

Woodland Birds of the Central Riverina, New South Wales

An Identification and Habitat Management Guide

Woodlands in south-eastern Australia are renowned for their rich and varied bird life. Unfortunately, one in five woodland birds is threatened or in decline. The worst affected species are those that need mature trees (especially hollow-bearing) and those that forage or nest on or near the ground. The central Riverina of southern NSW provides significant habitat for a range of different woodland birds including many nationally and regionally threatened species. Onground work has already begun to protect and restore woodland habitat in the region. In 1996 when Corowa District Landcare formed, there was 4% woody vegetation cover in the Corowa shire. Latest figures indicate there is now almost 8% cover – an increase that will inevitably help populations of woodland birds into the future.

YOU CAN HELP...

The following steps can improve your woodland's health and help conserve woodland birds:

Fence vegetation to manage stock grazing

Fencing controls stock movement and remnant vegetation often needs periodic grazing to minimise invasive grasses and weeds. To ensure the regeneration of plants such as palatable shrubs, grazing must be managed when seedlings are young.

Replace missing vegetation layers

The diversity of birds occurring at a site can be increased with the provision of vegetation layers including tall, medium and low shrubs. Replacing the understorey among scattered paddock trees and degraded remnants, and fencing the area, can deliver positive outcomes especially as shrubs mature.

Leave dead, standing and fallen timber

Decaying timber provides resources for birds, insects, reptiles and small mammals, nesting sites for hollow-dependant and ground-nesting species, and perches for ground-foraging species.

Link existing vegetation sites and increase size of remnants

Small, isolated remnants are inadequate to support viable populations of birds. Birds require corridors of habitat to enable movement on a daily or seasonal basis. The size of woodland patches needs to be increased (through fencing and restoration). Linear strips such as those along roads and creeks need to be widened, and remnants should be directly connected or at least be within close distance to others.

Respect your remnant patch

Areas of 'untouched' native groundcover plants, fallen timber and debris provide the best conditions for a range of woodland birds. It is important that cropping and grazing does not further disturb the ground structure. Where stock camps occur, scalping to remove heavily enriched soil may be required.

Control pest animals

Foxes and feral cats are major predators of woodland birds and should be eradicated. Domestic cats and dogs can also be a problem. Rabbit management is essential as they graze native vegetation and adversely affect plant recruitment and survival (especially native legumes such as Buloke and wattles).

Monitor Noisy Miners

Noisy Miners are an aggressive native bird that forms colonies and aggressively competes with and excludes most nectar and insect eating birds smaller than them, often even in healthy woodlands. In these cases Noisy Miner control may be necessary.

Get involved in conservation initiatives

There are a number of ways that you can contribute to woodland bird conservation without picking up a shovel. Consider participating in bird surveys (e.g. Superb Parrot survey), submit records of birds you have seen to the Atlas of Australian Birds (BirdLife Australia), or join a community group or conservation organisation such as Landcare or BirdLife Australia.

For further information

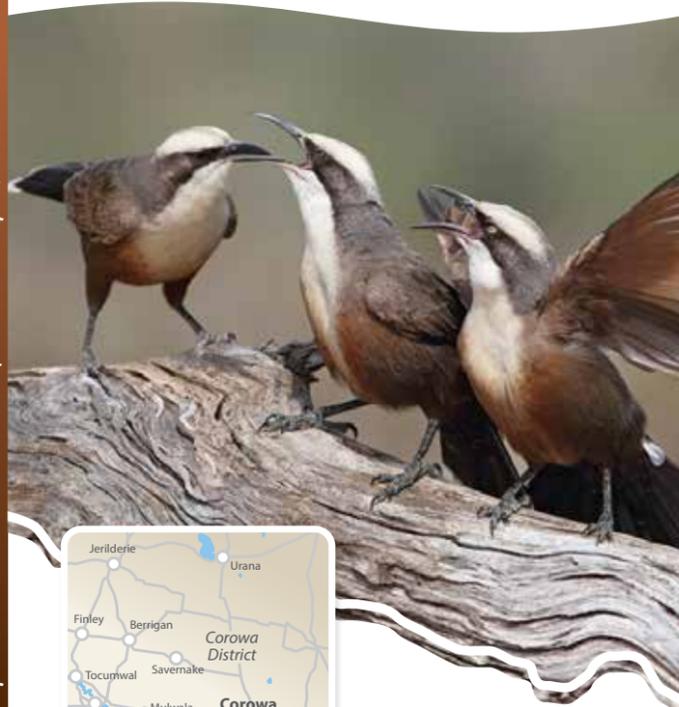
Contact Corowa District Landcare: corowalandcare@bigpond.com

Cover photograph: Grey-crowned Babbler – *Pomatostomus temporalis*

All photography: Chris Tzaros. **Content:** Chris Tzaros, Ian Davidson (Regeneration Solutions Pty. Ltd.) & Andrea Mitchell (Corowa & District Landcare). 2018

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Noisy Miner
Manorina melanocephala



White-plumed Honeyeater
Lichenostomus penicillatus



Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Coracina novaehollandiae



Grey Butcherbird
Cracticus torquatus



Golden Whistler
Pachycephala pectoralis



Brown-headed Honeyeater
Meliphreptus brevirostris



White-winged Triller
Lalage sueurii



Brown Thornbill
Acanthiza pusilla



Australian Raven
Corvus coronoides



Degraded remnants and scattered paddock trees

In modified woodlands such as this simplified remnant near Savernake, or in areas where there are only scattered paddock trees, you would expect to see a much smaller range and number of woodland birds. These mostly large and robust birds are common because they have adapted well to the changed landscape.

They do not require the specialised habitat of other woodland birds. By fencing, managing stock and establishing understorey through planting, direct seeding or natural regeneration, even small and isolated patches can be revitalised and provide habitat for woodland birds.



Willie Wagtail
Rhipidura leucophrys



Crested Pigeon
Ocyphaps lophotes



Galah
Cacatua roseicapilla



Eastern Rosella
Platycercus eximius



Magpie-lark
Gallinula cyanoleuca



Red-rumped Parrot
Psephotus haematonotus



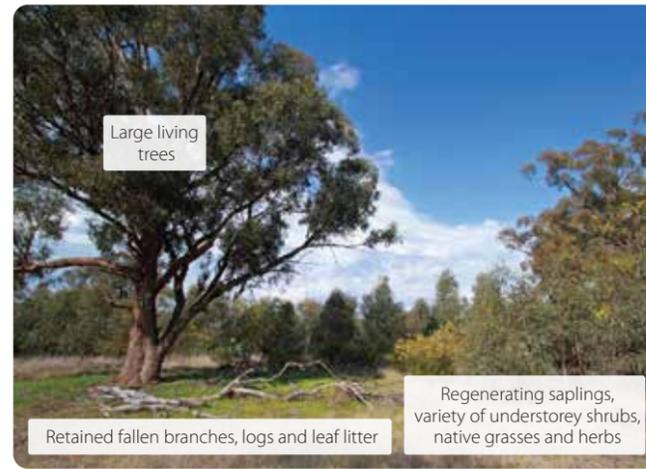
Western Gerygone
Gerygone fusca



Grey Fantail
Rhipidura albiscapa



Superb Fairy-wren
Malurus cyaneus



Restored remnants

Many small insect-eating birds spend most of their time in shrubs within 5m of the ground. Remnants that have been planted, seeded or allowed to naturally regenerate can support more bird species within just a few years. Many other birds will colonise over time as the habitat matures. Shrubs will

assist small birds by providing them with cover, food sources and nest sites. In many districts, some of the best sites for woodland birds started out as degraded remnants. Once restored, such sites will support the next generation of woodland birds in the Riverina.



Brown-headed Honeyeater
Meliphreptus brevirostris



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Rufous Whistler
Pachycephala rufiventris



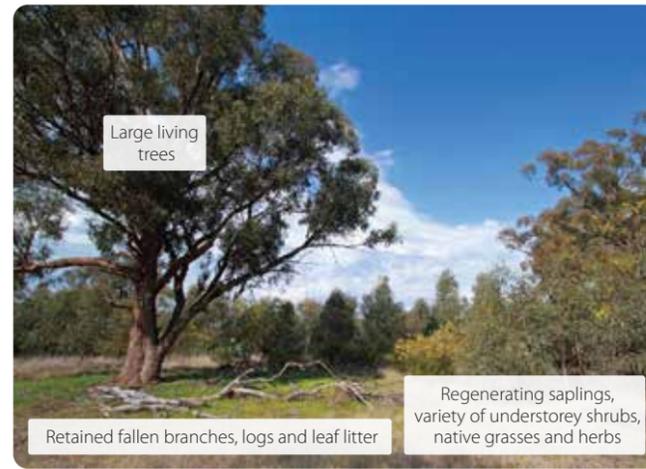
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo
Chalcites basalus



Common Bronzewing
Phaps chalcoptera



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White-winged Triller
Lalage sueurii



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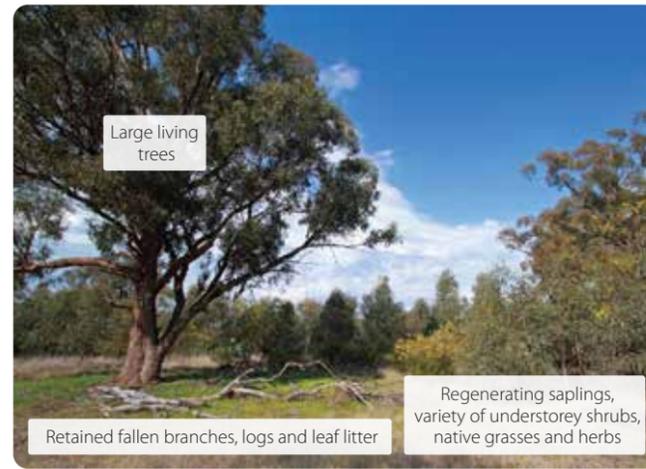
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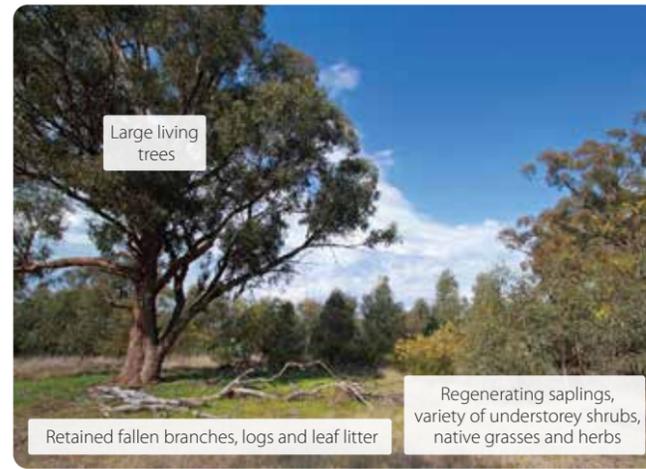
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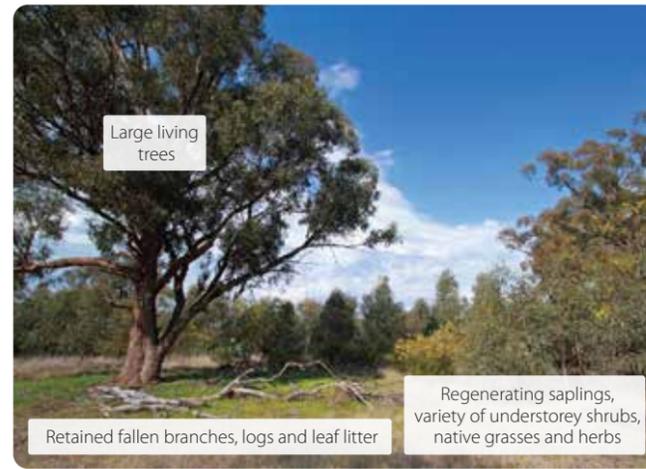
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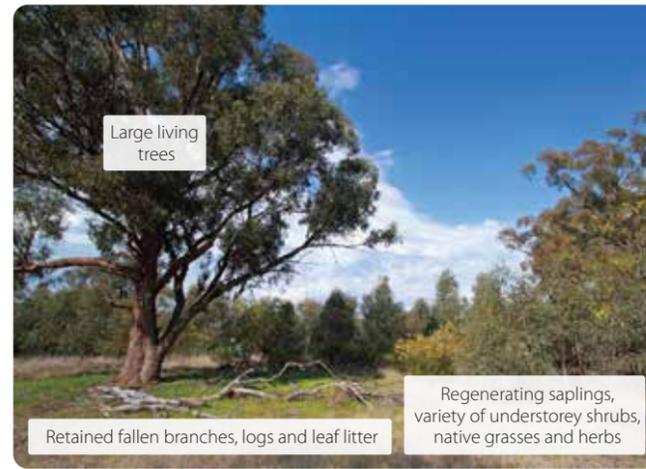
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Good Quality Woodlands

Locally Significant Birds



Striated Pardalote
Pardalotus striatus



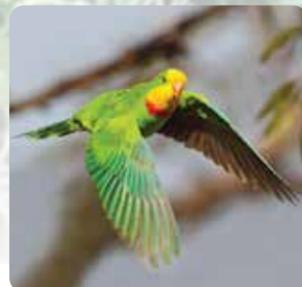
Mistletoebird
Dicaeum hirundinaceum



Yellow Thornbill
Acanthiza nana



Sacred Kingfisher
Todiramphus sanctus



Superb Parrot
Polytelis swainsonii



Musk Lorikeet
Glossopsitta concinna



Varied Sittella
Daphoenositta chrysoptera



Tree Martin
Petrochelidon nigricans



Grey-crowned Babbler
Pomatostomus temporalis

- Threatened species. Declined or disappeared from intensely farmed areas but generally secure in Riverina
- Mainly occurs in good quality roadside vegetation and larger remnants where it forages in leaf litter on ground or on branches and trunks of trees
- Responds well to habitat restoration - can breed in 6 year old revegetation. Conserving this species is a great example of how onground action can help a threatened species.



Brown Treecreeper
Climacteris picumnus

- Declining and secure only in larger patches of well-connected remnant vegetation.
- Nests in tree-hollows in mature trees. Forages for insects on ground in leaf litter, or on branches and trunks of trees.
- Retaining fallen timber beneath mature trees, maintaining sparse native groundcover and increasing size and connectivity of remnants will benefit this species.



Crested Shrike-tit
Falcunculus frontatus



Dusky Woodswallow
Artamus cyanopterus



Grey Shrike-thrush
Colluricincla harmonica



Australian Owlet Nightjar
Aegotheles cristatus



Superb Parrot
Polytelis swainsonii

- Endangered. Western part of the district is an important autumn-winter foraging area for the Riverina population.
- Eats seeds from ground and low shrubs (wattles, hopbush), and nectar from trees (Yellow Box and Grey Box).
- Benefits well from habitat restoration, especially linkage of box woodlands on plains to red gum forests along rivers, where they breed in tree-hollows.



Diamond Firetail
Stagonopleura guttata

- Declined due to conversion from native groundcover to introduced pasture.
- Needs larger remnants with saplings, shrubs and native groundcover, especially native grasses and low saltbushes. Also requires water.
- Within remnants, prefer small open areas for foraging and scattered clumps of understorey (often spiny shrubs such as Hedge Wattle) for shelter and breeding.



Brown Treecreeper
Climacteris picumnus



Hooded Robin
Melanodryas cucullata

Remnants of high quality

At sites like this woodland remnant near Berrigan, you would expect to see these woodland birds plus many others. More species of birds, including many of the highly-specialised woodland species, are found at sites with different layers of vegetation of varying ages. Better quality woodlands support the habitat resources that specialised birds need. Variety or patchiness of structure is a feature of high quality sites. Small open grassy areas are important for birds to forage and dense patches are needed for nesting and shelter. Size matters -

larger remnants support more species than smaller ones but small sites should not be discounted as they form an important foundation for future habitat restoration. Areas linked to other remnants by corridors of vegetation along roads or creeks are paramount as they allow for birds to move through the landscape. Protection, enhancement and appropriate grazing and fire management of large healthy remnants is the highest priority for woodland bird conservation as these sites are the source for future populations of birds to then colonise other areas as they are restored.



Red-capped Robin
Petroica goodenovii



Jacky Winter
Microeca fascinans



Hooded Robin
Melanodryas cucullata

- Disappeared from many districts, particularly intensely farmed areas where habitat patches are too small and isolated.
- Needs large remnants in good condition with mixed aged trees, shrubs, fallen timber and native groundcover, connected to similar sites.
- Within remnants, prefer small open areas for foraging with scattered clumps of understorey for shelter and breeding.



Barking Owl
Ninox connivens

- Endangered species that maintains large (>40 ha) permanent territories.
- Prefers woodlands along rivers and creeks where there is a mix of old trees with large hollows for breeding and younger dense trees for daytime roosting.
- Restoring creekline woodlands, expanding their size and improving connectivity with adjacent remnants on plains will assist this species.



Peaceful Dove
Geopelia striata



Painted Button-quail
Turnix varia



Restless Flycatcher
Myiagra inquieta



Apostlebird
Struthidea cinerea



Southern Whiteface
Aphelocephala leucopsis



Bush Stone-curlew
Burhinus grallarius



Diamond Firetail
Stagonopleura guttata



Chestnut-rumped Thornbill
Acanthiza uropygialis



Bush Stone-curlew
Burhinus grallarius

- Endangered well-known species that has declined or disappeared from many settled districts as a direct result of habitat removal and fox predation.
- Needs open mature remnant woodland with fallen timber and sparse undisturbed native ground cover.
- Leaving fallen timber and leaf litter under old trees, and controlling foxes, will assist in the recovery of this species.



Painted Honeyeater
Grantiella picta

- Rare nomad that occurs in Spring-Summer. Occurrence linked to fruiting mistletoe.
- Needs larger remnants in good condition with mixed aged trees containing mistletoe. Connectivity to other similar sites is important.
- Retaining old trees in good condition and allowing young trees to mature will ensure an ongoing occurrence of mistletoe, benefiting this species.