a plastic jug so they can top it up themselves.



A Diverse garden

Whether natural or planted, make sure you consider flowering year-round - for example, Correas and Banksias provide essential winter nectar for nectivores. Spiky plants like Hakeas and Bursaria provide cover and nesting sites for small bush birds. The Kangaroo Island Landscapes Board runs a [native plant nursery](#) with plants grown from locally sourced seed. Nursery Manager, Veronica Bates, has generously offered to provide advice and assistance on choosing appropriate plants for your area.

A guide that includes some plants common on Kangaroo Island is [Rachel-Stuppos-Plant-Book.pdf](#). There is a local coastal gardening brochure that can be downloaded from <https://www.slideshare.net/Kardatou54a/g1o207>. You might even want to consider revegetation if you have larger open areas. In this case, specialist advice from the Landscape Board or even specialised NGO groups like [Trees for Life](#) and [BioR](#) might be valuable resources. Suppose you leave leaf litter and fallen timber on the ground. In that case, you provide excellent habitat for geckoes, skinks, insects and invertebrates and cater for visiting echidnas. [Retaining dead trees](#) or even dead limbs is important as bare branches are useful perches and are important candidates for developing natural hollows. Birdlife Australia has an excellent summary of birdscaping gardens at www.birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Attracting-birds-to-garden.pdf. A book which is the absolute reference for a bird-friendly garden, that is also full of remarkable natural history observations and a life-time of accumulated knowledge is the late Graham Pizzey's **The Australian Bird-Garden**, ISBN 0 207 19675 3.

Hollows and Nestboxes

Retaining natural hollows and adding nest boxes is a great way to enhance the habitat for bats, possums and many birds. There is a remarkable reliance on hollows as shelters and nest sites by Australian birds and animals. 17 percent of Australian birds and over 40 percent of our mammals rely on them. The combination of land development for agriculture and impact of bushfires means we have lost many natural hollows. It can take up to 200 years for hollows to develop in Eucalypts so providing artificial hollows can be of great benefit to nature.

There is plenty of information about the needs of different creatures. The primary considerations are the size of the box, size of hole, “ladders” or perches, height above ground, maintenance, bees, aspect, and ensuring entrances face away from prevailing weather. An overview of bird nest boxes can be accessed at www.birdsinbackyards.net. More technical information on nestboxes sizes for different birds is contained at https://birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Nestbox-technical.pdf. Some birds, like Spotted Pardalotes, have particular accommodation requirements - luckily, we know what they are: www.birdsinbackyards.net/file/Spotted-Pardalote-nest-box-0. This design will also work for Striated Pardalotes.

For bats, have a look at www.ausbats.org.au/install-a-microbat-house.html. If you want accommodation for possums, the wildlife rescue group Wires offer advice www.wires.org.au/wildlife-information/making-a-possum-box. Even the smallest marsupials welcome some housing assistance. If you want to be an architect and landlord for pygmy possums, check out <https://nestboxtales.com/nest-box-designs/designs-pygmy-possum/>. Once you decide on final designs and decide nest box building is not in your skillset, why not reach out to a handy neighbour or even a local Men’s Shed to help out.

Drinking water

Depending on where you live and your soil type, providing drinking water might be very welcome. It may also stop kangaroos toppling your birdbath. As for birdbaths, hygiene is essential. A more remote location might keep grazers away from certain parts of your garden if their pruning assistance is too vigorous! If you live in an area inhabited by snakes, retain some open space between water points and locations used by people to lower the risk of close encounters.

Feeding wildlife - or not?

This is a subject where you will have a broad spectrum of opinions and need to consider these on their merits. Too much food can increase populations and over-browsing or even predation for some species. It can also lead to a change in the mix of the species in the immediate area, and it is often the smaller species impacted. The wrong diet can lead to disease or poor health for some creatures. Hand-feeding can also cause wildlife to lose their fear of people. Some, such as large male kangaroos, can become aggressive and even dangerous. As it often attracts rats and mice, you need to think carefully before doing this.

Pest management

Providing a wildlife-friendly environment might include feral plant and animal control in some settings. This could be removing weeds like bridal creeper and trapping or reporting feral cats and pigs. It can also include reducing elements that might attract rats and mice. If you keep chickens, carefully managing grain and other food can be significant.

Wildlife and pets

Whether you have pets of your own who live or visit your place of business or offer a pet-friendly establishment for guests travelling with pets - ensure you have a safe environment for their exercise and places where they cannot go so they and the local wildlife stay safe. Allure Beach Retreat at Pennington Bay welcomes pets but asks that they be kept inside overnight.

Sanctuary

You might consider declaring your property a formal sanctuary like Ecopia Retreats has done for heightened legal protection of wildlife. The signage is a tangible declaration of the value placed on nature by the business owners.

TOOLS AND TIPS – AN “A TO Z” OF IDEAS

Art and Photography

The Island has spectacular landscapes, birds and animals, so include this as part of the theme for your decor - whether you have accommodation, a restaurant, a cellar door or an attraction. Much of the local art has a wildlife focus, so incorporating this can extend the wildlife experience. If you are an artist or photographer, you could partner with an online printing and framing service to offer your work to the world and use it in your business. Many of the local galleries have photos, painting, sculptures and even jewellery that features wildlife and nature so ensure you celebrate the creative side of our community as part of your visitor hosting. You have options indoors, outdoors or even wearable art.

Best times and seasons

Many elements can impact your success in watching wildlife. The season influences the presence of migratory species like whales or waders such as sharp-tailed sandpipers and the visibility of goannas that are less active in cooler months. Small marsupials are almost always nocturnal. Other animals, like echidnas, are active on mild days and switch to nocturnal when it is hot. Tides are essential for planning if you seek shorebirds on the coast. Low tide can mean more mudbanks and sandbars are exposed for foraging, but a high tide will bring them closer to dry land. This is relevant for bird hides at American River (near the fire station) and Reeves Point (at the point of the heritage park immediately north of Kingscote). Examples of tide tables can be found for Kingscote (<https://tides.willyweather.com.au/sa/kangaroo-island/kingscote.html>), Stokes Bay (<https://tides.willyweather.com.au/sa/kangaroo-island/stokes-bay.html>), Penneshaw (<https://tides.willyweather.com.au/sa/kangaroo-island/penneshaw.html>) and Vivonne Bay (<https://tides.willyweather.com.au/sa/kangaroo-island/vivonne-bay.html>)

If you encounter challenging conditions, whether wind, rain or sweltering weather, it pays to think about the activity time and wind direction. In hot weather, your chances of seeing wildlife are enhanced early or late in the day, in the evening and after dark. If windy or stormy, seek offshore winds. For example, American River is sheltered during sou-westerly winds. Bay of Shoals between the boat ramp and Reeves Point is often sheltered in summer south-easterly winds.

Books and posters

There are many excellent books to identify or provide a deeper understanding of key species - some are local, and others have an Australia-wide coverage. A selection has been shortlisted for you. Have a look at the following resources:

Books

Baxter (2015) **Birds of Kangaroo Island: A Photographic Field Guide** ATF Press ISBN 9781921511189

DeMather and Tilbrook (2013) **Our Life the Beach E-Book** BirdLife Australia www.birdlife.org.au/documents/BNB-OurLifeTheBeach.pdf

Dolby and Clarke (2014) **Finding Australian Birds E-Book** CSIRO Publishing ISBN 9781486300846

Menkhorst et al (2019) **The Australian Bird Guide** CSIRO Publishing ISBN 9781486311934

Menkhorst et al (2022) **The Compact Australian Bird Guide** CSIRO Publishing ISBN 9781486312245

Morcombe (2003) **Field Guide to Australian Birds** Steve Parish Publishing ISBN 9781740214179

Pizzey (2000) **The Australian Bird-Garden**, Harper Collins, ISBN 0207196753

Pizzey et al (2012) **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** (9th Edition) Harper Collins ISBN 9780732291938

Simpson and Day (2018) **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** (8th Edition) Angus and Robertson ISBN 9780670072316

Slater et al (2009) **The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds** (2nd Edition) New Holland Publishers ISBN 9781877069635

Strahan (Ed) (1983) **The Australian Museum Complete Book of Australian Mammals**, Angus and Robertson ISBN 0207144540

A nice thing to do if you have a guest library is to display the main references with post-it notes as bookmarks for the relevant species.

Posters

- Encouraging people to explore our shorelines:
- <https://www.gould.org.au/product/beachcombing-archive-poster>
- Exploring the bush: <https://www.gould.org.au/product/bush-treasures-poster-archive>
- Some excellent resources for little travellers:
- <https://www.gould.org.au/product-category/reference-id/>
- Some environmental activities: <https://www.gould.org.au/product-category/books/>.
- Common native birds of Kangaroo Island poster (Birdlife Australia pdf)

Booklets

- Kangaroo Island Bird Identification Booklet (Birdlife Australia .pdf)
- Other resources for engaging young people in nature have a look at <https://birdlife.org.au/projects/beach-nesting-birds/for-kids-and-teachers>
- Wetlands Bird ID Booklet (Birdlife Australia pdf)
- Shorebirds ID Booklet (Birdlife Australia pdf)
- My Tern Booklet (Birdlife Australia pdf)
- [Shorebird Resources | BirdLife](#)

Bird lists

Consider developing a list of every species ever seen at your place (a life list), the usual suspects (regulars list), and a seasonal list if you notice significant seasonal changes. You could write up “Birds seen by the Jones Family” on a whiteboard in your holiday home to encourage participation. Some list templates are included as an appendix.

Birdwatching 101

Move slowly, reduce any loud noise, use ears as much as eyes, and consciously match up sounds with the birds that make them. At first, this may be overwhelming, but you can compile a list of bird songs you recognise one by one. Tune in using the sounds you already know - kookaburras, blue wrens, magpies, galahs - and gradually add more. Visit a variety of habitat types - sandy beaches, protected lagoons, mallee, tall forest, and visit them at different times of the day. Early and late in the day are usually good for birdwatching. Keep a notebook and take notes to assist in identifying new species. Use comparisons to known birds - smaller than a sparrow, colours, stripes, type and length of bill, shape and size of tail and size of legs, toes, claws and any webbing. More detailed information can be found at https://www.birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Birdwatching.pdf and https://birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-birding-tips.pdf.

Birdwatching guide and fact sheets

Part of this project has been the development of some new resources, an “Introduction to Birdwatching” as well as a series of fact sheets on different groups of birds. In addition, the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance has produced a range of other fact sheets about our Island and its natural environment. All of these can be sent to visitors in advance or kept in a compendium in visitor rooms or a library or browsing space. Enthusiasts may wish to read this before they come, other visitors may browse it once they are here.

Citizen science projects

As well as the annual citizen science events listed above, visitors can get engaged and active all year round. These can alter over time and the KITA website is regularly updated. Use the KITA-produced citizen science fact sheet aimed at visitors, read the Island Guardian operator toolkit for more ideas and encourage guests and even friends and family to get active through the Passport to Recovery project.

Don't forget the little creatures...

We often overlook the bugs and insects surrounding us. Still, they make up a higher proportion of living matter than the furred or feathered critters. Some are beautiful - lacewings, butterflies and even jewel spiders, others industrious like termites which provide critical nesting sites for goannas. They are also food for insectivores like echidnas, and when they fly, fantails, robins, wrens and flycatchers. A simple insect attractor can be made from a white sheet draped out in the garden and illuminated with a LED light could be of interest if you have guests at night as it will attract many insects. Sometimes you will see bats coming in to take advantage of a concentrated feed.

Events

A range of nature-based events occurs across the year that you might want to promote to guests or participate in. One is the shearwater migration, where they are observed in April headed east to make a big loop through the Pacific, where they spend the northern summer. They head west to breed on islands off of Eyre Peninsula in September. A great spot to see them is Cape du Couedic. Another type of event is a planned wildlife census. These are held for the Glossy-black Cockatoo and Hooded Plover. Then there is the Aussie Backyard Bird Count, and participation in these events might be good for encouraging return visits by guests. There are also winter Cape Barren Geese and Black Swan nesting events. All of these offer a chance to celebrate the natural life around us.

Hiding in plain sight

There are a few purpose-built bird hides around the Island which should actually be called "people hides" as the birds do not hide in there - we do! These offer a comfortable shaded and an often wind-proof spot to watch birds, and some of these have helpful signs. One is on the shoreline at American River behind the fire station. There are two at Duck Lagoon in Cygnet River and another overlooking a long spit of land exposed at high tide at Reeves Point in the heritage park just north of Kingscote.

Interpretive signage and useful organisations

There are many locations around the Island that have information on the natural and cultural history of our destination. Become familiar with these so that you can share this with visitors. Several organisations produce material that can inform operators and visitors alike about the happenings in the natural world. National Parks and Wildlife, the KI Landscapes Board, KI Land for Wildlife, BioR, Birdlife Australia and the Gould League. Have a look at the following link from the Gould League for an example of a birdlist that you could share. <https://www.gould.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Birds-of-Southern-Australia-RECORD-list.pdf>

Little customers

Can you develop some colouring-in sheets which are photocopied and supplied with a tin of coloured pencils to keep kids entertained? If you do, remember to sharpen and maintain them to avoid disappointment. Take a photo of some finished masterpieces and share them on social media, so others see you offer a family-friendly environment. Get wildlife-themed storybooks like Mem Fox's classic "Possum Magic" and wildlife jigsaws. If you have an old pair of binoculars little ones can use, label them, so parents know it is ok for little ones to use unsupervised.

Nightlife

Given much of our wildlife is more active after dark, we should encourage guests to explore the night creatures. There is plenty to experience, whether that is little penguins returning home, the eerie call of the Bush Stone-curlew (also referred to as the Bush Thick-knee), brush-tailed possums foraging on the ground or wallabies mowing the lawn. If you provide torches, it is good practice to use red filters and diffusers on them as a bright spotlight can be very disturbing to birds and animals.

Optics

There are a range of optical tools you can use to better observe and even capture what you see in the natural world - cameras, binoculars, telescopes, even consideration of placement of nest boxes and bird-baths in relation to windows can assist in improving your ability to observe birds and animals.

Binoculars

There is a wide range of binoculars out there - have a look at some online advice [here](#). An alternate discussion on binoculars is linked at https://birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Golo-Binos-Guide.pdf. If you buy binoculars, it is essential to maintain them and keep them clean, as this will enhance the experience for guests and reflect well on your business. Having some simple guidelines on adjusting them to the correct size and vision for each user will be appreciated. There are only a couple of steps - first, adjust for pupil width using the centre hinge. Then, with the right eye closed, adjust the focus for the left eye using the central focus dial. Next, close the left eye and open the right and, without moving the main focus dial, adjust for the right eye with the individual focus ring on the rear right eyepiece (AKA the diopter). You should open both eyes to perfect focus. This often differs markedly from person to person as our eyes are different.

Trail cams

Some excellent outdoor trail cameras can be set up on an active tree hollow, a birdbath, on a wildlife path through the bush and set to take still images or video. There are day-time colour options and infra-red nocturnal pictures or video, all of which can be triggered by body heat, movement or both. You could use these on your website and social media posts and involve guests downloading and identifying the species in the images. Examples of trail cams can be found at <https://www.digitalcameraworld.com/au/buying-guides/best-trail-cameras>.

Telescopes

Think carefully before investing in a telescope. Many telescopes in holiday homes are clunky, hard to focus, take up lots of space, and are rarely used. There is a vast difference between spotting scopes and astronomy telescopes, so seek advice before potentially wasting money. www.bhphotovideo.com/explora/outdoors/buying-guide/spotting-scopes-vs-telescopes-for-beginner-astronomers. Spotting scopes can be purchased with adapters for cameras, so double up as a sharp zoom lens. Google “digiscoping” for more detail on this activity.

Sustainability

Sustainability of your business is deliberate and is an outcome of good planning and a methodical approach to your entire business. It is a lens you can use to view your design and build of infrastructure, energy use, waste management, water use, purchasing, menu design and more. The global leaders in this space are the Swedes - and there is an amazing resource available that gets you thinking about all the ways you can implement positive change. Take a look at:

https://vastmanland.se/globalassets/bilder/vastmanland-turism/master-engelska_2019-09-19_170328.pdf.

For a local example with a more wildlife focus, have a look at what the team from Exceptional Kangaroo Island have put in place: <https://exceptionalkangarooisland.com/about-exceptional-kangaroo-island/ecotourism>. This includes formal accreditation via a third party audit through the Ecotourism Association of Australia's Eco Tourism Accreditation scheme.

Tracks and traces

One way to monitor who has been visiting the garden is with a sand plot. This is an area of sand kept free of leaves and raked smooth, so overnight visitors leave their footprints or tail drags for us to see. If this is successful, you could photograph regular tracks as a reference to identify the creatures which made the tracks. Bird and animal droppings and even regurgitated owl pellets provide clues to the creatures we share our world with. A photographic reference or simple drawings might be a fun addition to your guest compendium. Other poo spotting resources are www.environment.sa.gov.au/goodliving/posts/2018/02/animal-poop and www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2007/09/26/2044094.htm.

Wild neighbourhood

Think about experiences in the immediate vicinity to which you can refer guests. This could tip someone's decision to visit in your favour if done in advance. What walking trails, bird hides and reliable wildlife encounters are nearby? Are there little penguins after dark, a regular flight of glossy-black cockatoos or reliable wallaby encounters on your front lawn to share with guests?

Wildlife Guides and Tours

There are many opportunities for guided wildlife experiences on the Island - both terrestrial and marine. Some are site-based - like Emu Bay, Little Sahara, Vivonne Bay, Seal Bay, Cape Willoughby, Penneshaw, Hanson Bay and, for captive experiences, Raptor Domain and Kangaroo Island Wildlife Parks. Others are part of walking, ATV, Coach, 4WD and cycling tours which cover a range of habitat types. Partnering with some of these in a package will ensure your guests do not miss out on “must-do” experiences as they can be booked early in the planning stage. Depending on your arrangements with the guiding and tour services, it could earn you additional revenue.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The intent of this project is to curate a selection of ideas for tourism businesses to select as an ongoing continuous improvement journey. There is an opportunity for different businesses to collaborate and share existing knowledge and experience gained through trying some of these suggestions.

Success is most likely to be achieved by selecting a few of these ideas and implementing them, and gradually expand the level of wildlife engagement offered through your business.

Appended to this report are a series of short case studies of Kangaroo Island businesses that provide a snapshot of where other businesses are up to on their “Wildscaping” journey. These have been provided to show there is a spectrum of ideas and degrees of implementation.

Feel free to take portions out of this report and use it in your business - the material referenced is all publicly available and businesses are encouraged to use this freely. If you want to take the content of the fact sheets and personalise it with your own logo, please do so.

If there is interest, a good platform to share successes and challenges might be a closed social media group that allows for the posting of images, questions and ideas that can be explored within a group of like-minded operators.

It may be that there are specific ideas or topics contained within this report that spark a level of interest to the extent that further collaborative activities are sought. If this is the case for you, please make sure you share this with the team at the Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance who may be able to plan additional activities.

Chinese Philosopher Laozi has a proverb that is applicable here:

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Take 5 minutes now to decide which actions you want to take and which ones you can do now. Are there any you need help with? Who can help you with this? Create a simple plan with dot points - who, what, when and how you will share your success and start telling deeper wildlife stories. Good luck on your journey and may you be joined by many enthusiastic travellers along the way.



CASE STUDIES

Examples and links have been provided through this report but to add to the topic-based approach, a selection of businesses were assessed to give real-life examples of what has been done locally. Information was gathered from personal visits, telephone interviews and a website analysis. The intent is not to single out any short-falls but to provide evidence that there is a spectrum of activity and to encourage businesses to undertake some of these initiatives as part of a “continuous improvement” approach.

Western Kangaroo Island Caravan Park and Wildlife Reserve

Caravan Park, on-site cabins and wildlife reserve catering for a range of travellers that value the location and a choice of accommodation options with an ever-expanding range of excellent facilities.



Powered camp site - from website



Cape Barren Geese grazing



Lagoon onsite - accessed via walking trail - from website

Bird and Wildlife Offerings

- post bushfires they have planted many trees and are concentrating on protecting their waterways. (Red-browed Finches have come back and Restless Flycatchers nested post-fire.)
- they have koalas, kangaroos, possums and wallabies resident in the park
- the birdbath is currently private but has been a critical resource in compiling their post fire bird list for guests
- two short bush walks get people exploring as they walk to their lagoon – which gives them a better chance of seeing echidnas, goannas and birds
- plant and bird lists are available from the office
- Chris Baxter's 'Birds of Kangaroo Island' available for use in the office
- torches are available for spotting wildlife after dark

Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising

- references and photos throughout their website to their wildlife and birds. E.g., info under powered sites mentions abundant wildlife, the photo gallery includes koalas, kangaroo, wrens and Cape Barren Geese. Under facilities there is mention of local wildlife and bush walks to explore
- KITA booklet full page advertisement mentions 'walking trails boasting a variety of wildlife including koalas, kangaroos and echidna'
- Facebook mentions small family-run park with plenty of wildlife. Most reviews mention wildlife. *loads of koalas, Cape Barren Geese, chooks and swifts abound.*
- Many posts feature koalas, goanna, kangaroos and birds.
- Instagram photos are predominantly of wildlife

Guest Testimonials:

Many mention the wildlife, birds and the lagoon walk

One of the reasons for choosing Western KI was the possibility of wildlife sightings and it certainly did not disappoint. There were a multitude of koalas with their young residing in the eucalypts behind the cabins. There were always kangaroos and lots of birds feeding nearby in the mornings and evenings. The lake walk with our grandchildren was fun. The resident kangaroos, koalas and geese were a hit.

Future Initiatives

Rebuilding their post fire photo collection and replacing their collateral, one step at a time.

Suggested projects

Adding nesting hollows, bird-baths in public spaces and even a bird hide at the lagoon. Getting assistance from the Landscapes Board on specific plants for wildlife habitat enhancement.

Ecopia Retreat

Boutique eco luxury accommodation (two villas and Manager's Residence) in a private wildlife sanctuary with a range of habitats protected with formal sanctuary status. Catering for self-drive independent travellers and 4wd tour guests



Nearby wildlife



Guest and echidna train - from website



Looking out from a villa - from website

Birds and Wildlife Offerings

- active Glossy Black-cockatoo nest which visitors can visit, photograph and learn more about
- copies of Chris Baxter's Birds of Kangaroo Island
- Permanent lagoon established on the property
- plant, bird and wildlife information in all accommodation
- binoculars provided in each accommodation
- walking trail
- head torches for night-time exploration (Residence Ecopia)
- special torch for night-time exploration- with red and green lights that do not disturb wildlife (Villa Ada and May)

Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising

- website highlights their abundance of wildlife (including a habitat for the endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo) Great photos of kangaroos, echidnas and koalas. On their video footage, birds can be heard calling. There is assurance and evidence of an abundance of wildlife on this property. (All photos and videos were taken on the property)
- Facebook features some wildlife content
- Instagram features many wildlife photos

Guest Testimonials

Many mention the wildlife, birds and the lagoon walk

"I cannot recommend Ecopia retreat highly enough. The villa was absolutely stunning with beautiful interior design and fantastic attention to detail. The surroundings were gorgeous, teeming with wildlife and you could make wonderful exploring strolls to enjoy nature. The owners were super friendly, accommodating every question and need. Hope to be back one day, we are missing it already!"

"Villa ADA... a beautifully crafted eco-friendly villa with numerous modern and luxurious touches set in secluded, pristine, natural surrounds in the heart of Kangaroo Island. Seemingly removed from everything the modern world wants to throw at us, Ecopia Retreat is only a short drive to any of KI's natural wonders. Two nights in this little gem were a real treat, but we definitely could have stayed much longer...! It was awesome waking up to the rain gently falling on the roof, whilst frogs were chirping in the nearby creek and kangaroos were grazing on our back doorstep! Next time, we're definitely going to explore the grounds a lot more... so much wildlife, so much beauty, and so much peace... – See you again soon!"

Future Initiatives

- Sheltered bird baths to attract a variety of birds that visitors can see from inside or out
- Walking trail brochure and selective marking of the trail

Suggested projects

Adding nesting hollows, and a bird hide at the lagoon. Getting assistance from the Landscapes Board on specific plants for wildlife habitat enhancement, This could also improve micro-climate with wind-breaks, enhance wildlife habitat and increase solitude for guests.

KI Dragonfly

Guesthouse in Kingscote in an urban setting with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities in the main house and private facilities in the cabin. They cater for a wide range of guest types, most staying because they prefer to spend money on activities and experiences more so than accommodation.

Bird and Wildlife Offerings

- 2 birdbaths
- 3 bird nesting boxes
- Wrens and honeyeaters amongst the birds visiting the garden
- Chris Baxter's Birds of Kangaroo Island in their library plus "Birds of Kangaroo Island" fact sheet
- Walking distance/very short drive to the Reeves Point bird hide
- Close walking distance to the sea – shore and sea birds, seals and whales



Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising

- Recommends 3-5 day stay as ideal
- Mentions herb and vegetable garden in backyard and spacious rear garden with BBQ facilities
- Advert in KITA booklet shows small garden - potential garden bird habitat
- Refers potential guests to many other experiences and businesses

Guest Testimonials

"A really warm, welcoming and relaxing stay. A mini retreat with top notch facilities and lovely attention to detail which gives a home from home feel and uplifting environment. Located conveniently to access the whole island. Felt very welcomed and enjoyed my stay immensely."

Future Initiatives

Owners keen to further their guest experience by providing bird and wildlife fact sheets, lists, brochures and links. Planting more bird and bee attracting plants in their garden. Keen to embrace the opportunities to connect and enhance visitor experiences.

Suggested projects

- Add a camera to bird baths or nesting boxes and share content generated
- Package up with nature-based touring operators to offer an integrated service

Pelican Cottage

Self-contained cottage on large block adjacent Pelican Lagoon at Muston catering for independent travellers and friends and family of residents. The property is the former home of a significant historic figure Harold Moore Cooper who was an Anthropologist, Radio Operator and Historian who did a significant amount of work on the pre-contact Aboriginal sites across Kangaroo Island.



Bird and Wildlife Offerings

- two bird baths at least
- binoculars
- plant and birds list provided
- bird and wildlife fact sheets
- Chris Baxter's Birds of Kangaroo Island and other books available
- Extensive advice on wildlife observation and touring

Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising

- An inviting website which sells its location and abundance of wildlife extremely well. Mentions that it is set amongst a bird-welcoming native garden and that you can sit on the deck and view wildlife, sunrises, moon rises and relax.
- The photos on the 'About' page showcase the cottage and feature binoculars on a coffee table as well as birds in their birdbath and others flying by.
- Their gallery has photos of their bird baths and birds that use them
- They have posted reviews on their website that mention the lagoon, the birds and plants
- Facebook page mentions the beautiful natural surroundings and the bird sanctuary and marine park across the road
- Various Facebook posts are of the birds in the garden and in the bird baths.

Guest Testimonials:

Many mention the wildlife, birds and the lagoon:

"Pelican Cottage isn't just accommodation, it's a destination! The cottage was comfortable, clean, well equipped and provided everything we needed for our stay on Kangaroo Island. The location was quiet and relaxing, with fabulous views of Pelican Lagoon. If you enjoy birdwatching Pelican Cottage is an excellent place to stay. The lovely native garden provides a wonderful habitat for the island's tiny birds, there are waterbirds on the lagoon and eagles soaring overhead. I felt rejuvenated after my stay and plan to come back again. I feel lucky to have found Mary-Alice's Pelican Cottage."

“Pelican Cottage is a lovely, rustic cottage located directly on Pelican Lagoon, with beautiful views of the lagoon from the living space and the verandah - beautiful place to have breakfast or a cuppa, or just sit and watch the lovely birds in the shrubs or on the lagoon. It was located ideally for our various trips onto the Dudley Peninsula, including wineries and Antechamber Bay/Chapman River, to Kingscote, d’Estrees Bay, Red Banks cliffs, beaches at Pennington Bay, Emy Bay, Brown Beach, Baudin, Island, Nepean Bay etc. The cottage is well equipped to do your own cooking, although this time we mainly ate out to support the many wonderful local businesses. Mary-Alice is a great host, and she responded very quickly to our queries. Given the circumstances of the horrific fires on the Western side of KI, it is important to point out that Pelican Cottage and the Eastern parts of the island are totally unaffected and completely safe. There are so many things to do. We were over for one week and could have easily spent another week (or month!) there. Can’t wait to be back - thank you, Mary-Alice!”

Future Initiatives

Owners keen to further their guest experience by providing bird and wildlife fact sheets, plant, bird and other wildlife lists, brochures, links. Keen to embrace the opportunities to connect and enhance visitor experiences. Providing higher quality binoculars for guest use is also on the “to-do” list, as is the addition of an Instagram account and more Social Media activity generally.

Suggested improvements

Pelican Cottage has already adopted many of the approaches contained within this report and it is likely that the owners will continue to enhance the visitor experience over time. Adding video content from existing bird baths might be a good first step in providing more dynamic content to showcase the wildlife experience at the Cottage and nearby.

Mercure Kangaroo Island Lodge

38 room traditional country hotel with 3 room categories on spacious coastal grounds with an on-site restaurant. Extensive gardens provide habitat for many garden and bush birds and Glossy Black-cockatoos fly overhead daily. Significant resources have been invested in improving guest wildlife experience.



Bird and Wildlife Offerings

- Extensive gardens around the property which include many natives
- A self-guided bush walk at the rear of property is marked by yellow cattle tags. Interpretive signs covering the history and birdlife has been installed along the way. At the end of the trail is a stone seat and table with a view of the sea. Alongside the seat is a waterproof box which, on it's inception included a sketch book, pens and coloured pencils in which guests could write or sketch. At the end of the walk there is a stone seat called the 'Sometimes Seat.' (Winnie the Pooh quote: sometimes I sit and think and sometimes I just sit) The original intent was that guests can just relax and enjoy the view or organise to have drinks and nibbles delivered. There is a quick win here if the new managers choose to re-instate this experience to its' original standard.
- There is a self-guided nocturnal walk is outside the property and guests are given a brochure and torches
- Another walk is also self-guided and goes from the front of the lodge to the historic fish cannery ruins. A backpack containing water, binoculars, plant and bird books can be borrowed from reception. (The bird book has stickers alongside birds that are found in the American River area.)
- There are often glossies feeding in the casuarina alongside reception and they also roost in sugar gums behind the top carpark. Reception staff delight in pointing them out to guests
- Numerous bird baths are installed around property – outside the breakfast room and in gardens at the front, side and back of the property
- An elevated birdbath alongside the walkway to the Bayview Units is a great way to enjoy birds at eye level. A sign attached to the handrail showcases some of the birds that may be seen from this point
- Bird, wildlife and history signs. Are installed around the property. Rustic steel cut outs of wallabies are partly hidden below bushes
- 'Birds of Kangaroo Island' is available to borrow from the front desk
- Just above the beach opposite the main entrance are fish and bird signs

Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising

KITA book advert mentions lush natural bush setting and spot local wallabies. (Photos show bush and pelicans)

Website mentions the property is committed to environmental sustainability through: preservation of 4 acres of native vegetation, solar power, rainwater harvesting and storage, established gardens and shrubs for local birdlife and wildlife including the Glossy Black Cockatoos, low food miles through an onsite herb and edible flower garden, (these are used in the restaurant) recycle food scraps, worm farm.

Future Initiatives

The new owners (1834 Hotels) have new ideas in store with details yet to be released.

Suggested Improvements

Revisit past initiatives and refresh elements which put this property at the forefront of showcasing immersive nature experiences. For example the walking trail needs maintenance, resources originally provided (sketchbook, note-pad, binoculars available for guest use) need to be re-instated. Ensure all guests are aware of the additional activities they can access - walking trails, use of torches for self-guided nocturnal wildlife walk, information brochures. Add these elements to the website so guests are aware of these opportunities in advance.

One Kangaroo Island

Exclusive luxury retreat comprising two elegant private holiday homes (One KI and Walcowrie) available for booking on a sole-use basis. It is a natural haven surrounded by wildlife, offering a fully tailored experience or self-contained accommodation.



One KI



Walcowrie



Pygmy Possum Nest Box

Bird and Wildlife Offerings

- Landscaped bush gardens with abundant wildlife
- Upwards of 20 bird baths are scattered throughout the property and front decking.
- Some birdbaths are designed to be self-filling
- Binoculars and spotting scopes provided
- Plant and bird lists supplied, including one with KI sub-species
- Bird and wildlife fact sheets
- Chris Baxter's Birds of Kangaroo Island and other books are part of an extensive natural history library.
- Multiple pygmy possum and pardalote nesting boxes are scattered throughout the property - boxes are monitored and reported on.
- A formal Land Management Agreement is in place to protect the surrounding bush.
- Extensive revegetation over twenty or more years now provides habitat for various wildlife and birds.
- Kayaks for paddling with dolphins and birds
- Stand-alone bathtub on the deck so guests can enjoy the outdoors – wallabies and kangaroos up close - birds in the surrounding vegetation.
- Original art with plenty of natural history subject matter
- Owners participate in Birdlife Australia Beach-nesting Shorebird survey and other initiatives
- Owners are active members of Birdlife Australia, Trees for Life, National Trust and the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Network

Website/Instagram/Facebook/Advertising mentions:

- Wildlife and natural beauty in a secluded Australian beach and bush setting
- Swim, snorkel, kayak, paddleboard, birdwatch, collect shells and watch the dolphins and eagle rays.
- A nature haven surrounded by wildlife and vivid colours with private access to the idyllic beach only a few grains of sand away.
- Landscaped bush gardens with abundant wildlife
- Meet and greet the locals: dolphins, kangaroos, wallabies, pelicans, echidnas, rays and the abundant birdlife that makes this location so special
- Immerse yourself in nature
- Bird-watch, admire the unique wildlife, soak in the sunset and stargaze into the night.
- Eco-friendly, solar and battery power with 100% rainwater use

The website has a media page sharing articles, videos and stories about the property.

Future Initiatives

Owners are very engaged with the continuous improvement of the guest experience. A series of blogs are in development on sustainability and wildlife and owners are exploring Eco-Accreditation that will add an additional level of external oversight to their sustainability actions.

Suggested improvements

Given the advanced level of engagement already in place, this is a great candidate for some heightened elements such as web-cams on bird baths or even trail cams monitoring activity in and out of nest boxes, with the resultant videos being edited to develop a “show reel” to share on social media and the website.



APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION TO BIRDWATCHING ON KANGAROO ISLAND

Tuning in

Wherever you travel, if you plan to observe birds and animals, it pays to think a little about the activity and how you can increase your chances of success. We all need somewhere to live - habitat is a critical part of the plan. Different places offer different opportunities for birds and animals. If you want to see waterbirds - look for water. To the surprise of many travellers new to birdwatching, waterbirds are often not fussy whether that water is fresh or salty. Tall trees offer roosts for parrots; gums develop hollows used as homes for many birds and animals. Smaller birds favour low, dense bush as it gives them plenty of cover - essential for avoiding predators like birds of prey.

Kangaroo Island has many habitat types so consider exploring places with diverse vegetation. The wave energy shapes the coast and influences the creatures that live there, so rugged exposed coasts are home to different plants and animals than sheltered places. The so-called “edge effect” where two different habitat types meet double your chances of success.

Use all of your senses

With bright colours and fast movement, your sight is usually the first sense used in finding birds. Bird song is unique to each type of bird - although some trick us by mimicking the call of others! The scolding alarm call of the bush birds often alerts you to predators - tiger snakes, goannas or even raptors hunting overhead. Your sense of smell can also come in handy - smelling the perfume of blossoms might alert you to the chance of seeing spinebills or other honeyeaters. The unmistakable pong of cormorant roosts and little penguin burrows offer different clues. Touching plants and discovering they are sharp and thorny indicates they could be suitable for wrens and thornbills. Feeling the heat on a hot day reminds us that creatures like kangaroos with thick fur are likely to seek out deep shade or protected areas on a windy day.

What time is it?

The “early bird gets the worm” is not just a saying. Although many creatures are active throughout the day, early mornings are a time of increased activity for many. Others are nocturnal - owls, bats, and smaller mammals like wallabies and possums, and there are several reasons for this. They can avoid being lunch for a predator like a wedge-tailed eagle, they might increase their chance of finding food, and in warmer months, avoid the heat of the day. So think about what you want to see, when they are likely to be active, and plan around that.

A diversity of birdlife

By the numbers, it is pretty compelling: 263 species of birds representing 69 different bird families. 32% are found only in Australia. Many of them, having evolved in isolation, are classified as a Kangaroo Island subspecies. Some of these are grey currawong; superb fairy-wren; crimson rosella; glossy black-cockatoo; crescent honeyeater; New Holland honeyeater; purple-gaped honeyeater; red wattlebird, and; western whiplbird. There are sixteen local endemic species in total.

Kangaroo Island has many different birds, and there are many reasons for this. It has diverse geology and soils, leading to many kinds of vegetation growing. There is also enough change in topography to create varying rainfall. Many parks and reserves protect large areas of native vegetation, and agricultural development has kept a large amount of habitat as entire blocks or corridors. There are few introduced pests, predators and weeds - and the community is working hard on managing problems like feral pigs and cats.

Land development patterns and habitat diversity have caused a significant “edge effect” that gives plenty of foraging and shelter areas and, happily for birdwatchers, birds can be more accessible to see than if they were deep in the forest. Soils are low in nutrients, which drives plant diversity and short trees, which is also good news for birdwatching - less strain on the neck!

Habitats

Key habitat types across Kangaroo Island:

- Oceanic - open ocean over and beyond the continental shelf
- Coastal - beaches, cliffs, salt marsh and estuaries
- Inland waters - lagoons, rivers, swamps and dams
- Coastal mallee - coastal scrubs, heath and shrubland on limestone and calcareous dunes
- Stringybark /mallee open scrub - woodland on the acid soils of the central plateau
- Forest - river valleys and alluvial plains
- Cleared or largely cleared farmland
- Sheoak woodland

Key species

Typical targets for birdwatching on Kangaroo Island is dependent on seasonality and your level of birdwatching expertise. Local birders are likely to focus on endemic subspecies and try to understand how the Island birds are different. Those not familiar with Australian birds find the Island gives good access to some iconic species in a relatively compact space. A good target list for a visit of 3-4 days might (depending on the season) include the following:

Hooded Plover	Glossy Black-cockatoo	White-bellied Sea-eagle
Eastern Osprey	Superb Fairy-wren	Tawny-crowned honeyeater
Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Western Whipbird
Spotted Pardalote	Golden Whistler	Southern Emu-wren
Striated Thornbill	Musk Duck	Crescent Honeyeater
Beautiful Firetail	Grey Currawong	Rock Parrot
Cape Barren Goose	Little Penguin	Crimson Rosella
Red Wattlebird	Scarlet Robin	Black-faced Cormorant
Black Swan	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Spinebill
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Red-browed Finch

This list includes some easier targets as well as a few challenges. The best way to find some of the more elusive species is to talk to the locals. Good luck finding plenty of feathered friends - the following regional guide will help you plan your exploration.



BIRDING FACT SHEETS



ONLY ON KANGAROO ISLAND FACT SHEET

At present, sixteen birds are recognised as Kangaroo Island sub-species. The 10,000-plus years of isolation have caused subtle changes - some visible, like being bigger, and others audible. Like us, they have local accents or dialects. More local variations will arise as further research is done, especially at a molecular scale. These are primarily bush birds with small home ranges. See how many of these you can find as you explore the Island.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo**

These large black cockatoos with striking red tails are classified as endangered. By planting drooping she-oaks (their only food source), installing artificial hollows and excluding possums (that eat their eggs) from nest hollows, numbers are increasing. "Glossies" are regularly seen in Penneshaw, American River, and Duck Lagoon. Shredded cones, which look like coarse sawdust, below drooping she-oaks are a sure sign of their activity. The Kingscote grain silos have a massive mural featuring our glossies.

Crimson Rosella

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Crimson Rosella**

The brilliant red of this fast-flying parrot contrasting with electric and navy blue patches and red scalloping across the shoulders make this a photographer's favourite. You can often approach them within photographic range if you move quietly and slowly. Individuals with green rather than red feathers are juveniles and often in company with their parents. They live across the Island wherever you find medium-to-large gum trees.

Superb Fairy-wren

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Superb Fairy-wren**

These tiny yet confident birds are found across the Island and are at home in town and the bush. Their trilling call is a constant soundtrack on coastal trails, bushwalks or even at a local cafe where diverse gardens offer plenty of nesting and foraging opportunities. Apparent family groups are not what they seem, as females make early morning visits to neighbours, ensuring plenty of diversity in the gene pool. Breeding males are conspicuous with their contrasting black and iridescent blues - non-breeding, they look similar to females, distinguished by their light-coloured beak.

Southern Emu-wren

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Southern Emu-wren**

If you are looking for something with long legs and a long neck - you are out of luck. The "emu" part of the name of these little wrens is due to their sparsely feathered tails looking similar to emu feathers. Their calls are similar to the Superb Fairy-wren - although much more feeble. Most common in coastal heath on the South and West coasts, they also live in low vegetation through the central plateau. Finding these is a treat - you need to be patient and lucky! These elusive birds are tiny, weighing in at a whopping 6-9 grams! It is the largest, longest-legged, longest-tailed emu-wren. Its' tail is almost twice the length of its body.

New Holland Honeyeater

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island New Holland Honeyeater**

These bossy black, white and yellow honeyeaters are noisy, active and gregarious! Find a flowering Eucalyptus tree, and you will likely find the New Holland Honeyeaters in good numbers. They spend plenty of energy chasing other nectar-

feeders away and often gang up on larger birds. These birds provide an excellent early warning of the presence of goannas, snakes, raptors and even grey currawongs approaching, and the smaller bush birds take immediate notice. This alarm system works equally well for those who want to see and learn about the creatures surrounding us.

Brown-headed Honeyeater

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Brown-headed Honeyeater**

The larger-billed local form of the brown-honeyeater moves through the forest and mallee in small groups, checking for insects hiding in small gaps in the bark. They maintain a constant chatter of “chip-chip” as they forage and never stay still. During the breeding season, they gather fur from kangaroos, cows, and even koalas and fly off with a generous beakful of warm nest-lining material. Duck Lagoon is a consistent spot for these birds - check the trees around the barbeque shelters.

White-eared Honeyeater

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island White-eared Honeyeater**

A smartly tailored bird with an olive back, lighter chest, grey capped solid black head and upper chest. All of which contrasts strongly with its clean white “ear” tapering down and back from a dark eye. A loud liquid call is the first sign that White-eared Honeyeaters are nearby. They favour larger Eucalyptus trees along rivers and creek lines on the wetter western part of the Island, and on the east end, look out for them in the taller stands of Narrow-leaf Mallee. They will come into a birdbath for a drink and a splash - usually alone rather than in a group, and appear quite cautious, flying off at the first sign of any disturbance.

Little Wattlebird

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Little Wattlebird**

The less common of two wattlebirds found on the Island, the Little Wattlebird is rarely found outside the central plateau’s stringybark and banksia. Its’ lack of wattles best distinguishes this compact wattlebird. Wattles, in this case, are not flowers but pendulous skin flaps behind the eye, typical of this group. Look in flowering gums and banksias in and around the township of Parndana, where Little Wattlebirds sometimes chase other nectar feeders like lorikeets and honey-eaters from their territory.

Red Wattlebird

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Red Wattlebird**

Despite the name, this bird is not red! Its’ wattles are red and hang down behind the eye like funky flexible earrings. It is the largest of the honey-eaters on the Island and, in addition to these red-wattles, also has a prominent yellow belly in contrast to their striated mid-grey chest and darker back. A white-tipped tail is a give-away as they flash across the road traversing most bushland areas. A raucous call of “chock-a chock-a chock” will draw attention to red wattlebirds foraging insects or nectar.

Purple-gaped Honeyeater

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Purple-gaped Honeyeater**

If visiting Seal Bay - especially in summer and autumn, you might see birds queued up to drink from the fire protection sprinklers dotted around the visitors centre. These include New Holland Honeyeaters, Silvereyes, and a medium-sized light-green and grey bird called a Purple-gaped Honeyeater. It has a bold dark eye stripe and a bright purple line on the lower bill that gives it its name. Purple-gaped Honeyeaters are widespread through south coast mallee and narrow-leaved mallee of the east end. Look at the Bales Bay picnic area if you miss them at Seal Bay.

Shy Heathwren

Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Shy Heathwren**

As the name suggests, this is a bird that spends its’ time under dense cover. Quiet, careful observation in coastal heath and coastal mallee often results in a glimpse of these tiny wrens that share their home with Southern Emu-wrens. The most likely view is of a brilliant flash of their cinnamon or chestnut-coloured rump as they flit between thickets. They also live in the low, dense mallee vegetation across the central plateau.

White-browed Scrubwren Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island Spotted Scrubwren**

These little birds look similar to the Shy Heathwren but have a brown rather than chestnut rump. They also hold their tails flat rather than upright, typical in the heathwren. Bold and confident, they are often the first to raise the alarm to alert other birds to intruders - goannas, snakes, raptors or even people! These birds are widespread across the Island - all they need is dense cover.

Brown Thornbill Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island**
Brown Thornbill

The two thornbills common to Kangaroo Island are Brown and Striated Thornbills. These are commonly referred to in birding circles as LBJ's "little brown jobs", and some give up on telling them apart. Both are widespread, tiny, fast-moving insectivores. Brown Thornbills are more likely to be feeding on the ground or in lower branches. They will readily come into a birdbath, and if you get a pair of binoculars on them, you will see a distinctive series of tiny round pale crescents running across their forehead. Remember "brown" rhymes with "round"!

Striated Thornbill Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island**
Striated Thornbill

Closely related and similar to the Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbills usually forage higher in the canopy in fast-moving groups. They are also regular birdbath visitors, and the key to identifying them is a series of dark vertical streaks running down the chest from their chin. In contrast to the Brown Thornbill, the pale marks on the head run up their head rather than across. It is strangely satisfying to crack the code to distinguish between these two little birds!

Western Whipbird Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island**
White-bellied Whipbird

Those familiar with the Eastern Whipbird will be surprised by the birds' differences. Not so much in appearance because the Western or White-bellied Whipbird (as the Kangaroo Island sub-species is known) is rarely seen. A noticeable difference is in the call. The calls are a duet between male and female pairs, but Western lacks the whip-crack ending. Instead, the call is a musical "ooh did you see me" from the male and an immediate "yeah-whit" response from the female! Listen in winter and spring in south coast mallee for this unusual song.

Grey Currawong Sub-species: **Kangaroo Island**
Grey Currawong

These large birds are distinguished from ravens by a white-tipped tail, white vent, long straight bill and bright yellow eye. The local subspecies have a black wing rather than grey, typical elsewhere. They often walk around foraging for insects and lizards and also eat fruit. They are nest-raiders - taking eggs and baby birds, so their presence often sets off an alarm call from smaller birds. Breeding from winter through summer, their nests are usually smaller than the sitting bird, so it is comical to see both head and tail sticking out over a small untidy platform of sticks.



GLOSSY BLACK-COCKATOO FACT SHEET

Kangaroo Island's Glossy Black-Cockatoo is one of 16 birds with a recognised local subspecies. To find these birds outside of Kangaroo Island, you have to go all the way to Lakes Entrance in Victoria, and from there, they range up to the central Queensland coast. They only feed on drooping she-oak cones. Long-term climate change, which has made Australia much drier, has resulted in the drooping she-oak woodlands retracting to the east coast. Here on Kangaroo Island, perhaps because of our consistent rainfall, a small relict population remains.

How Small?

In 1982 only 115 of these large and uncharacteristically quiet black cockatoos were found. Since then, the numbers have increased to over 450, but they are still considered endangered. Why did numbers get so low? "Glossies" are very fussy eaters - and as much of the drooping she-oak woodlands were cleared for agriculture, their food supply went with it. These birds nest in big gum hollows and need a large cavity. Big trees are not common on Kangaroo Island - much of our vegetation is low mallee, scrub or coastal heath. Many big trees were felled for timber or cleared to develop farmland because they grew in the best soils. Often trees with hollows are lost during bushfires. An important discovery was that brush-tailed possums ate about 50% of all eggs. It is tough to survive if you do not have much to eat, nowhere to live and possums eating half of your eggs!

What Changed?

Outstanding conservation research and enthusiastic action across the community resulted in many future feed and breeding trees being planted. Artificial hollows were installed in gum trees near good feeding sites, accelerating breeding opportunities. By putting steel bands around the trunks, possums are prevented from getting into tree hollows (natural and

artificial alike). Given that they are long-lived birds (30+ years), removing the egg predation combined with the new nest hollows and extensive revegetation has increased the bird numbers.

Where Are They Found?

Baudin Conservation Park is a good spot, immediately east of Penneshaw, as are the she-oaks found through the residential streets above Frenchman's Rock. Another is the she-oak woodlands on the steeper parts of American River. They are seen consistently at Duck Lagoon in Cygnet River, another good spot. They often fly around early morning and late in the day, spending much of the day feeding when the only clue to their presence is a quiet clicking sound. Their strong beaks make this sound as they shred she-oak cones to get to the tasty seeds inside. The shredded remains - like piles of coarse sawdust - are known as "chewings". These are a clue that glossies have been recently active. Chewings are colour-coded - if they are pale green and yellow, glossies were feeding there in the last few days. After a week or so, the chewings go a rusty orange-red and then, after a month, turn brown and grey.

What Colour Are They?

Black would be an obvious answer, but there is more to the story of cocky colours. Adults are primarily black and glossy, as their name suggests. Their heads are a lighter matt brown, and the females have a varying amount of yellow on their faces. The tails of adults are distinctive - males have a solid red panel covering the centre of the black-tipped feathers, and on females, the red has black bars running across the feather. As is often the case in birds, juveniles look like their mums - regardless of whether they are girls or boys. Want more details - ask a local or look at www.birdlife.org.au/documents/SEGBC_Field_Guide.pdf.

What About the Bushfires?

The 2019-2020 bushfires had a significant impact on glossy black-cockatoos. Post-fire surveys revealed the fires destroyed over 50% of feeding habitat and nearly 40 % of known nests. Amazingly, 454 glossies were counted post-fire in 2020, indicating low direct fire mortality. Birds have moved further east, with more sightings in Cygnet River, American River and Penneshaw than usual.

FUN FACTS

On tour

Glossy Black-Cockatoos have a strict schedule - they often return to the same trees to feed within a day or two of the same date every year, stick around for a week or two, and then continue their rounds.

Go the Eagles!

If they were football fans - they would not follow the eagles! Wedge-tailed eagles flying overhead usually disrupt their feeding - the glossies call out a warning and often fly out to seek shelter in large gum trees.

Left footers?

Observers have only ever seen two right-footed glossy black-cockatoos. How do they know they are right-footed? By carefully watching which foot holds cones being shredded for their seeds.



COCKATOOS AND PARROTS FACT SHEET

There are about ten different cockatoos and parrots regularly seen on Kangaroo Island. These closely related groups are roughly divided by size and head shape. Cockatoos are large, usually raucous birds that raise a crest on their heads when agitated. Cockatoos generally have a slower floppy wingbeat. Parrots have a rounded head, smaller beak, a rapid wingbeat, and direct flight. All are sociable and form lasting pairs.

Agricultural development has had a mixed impact on bird numbers. Glossy Black-cockatoos got down to just over 100 individuals, whilst single flocks of Little Corellas that have only been on the Island since the 1960s can exceed 500 birds! Often brightly coloured, numerous and noisy, cockatoos and parrots are hard to miss in the landscape.

Glossy Black-Cockatoos

These large black cockatoos with striking red tails are endangered and classified as a Kangaroo Island sub-species. By planting drooping she-oaks (their only food source), installing artificial hollows and excluding possums (that eat their eggs) from nest hollows, numbers are increasing. “Glossies” are regularly seen in Penneshaw, American River, and Duck Lagoon. Shredded cones, which look like coarse sawdust, below drooping she-oaks are a sure sign of their activity. The Kingscote grain silos have a massive mural featuring our glossies.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos

Larger than the Glossy Black, “Yellow-tails” travel in bigger flocks and, although they breed on the Island, will also visit from the mainland. It is strange to see about 200 floppy-winged birds coming over the ocean. They feed on Banksia cones, will shred Acacia branches to extract witchetty-grubs, and have adapted to eating

seeds of pine trees. Careful observation of pines in farm shelterbelts or timber plantations often reveals “scouts” doing sentry duty, protecting their mates feeding nearby.

Galahs

Found across Australia, pink and grey galahs are often seen in paddocks feeding on grass seeds. They found their way to the Island in the 1920s and have been present ever since. Their antics on wires during summer rainstorms are legendary and resulted in Aussies referring to anyone “clowning around” as a bit of a galah. Galahs have solved a housing shortage (too few tree hollows) by nesting in limestone cliffs at Pennington Bay and Stokes Bay.

Little Corellas

Another bird that has expanded with agricultural development, Little Corellas often mix with galahs and feed on grain crops. Massive flocks form a spectacle, and screeching calls and woosh of their wings make a flyby unmissable. Not everyone is a fan, as their destructive habit of pruning branches impacts street trees - an issue for towns, not out in the bush. Competition for nest hollows has seen conflict between Little Corellas and Glossy Black-cockatoos. Kingscote Oval and town approach are reliable places to see these birds.

Rainbow Lorikeets

No prizes for guessing why they have the name “rainbow”! These specialist nectar-feeders have feather-tipped tongues that efficiently collect the sweet pollination reward from eucalypts, and they also eat fruits, pollen and some foliage. Rapid beats of narrow wings carry them through the trees at extraordinary speed, fuelled by abundant

nectar. They form nomadic bands following the nectar flow from one valley to the next, returning to favoured roosts each evening. Their constant screeching in flowering mallees and gums is a give-away - find the flowers, and you will find the rainbows. Occasionally, a strange phenomenon occurs in winter when the combination of native fuchsias (*Correa reflexa*) flowering with a profuse nectar flow and heavy rainfall. The rain mixes with the sugars in the nectar and ferments, turning it alcoholic. The result is that the innocent native fuchsia turns into the mischievous "pissed parrot plant" and makes the rainbow lorikeets drunk and disorderly, making it impossible for them to fly!

Purple-crowned Lorikeets

Barely larger than a budgerigar, this tiny lorikeet is another sugar-fuelled bundle of energy. Like the Rainbow, Purple-crowned Lorikeets chatter constantly and are always moving. Those new to birdwatching are often frustrated trying to get a good look at them - you can hear them but not see them! Their habit of nesting on the hollow metal cross-bars on electricity poles in towns makes them easier to spot during nesting season, which runs from spring through early Summer.

Crimson Rosella

Another Island sub-species, their brilliant red contrasts with electric and navy blue patches and red scalloping across the shoulders make this a photographer's favourite. They can often be approached for a photo if you move quietly and slowly. If you see individuals with green rather than red feathers, they are young and often in company with their parents. They live across the Island wherever you find medium-to-large gum trees.

Possible Parrots and "Could Be" Cockatoos

Some more sightings are listed for the Island but are rare or restricted to specific locations. These include **Gang-gang Cockatoos** introduced in the 1920s and persisted in Flinders Chase National Park and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, which frequent the Ravine des Casoars or Cygnet River valley. Small, fast-moving seasonal visitors are **Elegant Parrots** and highly camouflaged **Rock Parrots** that feed in the coastal heath, mainly on the South Coast. **Cockatiels**, **Budgerigars**, **Musk Lorikeets**, and **Blue-winged Parrots** are far less frequently seen.



RAPTORS FACT SHEET

Eagles, hawks, falcons and owls are collectively known as raptors. These are the hunters of the bird world and have “eagle eyes”, hooked beaks and needle-sharp claws. The owls are nocturnal, and the balance is day-active. Those raptors most likely to be encountered are outlined, with more uncommon birds listed as possibilities.

Eastern Osprey

Fine fishers that submerge up to a metre deep, with sharp talons perfectly adapted for grasping slippery fish. Osprey take off vertically with fish on board and wings sodden, and at about 6-8 metres up, pause mid-flight to shake to remove the water. They use a nest for generations - Point Tinline in D'Estrees Bay has been a nest site since at least 1853, when a survivor from the Osmanli shipwreck sketched an active “hawk's nest” in a location still used today. If this were a building, it would be Heritage listed!

Black-Shouldered Kite

These clean white raptors are obvious in the landscape - either nesting on a high perch or hovering over open fields looking for a meal. They appear to compete with another hovering raptor - the Nankeen Kestrel. Black-shouldered Kites are more active early and late in the day, with the Kestrels taking the day shift. These small raptors take a range of prey - grasshoppers, mice and even other birds of open spaces like Australasian Pipits.

Wedge-tailed Eagle

The largest of Australia's birds of prey, they ensure small mammals such as possums, tammar wallabies and bandicoots remain nocturnal. No one wants to be lunch! Wedge-tailed eagles form lasting pairs, using the same massive stick platform to raise their chicks. Take care approaching them feeding on roadkill, as it takes

a while for such large birds to get airborne. Groups of up to twenty gather once young ones are independent, and they pay close attention to the free-range chicken farms!

Brown Goshawk

These swift hunters work under the forest's canopy, racing in from a high perch to snatch an unwary honeyeater, lizard or mouse. If you see Brown Goshawks up-close - look for long bare legs and large bright yellow eyes. Often their presence is given away by the scolding chatter of the smaller birds calling out a warning throughout the bush. When observing nature, your ears are essential as similar warnings will alert you to tiger snakes and goannas hunting nearby.

Collared Sparrowhawk

These look like a miniature version of a Brown Goshawk - and with no reference to use as a scale, they can be hard to separate. The easiest way to tell them apart is if they are flying and you can see the shape of their tails. Collared Sparrowhawks have a narrow squared tail and the Brown Goshawks a broader, rounded tail - remember, Brown is round. They both hunt a similar range of prey, but the smaller Sparrow-hawk will take smaller meals. The name provides a clue!

Swamp Harrier

These medium-sized raptors soar low over wetlands and tea-tree swamps, their name giving a helpful reference for where to find them. Their broad wings rock from side to side, and heads sweep left to right, looking for a small waterbird to snatch. Although they will feed on roadkill, they are waterbird specialists and sometimes “parachute” in and take an unsuspecting stilt from overhead. Murray Lagoon is a consistent location for sightings.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle

White-bellied Sea-Eagles are found from India down through South-East Asia as far south as Tasmania. They represent a worldwide group: White-tailed Eagles in northern Europe; Fish Eagles in Africa; and Bald Eagles in North America. Dining on fish and birds at sea, they snatch their prey from the surface. They are a significant factor in Little Penguins coming ashore after dark as they are an easy target on an open beach. White-bellied Sea-Eagles use the same nest annually. Their habit of adding fresh leaves during nesting results in a massive pile of sticks on a cliff ledge or tree fork.

Barn Owl

Silent hunters of the night, barn owls take a range of small prey, including mice, bats, geckoes or even unsuspecting birds plucked off a perch. Their rounded faces channel sounds into large ear channels, allowing their dinner location to be precisely calculated. Their feathers are incredibly soft, with leading edges of flight feathers having a fine fringed edge, allowing silent flight. The rowdy begging of young ones breaks this silence as they chase mum and dad, seeking an easy feed.

Southern Boobook

Mobs of honeyeaters often give away these small brownish owls (that look like they are wearing glasses!) as they quietly roost in dense tea-trees. Their luminous rounded eyes are the key to finding food that includes many insects, usually taken on the wing, small mammals and lizards. Boobooks are one of the few birds that have named themselves! Their “mopoke” or “boobook” call is a constant across the Island at night. Local folklore states that if Boobooks call several nights in a row, it is a sure sign of rain. There is no certainty that the facts back up these predictions.

Nankeen Kestrel

These beautifully coloured birds are the smallest of the Australian falcons. They often hover over open country, almost motionless on the slightest breeze, searching for grasshoppers, beetles, mice, and small lizards. Like most raptors, the female is larger than the male and will do the bulk of incubation of eggs and small young. The male brings food back to the female until the eggs hatch. Then, both mum and dad work hard to feed up to four hungry chicks.

Brown Falcon

Brown Falcons have a dark “tear stain” running down from their eye and look like a larger, darker version of the Kestrel. Elsewhere in Australia, they have several colour variations, but they are uniformly brown on the Island. They watch from high perches, soaring in on broad wings, taking small reptiles, mice and ground-nesting birds like quails and pipits. Recent sightings within Flinders Chase National Park suggest they take advantage of landscapes opened up by bushfires.

Peregrine Falcon

The Peregrine is a global traveller, and flying at speeds of over 320 kph means this is the fastest bird recorded on earth. They have been seen knocking a black swan out of the sky before settling to feed on the ground. More usual prey items are smaller birds like pigeons and ducks. Peregrines nest on a simple ledge on a coastal cliff or rocky gorge. Their extraordinary speed allows them to cover plenty of distance whilst feeding. Duck Lagoon is an excellent spot to see them, and they sometimes check out the pigeons on the Kingscote grain silo.

Other Raptors

The above list of raptors covers the most likely encounters, although other possibilities exist. **Letter-winged, Black, and Square-tailed Kites** have made rare appearances. A single **Little Eagle** has been seen on several occasions - once making an unwelcome stop to feed on some farm chickens. **Spotted Harriers** appear more frequently across the Island but in recent years around Cape Willoughby. **Whistling Kites** make periodic visits, as do **Black Falcons**. The **Australian Hobby** is the most likely on the “Other” list, as they breed on the Island. Keep an eye out for a small compact falcon with a dark face, high up in tall gums.

Interesting...

Some birds, such as the **Willie Wagtail**, will build nests near those of birds of prey and occasionally in the nest’s base. This association may benefit both species. Strongly territorial, the bird of prey would offer nest protection, while the bold and aggressive Willie Wagtail would quickly alert the raptor to an intruder’s presence.



WATERBIRDS FACT SHEET

Kangaroo Island has plenty of freshwater lagoons and salt lakes on land, plus estuaries and sheltered coves around the coast. These all provide excellent habitat for Geese, Swans and Ducks, Egrets, Herons and friends.

Cape Barren Geese

Once having an Australia-wide population of under one thousand, there are now close to that number on Kangaroo Island. These large ground-nesting birds benefit from the lack of foxes. They breed in pastures around Rocky River in Flinders Chase National Park. After the Black Summer fires, many native plants germinated in these open spaces, reducing nesting spots for these birds. It will be interesting to see how the geese respond, given they move seasonally across the Island. They may choose new places to nest. Meanwhile, look for them near American River, Murray Lagoon, Hanson Bay Sanctuary and Rocky River.

Black Swan

So it seems Western Australia does not have a monopoly on these birds - they live in every State! Here on the Island, they nest in freshwater rivers and lagoons in winter and spring, and when these start to dry up in summer, they move to protected marine waters of Bay of Shoals, Nepean Bay, Pelican Lagoon and American River. They are vegetarian - using their long necks to reach aquatic plants growing in marine and freshwater wetlands. They happily graze in farm paddocks in winter and often share a meal with sheep in soggy pastures.

Freckled Duck

Although occasionally found on Kangaroo Island, quite appropriately at Duck Lagoon, Freckled Duck is an outback bird that ends up on the Island for two reasons. One is if there is plenty of water in

the Channel Country and through the Outback, causing a bumper breeding season, they spill over into southern districts. This is good news for Freckled Duck numbers; however, the other reason is not good. When no water remains in outback waterways, the birds seek important drought refuge down south. Either way, we are always pleased to see them.

Australian Shelduck

Large flocks of these big ducks with bright orange chests are common on waterways and farm paddocks in the southeast of the Island. Surprisingly, these birds nest in hollows, resulting in ducklings having a big first step when they leave home and follow their parents to feed. Numbers have increased over time, probably due to the high-protein feed offered by farm crops and pastures. What has not increased is nesting hollows, a problem addressed creatively by taking to crevices in limestone cliffs of the South Coast. These new nest spots are often alongside galahs who have found the same solution to a housing shortage.

Pink-eared Duck

Their nomadic appearance on Kangaroo Island follows that of the Freckled Duck and can go from no presence to flocks of hundreds of birds. Not often seen on the western waterways, they pop up at Duck Lagoon, Murray Lagoon, waste-water treatment ponds at Kingscote and Parndana, and the salt marsh at the Cygnet River Estuary. Their strangely shaped broad bill is good for filtering out planktonic water beetles, algae and crustaceans. They work co-operatively, swimming in circles to concentrate food in a vortex before plunging in for a feed.

Australian Wood Duck

Another one of our hollow-nesting ducks - the Maned Duck (AKA Wood Duck), is a well-tailored gregarious brown and grey bird with a tiny bill and relatively short neck. They graze on pasture and are often seen grazing or standing at rest near farm dams. They have expanded with agricultural development and often sneak an easy feed on farms when farmers feed out grain to augment late summer and autumn pastures for sheep and cattle.

Pacific Black Duck

Why a light grey-brown duck would be called a black duck is a puzzle! The only part of this bird that is black is a curving eye stripe that follows the shape of its domed head. An iridescent patch on the wing that, depending on light, could be blue, purple or green, is the only flash of colour. They are closely related to introduced Mallards, and female Pacific Black Ducks are far more impressed with the male Mallard display than their kind, resulting in frequent hybridisation. If you see a Pacific Black Duck with orange legs - it has a mixed ancestry! Almost a permanent fixture at Duck Lagoon.

Australasian Shoveler

These long-bodied ducks sit low in the water and get their name from their feeding behaviour. They swim with their long bills in the water, shovelling food with their specially adapted filters. There is a marked difference between males and females; males have a steel-blue head, yellow eyes and rich cinnamon flanks, and females are more camouflaged with mottled feathers of light chestnut with dark centres. Look out for them in paperbark fringed lagoons like the eastern side of Murray Lagoon.

Grey Teal

These are among our most common ducks, and unlike the closely related Chestnut Teal, males and females look the same. They are flexible in feeding style, and habitat selection and are as common on sheltered coastal waters as in freshwater. Those old enough to remember "Popeye" cartoons will immediately recognise the call as it sounds like Popeye laughing!

Chestnut Teal

Female Chestnut Teal look like Grey Teal - uniformly light grey-brown, but with darker, more vibrant colours in the mottling of feathers on their flanks. They are usually in company with the males, unmistakable with their deep green-to-black iridescent head, dark back and distinctive chestnut front and sides. Whilst there are always a few around, they are nomadic like Freckled and Pink-eared Ducks, flying to flooded outback waterways when the opportunity arises. Often found as part of a mixed flock of ducks with Grey Teal, Pacific Black Ducks. Duck Lagoon and the American River foreshore are good spots to see them.

Hardhead

These ducks are another outback traveller - there may be many or none. Its' name has nothing to do with skull density - which is no harder than other ducks. Instead, it reflects the difficulty early collectors had "processing" the head for taxidermy for museum collections. Hardheads feed by diving and are well suited to deeper water to reach food out of range of other ducks and swans. Murray Lagoon and the Kingscote Sewerage Ponds are good places to check.

Blue-billed Duck

One of two Australian ducks belonging to a global group known as "stiff tails" because their tailfeathers have a strong central shaft. The other is the Musk Duck. The colouring of male and female Blue-billed Ducks is different. Females have striped flanks, a dark brown head and a grey-brown bill. Males have a striking blue bill, deep chestnut body and dark head. Murray Lagoon is an excellent place for them.

Musk Duck

Musk ducks sit low in the water, often lurking like submarines. Apart from when females clamber onto their floating nests or when they fly, they never leave the water. Musk ducks are thus entirely aquatic - they can only slither on their bellies like seals if captured and dumped on land.

That's not a duck! The breeding behaviour of male musk ducks is one of the strangest in the bird world. Males have a peculiar dark disk below their bill, which they inflate with their head held back, bring their stiff tail upright, and make a weird kerplunk sound. This sound is

accompanied by a vigorous splash from their feet and immediately followed by a piercing whistle. Many people seeing this display for the first time debate that they are looking at a duck. They do not know what it is - but it is not a duck! Well, it is a duck - and the courtship display certainly works. Although already very low in the water, a mother duck with ducklings is even lower, as they often pile the kids up on their back. The result is their body is almost completely submerged. Bay of Shoals, Duck Lagoon and the sheltered waters of Pelican Lagoon and American River are consistent locations for Musk Ducks.

EGRETS AND HERONS

If it has long legs and a long straight beak, on Kangaroo Island you are safe calling it an egret or heron. These birds are stealthy, visual hunters that stand perfectly still and then strike fast, spearing their catch of frogs, crabs or fish, depending on whether they are hunting, and then tossing their meal back into their mouths. Most are day-active but one, whose name gives this away, is nocturnal - the **Nankeen Night-Heron**. These can sometimes be seen at dusk feeding out on the exposed shoreline at low tide along American River and Pelican Lagoon. There are three white egrets - **Eastern Cattle Egrets**, **Great Egrets** and **Little Egrets**. There are a few others in this group, but those mentioned, and the grey bodied **White-faced Heron**, and **Eastern Reef Egret** are the most likely encounters.

IBIS AND SPOONBILLS

Much derided in cities as “bin chickens”, ibis seen out in their more natural habitats are quite elegant birds. Kangaroo Island has many **Australian White Ibis** - that familiar white bird with long down-curved bills and bald black head - typical of all ibis and a black tail. Similar sized but with an all-black back, which if you see in full light is iridescent, and a yellow straw-like plume on the neck that gives its name is the **Straw-necked Ibis**. A third ibis only seen in very wet years is a smaller dark bird which is again iridescent but with no white and is called the **Glossy Ibis**.

There are two spoonbills, both unsurprisingly having a broad spoon-shaped bill, and they feed by feel, sweeping their bills back and forth through the shallows as they walk along, often feeding co-operatively. The **Royal Spoonbill** has a black bill and a fancy plumed headdress. The **Yellow-billed Spoonbill** has, unsurprisingly, a yellow bill. Pelican Lagoon and American River are favourite haunts of the Royal Spoonbill, and you are more likely to see the Yellow-billed at Duck Lagoon.



WADERS AND SHOREBIRDS FACT SHEET

Waders and shorebirds are either residents (R), meaning they breed in Australia or migrants (M) that breed outside Australia. Most migratory shorebirds come from the northern hemisphere, arriving around September and leaving in March. Sadly these birds and their coastal habitats are under pressure through the development of coastal regions where they breed or rest on their twice-yearly global migration.

PLOVERS

Have long legs and short, straight bills. They feed in a stop-and-run motion.

Red-capped Plover (R) - 15cm

The name comes from males that have a rufous cap. These delightful little birds hang out singly, in pairs or family parties. They nest above the high tide mark in a scrape on the beach. Common on sheltered coastal beaches: Emu Bay, Island Beach, D'Estrees Bay.

Red-kneed Dotterel (R) - 18cm

Black breast band and a white head. Distinctive chestnut racing stripe along the flank. Murrays Lagoon and other paperbark lagoons and swamps.

Black-fronted Dotterel (R) - 17cm

Distinguished by a red bill and eye-ring and a black breast band, these birds favour freshwater wetlands. Commonly found at Murrays Lagoon and Duck Lagoon.

Double-banded Plover (M) 19cm

Trans-Tasman migrants to Australia, they visit between February to August. Double bands are still evident in non-breeding plumage. Rush Lagoon and Cape Rouge are the best chance to see these birds.

Hooded Plover (R) - 21cm

Near threatened, and although seen on many sandy beaches, they struggle to raise chicks due to increased people, dogs and cars on beaches. Adults have a black head (hooded), red bill and eye rings, smooth grey upperparts, black tip on tail and short pink legs. These little birds move smoothly and quickly along the beach. If nesting, they will lead you away from their nest site, glancing back and waiting for you to catch up. If they have chicks, they try the broken wing trick. As they nest in a simple scrape which is almost impossible to see, you can help them out during nesting season (August to March) by walking along the water's edge rather than high on the sandy beaches they frequent.

LAPWINGS

They are a similar shape to plovers but with coloured facial skin.

Masked Lapwings (R) -34cm

Usually found on football ovals to beaches, wetlands and nature strips, they have been observed nesting on a flat roof. They are common, widespread and familiar to many through their active nest defence - they swoop!

Banded Lapwings (R) - 27cm

Primarily seen in well-grazed farm pastures as their short legs are not suited to long grass.

STONE-CURLEWS

Bush Stone-curlew (R) - 55cm

These are relatively large, slim, ground-dwelling nocturnal birds with cryptic colours and markings. To camouflage itself further, it can lie flat with its neck outstretched making it very hard to see. At night they make an eerie, wailing noise.

They are near-threatened and can be heard and seen across the Island, including near settlements and on farmland with remnant bushland.

SMALL SANDPIPERS

Medium to long straight or down-curved bills and medium-length legs. Mostly grey-brown plumage when in Australia. Feed by probing in the mud.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (M) - 20cm

Dark streaking on under-tail coverts. Yellowish-green legs. Murrays Lagoon, Bay of Shoals.

Red-necked Stint (M) - 20cm

Tiny grey and white birds with black legs weighing only 30grams, which is less than a Mars Bar and makes them the smallest of Australia's migratory birds. They are rarely seen on KI in the breeding plumage that gives them their name. They feed voraciously like a sewing machine, building up fat for their long journey back to the northern hemisphere. Despite their small size, they fly from Australia annually to breed in eastern Siberia and western Alaska. This is a round trip of about 30,000 kilometres; over their lifetime of approximately 20 years, they fly more than the distance between the earth and the moon!

Ruddy Turnstone (M) - 23cm

These are small, stocky waders with short, stout, orange legs. Their grey-brown upperparts become rich-chestnut in the breeding season when black markings develop on the breast, back of the head and side of the throat. They use their thick wedge bill to flip stones, shells, seaweed and driftwood to expose food. They are found at Emu Bay boat ramp and on seaweed-strewn beaches of D'Estrees Bay.

Sanderling (M) - 21cm

They are easily confused with stints but are whiter with a pale face, dark shoulder patch and black legs. Sanderlings are usually found in ones, twos or small flocks. South coast beaches from D'Estrees Bay to Hanson Bay are favoured sites.

LARGE SANDPIPERS

Common Greenshank (M) - 33cm.

A slightly upturned bill, streaky grey upper parts and a white rump in flight are key markings for these birds. They have long greenish-coloured

legs and a piping three-note alarm call. Often seen feeding on coastal mudflats but also inhabit a diverse range of other habitats. Along the American River foreshore, up to ten arrive each year having bred in the northern hemisphere. Reeves Point and Wheaton's Beach at D'Estrees Bay are other suitable locations to find them.

CURLEWS

With large brown or reddish (in breeding plumage) birds with long down-curved bills and long legs, these are the easiest shorebirds to identify due to their size and bill shape! They forage across tidal mud and sand flats. Migrant September to March.

Eastern Curlew (M) - 63cm

Largest migratory wader. Down-curved bill, almost as long as its body. Female has a longer bill. Solitary or in small flocks. Their staging grounds on their journey to their breeding grounds are disappearing fast, as are these birds. Up to 80% of them have entirely vanished. American River had eight arrive every August, but now there is just one. At high tide, a small flock usually roosts at Reeves Point. (September to March)

Wimbrel (M) - 42 cm

Whimbrels also have a down-curved bill, but it is only half as long as Eastern Curlew. It has a dark cap with a light stripe on its' crown and a dark eyestripe. This species is often seen at Reeves Point at high tide. Island Beach has had one overwinter. (September to March)

OYSTERCATCHERS

There are two species - both resident (R) and the same size at 46cm.

These seashore birds have distinctive thick red bills shaped to prise shellfish from rocks. The **Pied Oystercatcher** is black and white, and the **Sooty** is all black. The Sooty prefers high-energy rocky coasts. Both are resident Australians and be easily seen at Bay of Shoals, Reeves Point, American River, Seal Bay and Vivonne Bay. Both species are found at high tide on the Bay of Shoals boat ramp.

STILTS AND AVOCETS

Slender waders with long legs and neck and fine needle-like bills.

Banded Stilt (R) - 39cm

Banded stilts have white on the neck and back, a rich chestnut breast band that connects with a black shoulder and pink legs. They are nomadic visitors whose presence depends on conditions in inland Australia. Flocks of thousands have been seen on the salt lagoon of the Wisanger between Kingscote and Emu Bay.

White-headed Stilt (R) - 37cm

These were previously known as Black-winged Stilts - arguably a more accurate name! A graceful wader with long pink legs. Body white with black on neck and back. They are widespread and most common in the eastern half of KI, although rarely in large numbers. Look out for them on freshwater wetlands and protected coastlines.

Red-necked Avocet (R) - 44cm

A remarkable bird with a fine, upcurved bill, a distinctive rich chestnut head and neck, and a predominantly white upper body. Legs pale blue. They feed in shallow water, rapidly sweeping their bills from side to side. Look for them at Wisanger Lagoon, especially amongst Banded Stilts.



COASTAL AND OCEANIC BIRDS FACT SHEET

Many birds are found near the sea - some on the shoreline and others at home far from land.

With the largest beak of any bird on earth, the Australian Pelican is one of the most recognisable of any bird in our coastal and inland waters. Emu Bay, Stokes Bay, American River and the Bay of Shoals boat ramps are regular spots to see them wait to clean up as fishermen clean their catch. Pelicans prefer one leg over the other when resting on one leg, so the preferred one becomes noticeably thicker over time. Almost all birds stand on one leg, especially when resting because it minimises heat loss.

Cormorants often join pelicans hunting for fish, with the likely helpers being Black-faced, Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants. Little Pied Cormorants are more restricted to fresh water, and far less common are **Australasian Darters** with a skinny "S" shaped neck and pointed bills. Darters often hold their wings out to dry on a prominent perch along one of the permanent rivers.

Flying overhead on our beaches, keep an eye out for coastal raptors - these include **Eastern Osprey, White-bellied Sea-eagles, Peregrine Falcons** and the smallest raptor, **Nankeen Kestrels**. Great places to see the Osprey are a nest right on the tip of Point Tinline at D'Estrees Bay and a purpose-built artificial nesting platform just west of the Bay of Shoals boat ramp.

Common gulls and terns around our shores are the familiar **Silver Gull**, the massive **Pacific Gull** with a black back and red-tipped yellow bill and black caps, the **Greater Crested Tern** with a yellow bill, and much larger red-billed **Caspian Tern**. There are many other possibilities for tern sightings, but these are most likely encounters.

Pied and **Sooty Oystercatchers** are found along the beach and shorelines, often in the company of **Hooded Plovers** and occasionally with some of our long-haul travellers such as **Ruddy Turnstones, Red-necked Stints** or **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**. There are many possible bird encounters, but this gives you a start. Taller birds working the shorelines include **White-faced Herons** and **Eastern Reef Egrets**, and on sheltered waters, **Royal Spoonbills** and **Australian White Ibis**.

Many people new to birdwatching are surprised to find birds they usually associate with freshwater at home on the ocean. Some of these are **Black Swans, Grey** and **Chestnut Teal, Musk Ducks** and **Australian Shelduck**.

Little Penguins are found around the coastline but rarely seen in daylight. Sometimes referred to as fairy penguins, these are the smallest penguins on earth and work long days - leaving under cover of darkness to go fishing and returning after dark. Good locations to see them are around the base of the Kingscote Jetty, Penneshaw Beach (check out the tours from the Penguin Centre) and, if you are staying at Vivonne Bay, near the Jetty at Point Ellen.

A couple of great spots to see a range of shoreline birds, equipped with bird hides, are American River near the fire station and the tip of Reeves Point in the Heritage Park north of Kingscote in the Bay of Shoals.

A wide range of birds soars over the open ocean, many of which only come close to shore when blown by heavy winds. Most common sightings include **Australasian Gannets** that make themselves known via spectacular vertical plunges into the sea when blue-fin tuna and other predators accumulate bait balls of fish.

Shearwaters, named because they fly so close to the ocean, are often seen as you travel on the ferry. They are also referred to as mutton birds due to once being hunted for food - historical reports have this “mutton” tasting quite fishy! Most likely encounters are **Flesh-footed, Fluttering** and the most common of all, **Short-tailed Shearwaters**.

Spectacular numbers of these birds fly past Kangaroo Island east-bound in April-May only to return headed west in October-November. Estimates of numbers are around 20,000 per hour, and the migration lasts for days! The ferry crossing, Cape Willoughby, Remarkable Rocks and Cape du Couedic are great vantage points to spot this extraordinary natural event.

The most elegant of the oceanic birds is the albatross, and the most likely species you will see are the Black-browed, Shy and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross. Black-browed can sometimes be seen over winter feeding in Eastern Cove. In contrast, others are more likely to be seen from the ferry, fishing boats or, during strong southerly blows, from high places like Cape Willoughby and Cape du Couedic. Many other species are out over the open ocean, and many records come from birds washed up during storms.



GARDEN BIRDS FACT SHEET

Food, water and shelter are all elements which attract birds to gardens. Most will attract a few birds at the very least, so relax, have a little patience, keep your eyes open, and you will be rewarded. Don't forget that the best time to watch birds is from early to mid-morning and late afternoon.

The smallest birds

Birders refer to small, brown birds that are difficult to identify, as LBJ's (Little Brown Jobs.) and thornbills fit this category perfectly. You can best tell them apart at close range when they are in a bird bath. **Striated Thornbills** tend to visit in small parties, and their dark eyes are a give-away. Up close, you can also see that their backs are olive-brown, and their abdomens are light yellowish.

Brown Thornbills tend to be solitary, have red eyes, and sport a rufous cap on their heads. They also just look browner!

The larger, stockier **White-browed Scrubwren** is easy to identify with its white eyebrow, grey-brown upperparts and black streaks on its throat and chest. This bird is a skulker, hangs out in the undergrowth and is right at home in overgrown gardens. It will scold you if you get too close but keep a lookout, as this behaviour sometimes indicates that a snake or goanna is around rather than you!

Another tiny bird is the delicate and pretty **Silvereye**. Usually seen in small parties and often at the bird bath, these birds with their grey backs, olive-green heads and wings and conspicuous white eye-rings are identifying marks. Close to them in size is the **Striated Pardalote**, often heard rather than seen. Its song is a loud, repetitive "wit-wit" and can be continuous during the breeding season. This tiny bird has a stubby bill, a yellow throat and eyebrow.

Brightly coloured birds

The easiest birds to identify are those with the most vibrant colours. No need to know their size, what they like to eat, or even who they hang out with. Who they are is unmistakable, and pretty much THEY know it! As he hops about in the bush or on the lawn, a male **Superb Fairy-wren** in iridescent blue breeding plumage is breathtaking. A recent discovery is that the female Superb Fairy-wren is the most promiscuous of all birds. Sneaking off before dawn, she seeks out other mates (better chance of producing virile offspring), the upshot being that 95% of broods and 76% of young result from avian cheating. Variety apparently is the spice of life! Top performer in the Australian bird of the year (2021) Guardian/Birdlife Australia poll: Superb Fairy-wren!

The **Golden Whistler** male is possibly THE most beautiful bird in the garden. He is a showstopper with a black head, white throat, golden yellow nape, breast and abdomen. His melodious song "wheet-wheet-wheet- whit" will direct you to the tree from which he is calling.

The male **Scarlet Robin** is another crowd pleaser with a black back and head, white forehead and stunning scarlet chest. Often seen perched on a branch or sprinkler waiting to pounce on an insect, he has a lovely lilting song. The delicate and pretty brown female is usually close by and has reddish-pink wash on her chest. Scarlet Robins form life-long bonds with their partners. They have particular roles in their relationship. Males work to defend their territory, singing from high perches to deter other males.

Red-browed Finches often feed with Superb Fairywrens. They have olive-green backs and wings, red eyebrows, bills and rumps. The exquisite **Beautiful Firetail** is less common and more likely to be seen in a bush garden, its mournful floating whistle often heard before the bird is seen. Its red bill, pale blue eye-ring, black mask, red rump and heavily barred underparts make it unmistakable. The introduced **European Goldfinch** is a red-faced, white and brown finch with large yellow wing bars. Often seen in small flocks, their undulating flight pattern is quite distinctive.

Grey or black or black and white birds

Some birds in the garden have attributes other than colour. The **Grey Fantail**, easily identified by its widely fanned grey and white tail, is an aerial acrobat. These extremely confident and restless birds perform remarkable aerial feats whilst seeking their food – chiefly flying insects.

The **Grey Shrike-thrush** is a large, grey-brown, confident bird and a charming whistler with a refined repertoire of liquid notes. They nest in sheds, hanging plants and even cake tins! **Willie Wagtails** are large-black fantails with white bellies and eyebrows and are very much at home in the garden. If it looks bigger than usual and sports white right up and under its neck, it is a **Restless Flycatcher**. Once known as a Scissor Grinder, this name has become irrelevant because few people today know what a scissor grinder is, let alone its sound!

There's no mistaking the "pee-wee pee-wee" of the **Australian Magpie Lark**, the delightful warble of the **Australian Magpie** or the introduced **Common Blackbird's** sweet song. The male blackbird is black with a yellow bill, and the female is dark brown. They are often the gardener's bane because they love scratching through leaf litter and making a mess on paths.

Honeyeaters

These birds flock to the blossoms and foliage in a garden, and a great variety of insectivorous ones will come to feed on insects attracted to the flowers and foliage at the tops of certain trees. They are often the garden's most active, vocal, and entertaining birds. The small **Brown-headed Honeyeater** travels in pairs or small flocks and most often passes through on the hunt for insects. They make a chip-chip noise in flight, so you know when they are nearby.

The slightly larger **Eastern Spinebill** is a handsome bird sporting a chestnut bib on a white throat and black crescents above rufous underparts. It flits from flower to flower, probing each bloom with its long, spine-like bill. Its piping call is another diagnostic feature, as well as the noise its wingbeats make in flight. The timid, **Purple-gaped Honeyeater** makes a "twit twit" in flight. Its purple gape is sometimes tricky to see - depending on where you are on the Island. Regardless of the purple gape, it is a bird with a yellow throat, ear tuft, grey crown, and black mask.

The **White-eared Honeyeater** is one of the largest honeyeaters and will cautiously visit a birdbath for a drink and a splash, often alone and flying off at the first sign of any disturbance. The male **Crescent Honeyeater**, with its distinctive black crescents, pale front and bright yellow wing patch, is often seen with other males and grey-brown females with less obvious crescents. They are small but noisy birds, and their "ee-GYPT" call is very distinctive. The loud and bossy **New Holland Honeyeater** will chase other nectar feeders away and gang up on bigger birds. Strong field marks are its streaked black and white underparts, yellow patch on the wing and curved black bill. They chatter loudly as a warning of an approaching threat.

The bad boys

The **Red Wattlebird** is big, noisy, and aggressive, and other birds scatter in their presence. They monopolise the bird bath, and their size allows them to dominate any smaller birds. The drooping red skin flaps on the side of their head are called wattles, hence the name. The **Grey Currawong** is even larger. Other birds leave in a flurry when they arrive in the garden. They are black rather than grey, have white tail tips and bright yellow eyes. They often stalk about the garden on their long legs, foraging for insects and lizards. They are nest-raiders, taking both eggs and baby birds, so their presence in the garden is not appreciated by birds nor humans. The **Laughing Kookaburra** is unmistakable, sometimes found in gardens and another bird that preys on small birds and nestlings.

Bonus birds

Anything can pop up in a garden - the wide range of plants chosen for planting can create habitat for many creatures. Reports of a furtive **Bassian Thrush**, a bathing **Buff-banded Rail** or a **White-naped Honeyeater** hanging upside down in foliage are not uncommon.