

Birdwatching in and around Carnarvon



Two of the impressive locals: Male (above) and female Mulga Parrots.

birds are in our nature



Introduction



Carnarvon One Mile Jetty

Within a radius of 60 km of Carnarvon township there is a variety of habitats for over 205 species of birds which are either permanent residents or visitors.

Visitors make up about 30% and are summer visitors from the northern hemisphere (waders), breeding or non-breeding visitors from north or south of Western Australia or birds passing through the area.

In the following guide we have given a description of each of the main habitat types and birds that live in them.

A list of birds recorded in the Carnarvon area and information on each can be found on pages 14-19.



Australasian Darter

1. Chinamans Pool
2. One Tree Point
3. Jetty
4. Small Boat Harbour
5. Airport

Legend

- Carnarvon Town
- Plantations
- Mangroves



COASTAL HABITATS

1. Mudflats

The tidal mudflats near the mouth of the Gascoyne River are rich feeding grounds for over 30 species of waders, many on their annual summer migration to and from the northern hemisphere. Between September and April many pay a brief visit, most are on their way to other feeding grounds, a few remain for the whole summer period and about 200 spend their winter at Carnarvon.



The Mudflats of the Small Boat Harbour

The Small Boat Harbour is the best place to see waders. The most common are Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Knot and Red Knot. Notice the range in size of waders and shape of bill and legs as they feed vigorously in the mud. Other places to visit mudflats are the jetty and Oyster Creek.

Eastern Curlew



Red-necked Stint



The smallest wader here is the Red-necked Stint. One of the larger waders is the Eastern Curlew with a bill for probing deeply in the mud.

Fairy Tern



Caspian, Lesser Crested, Crested and Fairy Tern can be seen either loafing, or flying in search of food.

2. Mangroves

Mangroves (*Avicennia marina*) form a broken belt along the coast from Miaboolya Beach to Bush Bay. They vary from tall woodland to stunted shrubland and are the habitat of seven species of birds that are largely confined to or totally dependent upon them.

Brahminy Kite



White-breasted Woodswallow



Bird species include Brahminy Kite, White-breasted Whistler, Mangrove Grey Fantail, Dusky Gerygone, Yellow White-eye and White-breasted Woodswallow and all are at or near their southern limit in coastal W.A.

Eastern Great Egret



There are many other birds that visit the mangroves for food, rest or shelter, such as Sacred Kingfisher and Singing Honeyeater, Little and Eastern Great Egret and some waders feed near mangroves. Take the trip to Oyster Bay to search for some of these birds. In the enclosed bay look for Eastern Osprey, Brahminy Kite and Eastern Great Egret.

Travel on to Bush Bay for your next stop to search for the special mangrove birds. You may be lucky and hear the clear, musical whistle of the White-breasted Whistler.

White-breasted Whistler



3. Beaches, Islands, Bays

A trip to Miaboolya Beach will introduce you to a variety of habitats including a sandy beach where Eastern Osprey, Brahminy Kite and White-bellied Sea-Eagle may be sighted. On the beach are Sooty and Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Red-capped Plover and Pacific Gull. Sanderling sometimes visit this area too.

Pied Oystercatcher



Terns may be either loafing on the beach or flying over the water. Look for Caspian, Lesser Crested, Crested, Roseate, Common (in summer) and Fairy Tern.

The mangroves are worth searching for mangrove birds, as well as Little and Eastern Great Egret, Sacred Kingfisher and Black-winged Stilt.

THE COASTAL PLAIN

The coastal plain, which extends inland for about 10 km, has a varied pattern of coastal dunes, salt lakes, claypans, samphire flats and thickets or sparse scrublands. Take a day's trip to the Blowholes to see many of the habitats of the coastal plain. Take the road over the Bibbawarra Crossing on the Gascoyne River.



Acacia Thickets

4. Bush Thickets

This is the habitat of Splendid Fairy-wren, Redthroat, Rufous Whistler, White-winged Triller and Chiming Wedgebill. Watch for raptors, Masked and Black-faced Woodswallows.

Visit Bibbawarra Bore, which is of historical interest and attracts Zebra and Star Finch, Australian Reed Warbler and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater.



Splendid Fairy-wren

Star Finch



5. Grasslands

Look for Emu and Australian Bustard in this habitat



Australian Bustard

6. Samphire Flats

In the wetter flats, samphires (*Halosarcia spp*) are dominant and are often adjacent to mangroves. On the way to the Blow Holes visit One Tree Point and Miaboolya Beach.



Samphires

This is the habitat of mainly ground dwelling birds: Australian Bustard, Little Button-quail, White-browed Scrubwren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Rufous Fieldwren, Horsfield's Bushlark and Little Grassbird. The Golf Course is also good for Slender-billed Thornbills (please seek permission first).

Horsfield's Bushlark



Bush Bay is one area where Australia's rarest thornbill, the Slender-billed Thornbill lives. Their tiny rattling 'tsip tsip' call may be heard as they forage in the samphire bordering mangroves.

7. Claypans

An excellent example is the McNeil Claypan, an extensive seasonal swampland which in a good season supports a wide range of waterbirds.



Claypan

Grey Teal



Seven species of ducks have been recorded as well as grebes, cormorants, herons, ibis and waders.

Look out for Swamp Harrier and Whiskered Tern flying over the water. In the rushes at the western end near the NW Coastal Highway look for Australian Spotted Crake. Among the gum trees bordering the claypan are many bush birds including Rainbow Bee-eater, Grey Shrike-thrush and Rufous and Brown Songlark.



Swamp Harrier

8. Sand dunes

Search for Grey Fantail, Inland Thornbill and Variegated Fairy-wren among the vegetation along the dune edges. Finally, you will reach the rocky cliffs at the Blowholes. Watch for Eastern Osprey, White-bellied Sea-Eagle and terns fishing.

Eastern Osprey



Variegated Fairy-wren

EASTERN ACACIA ZONE

Inland of the coastal plain is the pastoral region with plains of red clays, sandy loams and red sand dunes.



Sand Dunes

Take a day's trip to Rocky Pool. Along the road you will see a range of habitats and birds of the pastoral area. Creeklines are always worth a look. Overhead watch for raptors - Whistling Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Brown Falcon and perhaps a Black-breasted Buzzard. Flocks of Cockatiel, Budgerigar and Galah may be sighted. Honeyeaters wander over the region in search of flowering shrubs such as Eremophila species. Also look for Black, Pied and White-fronted Honeyeaters.

Whistling Kite



Little Eagle



9. Thickets and Scrubs

Search the dense thickets for Black-eared Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Splendid Fairy-wren, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Redthroat and White-browed Babbler.

White-browed Babbler



10. Lightly Wooded Grasslands

Look for White-winged Fairy-wren in saltbush, bluebush and shrubs such as Curara and Snakewood.

11. Red Sand Dunes

Gidgee scrub and Curara dominate here. Birds to look for here are Common Bronzewing, Bourke's Parrot, Rufous Whistler, Grey Fantail, Inland Thornbill and Variegated Fairy-wren. Finally, you will reach Rocky Pool.

THE WATERCOURSES

The Gascoyne River rises over 600 km to the east and winds through the red soil plains to the sea through the tidal mud flats at Carnarvon. The mile-long jetty was built over the mud flats to reach deeper water to service the pastoral hinterland. Today the jetty is a favourite fishing spot and tourist attraction. After rain the Gascoyne River becomes a series of pools.



Chinamans Pool

12. River Pools and Tree-lined Banks

Chinamans Pool, at Carnarvon, is a good location to see birds that live on or close to water on the coastal plain such as ducks, cormorants and Australasian Darter. On the river sand bars are Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Common Sandpiper and Black-fronted Dotterel. Star Finch has been seen in the thick undergrowth along the banks.



Black-fronted Dotterel



Australasian Darter

In the gum trees look out for Nankeen Night-Heron, Peaceful Dove, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Striated Pardalote and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.



Blue-winged Kookaburra



Rocky Pool

Rocky Pool is a favourite picnic spot and a good location to see some of the birds of the drier inland that live on or near water. Among the waterbirds, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorant and Australasian Darter are common. Search the River Red Gums and Casuarinas along the river bank for Blue-winged Kookaburra, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Mulga Parrot, Spotted Pardalote and others. Raptors include Whistling Kite and Australian Hobby and, if very lucky, you could see a Grey Falcon.



Black-tailed Treecreeper

13. Open Scrub Near Watercourses



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

In the scrublands close to Rocky Pool search for Spinifex Pigeon and Southern Whiteface. This is their nearest western occurrence from Carnarvon. You could also see Mulga Parrot, Bourke's Parrot, Black-eared Cuckoo, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler and Crested Bellbird.

14. Minor Water Courses

These are worth a search in good seasons for species already mentioned at wet habitats. Also search for Little Button-quail, Black-tailed Native Hen, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe.



Black-tailed Native Hen

KEY

Coastal

- 1 mud flats
- 2 mangroves
- 3 seas, islands, bays
- 4 dense scrubland
- 5 scattered shrubs
- 6 samphire flats
- 7 salt lakes, claypans
- 8 sand ridges

Acacia Zone

- 9 dense acacia thickets
- 10 lightly wooded
- 11 clayflats, grasslands

Waterways

- 12 river pools
- 13 riverine flats

Modified areas

- 14 playing fields, roadsides
- 15 Bibbawarra Bore
- 16 sewage ponds

Column 1

B - Breeding recorded in area

Bis - Breeding on nearby islands

Column 2 (represents abundance)

C Common

M Moderately common

U Uncommon

Ra Rare

Column 3 (represents status)

R Resident

No Nomadic

Vag Vagrant

Var Varies according to abundance of water

Vi Visitor Su Summer Wi Winter

W Widespread

The numbers indicate the habitat where each species is commonly found

EMU

Emu 5, 10, 13 B M R

QUAIL, PHEASANT

Stubble Quail 6, 11 B U ViWi

Brown Quail 7, 11, 13 B Ra Vag

WATERFOWL

Plumed Whistling Duck 3, 7, 12 U Vi

Wandering Whistling Duck 7, 12, 16 U Vi

Musk Duck 7, 12 Ra No

Freckled Duck 7, 12 Ra No

Black Swan 7, 12 B U Vi

Australian Shelduck 7, 12 U Vi

Australian Wood Duck 7, 12 M Vi

Pink-eared Duck 7, 12 U Vi

Australasian Shoveler 7, 12, 16 Ra Vi

Grey Teal 7, 12 B C No

Chestnut Teal 12, 16 Ra Vi

Pacific Black Duck W B C Vi

Hardhead 7, 12 B M Vi

GREBE

Australasian Grebe 7, 12 B M Vi

Hoary-headed Grebe 7, 12 B M Vi

Great Crested Grebe 16 Ra Vi

PIGEON, DOVE

Rock Dove W B M R

Laughing Dove W B M R

Common Bronzewing 9 B U R

Flock Bronzewing 7, 11, 12 Ra No

Crested Pigeon W B C R

Spinifex Pigeon 11 U R

Diamond Dove 5, 10, 12 B M R

Peaceful Dove 7, 12 B C R

FROGMOUTH

Tawny Frogmouth 4, 9 B U R

NIGHTJAR

Spotted Nightjar 10 U ViWi

Australian Owlet-nightjar 9 B M R

SWIFT

Fork-tailed Swift 11 Ra Vi

GANNET

Australasian Gannet 3 Ra Vi

CORMORANT

Australasian Darter 12 B M R

Little Pied Cormorant 2, 3, 12 B M R

CORMORANT cont.

Great Cormorant	3, 12		U	Vi
Little Black Cormorant	12	B	C	R
Pied Cormorant	3, 12	B	C	R

HERON, IBIS. ALLIES

Australian Pelican	3, 12		M	Vi
White-necked Heron	12	B		Var
Eastern Great Egret	2, 3, 7, 12	B	C	Vi
Intermediate Egret	7, 2		Ra	Vag
Cattle Egret	1, 7		Ra	Vag
Striated Heron	1, 2	B	M	R
White-faced Heron	W	B	C	R
Little Egret	1, 2, 3, 12	B	C	R
Eastern Reef Egret	3	B	M	R
Nankeen Night Heron	2, 12		U	R
Glossy Ibis	7, 12, 13		Ra	Vi
Australian White Ibis	7, 11		M	Vi
Straw-necked Ibis	6, 7		M	No
Royal Spoonbill	1, 2, 12		U	No
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	7, 12	B	U	Vi

RAPTOR

Eastern Osprey	1, 3	B	M	R
Black-shouldered Kite	5	B	M	ViWi
Square-tailed Kite	W		Ra	Vi
Black-breasted Buzzard	5, 13	B	U	R
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	3	B	U	R
Whistling Kite	W	B	C	R
Brahminy Kite	1, 2	B	M	R
Black Kite	W		U	Vi
Brown Goshawk	2, 9 12	B	U	R
Collared Sparrowhawk		B	Ra	R
Spotted Harrier	10, 11		M	R
Swamp Harrier	7		U	Vi
Wedge-tailed Eagle	W	B	C	R

RAPTOR cont.

Little Eagle	W	B	M	R
Nankeen Kestrel	W	B	C	R
Brown Falcon	4, 10	B	M	R
Australian Hobby	10, 13	B	M	R,Vi
Grey Falcon	12, 13		Ra	Vi
Peregrine Falcon			U	Vi

CRANE

Brolga	11		Ra	Vag
--------	----	--	----	-----

CRAKE, RAIL, ALLIES

Purple Swamphen	7		Ra	Vag
Buff-banded Rail	2	B	Ra	No
Australian Spotted Crake	7		U	Vi

CRAKE, RAIL, ALLIES cont.

Spotless Crake	15		Ra	No
Black-tailed Native-hen	7	B		No,Var
Eurasian Coot	7, 12	B	U	No

BUSTARD

Australian Bustard	5, 6		U	No
--------------------	------	--	---	----

SHOREBIRD

Bush Stone-curlew	4		Ra	Vi
Beach Stone-curlew	3		Ra	Vag
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	3	B	M	R
Sooty Oystercatcher	1, 3		U	R
Black-winged Stilt	W	B	MNo	
Banded Stilt	W		Ra	Vi
Red-necked Avocet	W		U	No
Pacific Golden Plover	1, 14		Ra	Vi
Grey Plover	1,3		U	ViSu
Red-capped Plover	W	B	M	R
Lesser Sand Plover	1		U	ViSu
Greater Sand Plover	1, 3		M	Vi
Oriental Plover	7		Ra	ViSu
Inland Dotterel	10		Ra	Vi
Black-fronted Dotterel	7, 12	B	M	Vi
Red-kneed Dotterel	7		B	UNo
Banded Lapwing	5, 14	B	M	R,Vi
Australian Painted Snipe	7	B	Ra	Var
Pin-tailed Snipe	12		Ra	Vi, Su
Black-tailed Godwit	1		Ra	ViSu
Bar-tailed Godwit	1		C	Vi
Little Curlew	14		Ra	Vi
Whimbrel	1, 2		M	Vi
Eastern Curlew	1, 2		M	V
Terek Sandpiper	1		U	ViSu
Common Sandpiper	1, 12		M	Vi
Grey-tailed Tattler	1, 2		M	Vi
Common Greenshank	W		U	ViSu
Marsh Sandpiper	1, 2		U	Vi
Common Redshank	1		Ra	Vi
Wood Sandpiper	7, 12		Ra	ViSu
Ruddy Turnstone	1		M	Vi
Asian Dowitcher	1, 3		Ra	Va
Great Knot	1		M	ViSu
Red Knot	1		M	ViSu
Sanderling	3		U	ViSu
Red-necked Stint	1		M	Vi
Long-toed Stint	7, 12		Ra	ViSu
Pectoral Sandpiper	16		Ra	ViSu
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1, 7, 16		U	ViSu
Curlew Sandpiper	1		U	ViSu

SHOREBIRD cont.

Broad-billed Sandpiper	1		Ra	ViSu
Ruff	7, 12, 16		Ra	ViSu
Oriental Pratincole	11, 14		Ra	Var
Australian Pratincole	12		Ra	Vi

BUTTON-QUAIL

Little Button-quail	7, 14	B	U	No,Var
---------------------	-------	---	---	--------

SKUA, JAEGER

Brown Skua	3		Ra	Vi
Pomerine Jaeger	3		Ra	ViSu

NODDY, TERN, GULL

Common Noddy	3		Ra	Vi
Bridled Tern	3		Ra	Vi
Fairy Tern	1, 3	Bis	C	Vi
Gull-billed Tern	3, 7		M	V
Caspian Tern	1, 3	Bis	C	R
Whiskered Tern	3, 7		U	Vi
White-winged Black Tern	7		U	Vi
Roseate Tern	3	Bis	U	R
Common Tern	3		M	Vi
Lesser Crested Tern	1, 3		U	R,Vi

NODDY, TERN, GULL cont.

Crested Tern	1, 3	Bis	C	R
Pacific Gull	1, 3	Bis	C	R
Franklin's Gull			Ra	Vag
Silver Gull	W	Bis	C	R

COCKATOO, PARROT

Galah	W	B	C	R
Little Corella	13	B	C	R
Cockatiel	10	B	U	No,Var
Australian Ringneck	W	B	M	R
Mulga Parrot	9	B	U	R
Budgerigar	10	B	U	No,Var
Bourke 's Parrot	10		U	No
Elegant Parrot	10, 12		Ra	Vag

CUCKOO

Horsfields Bronze-Cuckoo	2, 4	B	M	R
Black-eared Cuckoo	4	B	U	Vi
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	10		Ra	Vi
Pallid Cuckoo	9, 10	B	U	Vi

OWL

Southern Boobook	12		M	ViWi
Eastern Barn Owl	10		Ra	Vi

KINGFISHER

Blue-winged Kookaburra	12	B	M	R
Red-backed Kingfisher	13	B	M	R
Sacred Kingfisher	2, 12		M	Vi

BEE-EATER, ROLLER

Rainbow Bee-eater	7, 12	B	M	Vi
Dollarbird	12, 13		Ra	Vag

TREECREEPER

Black-tailed Treecreeper	12	B	U	R
--------------------------	----	---	---	---

SCRUBWREN, ALLIES

White-browed Scrub-wren	2,4,6	B	M	R
Rufous Fieldwren	6, 7	B	M	R
Redthroat	4, 9	B	M	R
Weebill	12		U	R
Western Gerygone	4, 9		U	Vi
Dusky Gerygone	2	B	M	R
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	9	B	Ra	R
Slender-billed Thornbill	6	B	U	R
Southern Whiteface	9	B	U	R

PARDALOTE

Red-browed Pardalote	12	B	U	R
Straited Pardalote	12	B	M	R

FAIRY-WREN, GRASSWREN

Splendid Fairy-wren	4	B	U	R
White-winged Fairy-wren	5, 6	B	C	R
Variegated Fairy-wren	2, 4	B	C	R

HONEYEATER, CHAT

Pied Honeyeater	10	B	M	No
Singing Honeyeater	W	B	C	R
White-plumed Honeyeater	12,13	B	C	R
White-fronted Honeyeater	9	B	Ra	ViWi
Yellow-throated Miner	4,9	B	U	R
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	4, 9	B	C	No,Var
Crimson Chat	6, 7	B	U	No
Orange Chat	6, 7	B	U	No
White-fronted Chat	6, 11	B	Va	No
Black Honeyeater	10	B	Ra	No
Brown Honeyeater	4		Ra	N

BABBLER,

Grey-crowned Babbler	12, 13	B	M	R
White-browed Babbler	4,9	B	C	R

QUAILTHRUSH, ALLIES

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush	5		Ra	No
Chiming Wedgebill	4, 9	B	C	R

CUCKOO-SHRIKE, TRILLER

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	4, 9	B	C	R
White-winged Triller	4, 9	B	U-C	Vi

WHISTLER, SHRIKE-THRUSH

Rufous Whistler	4, 9	B	U	R
White-breasted Whistler	2	B	U	R
Grey Shrike-thrush	W	B	C	R
Crested Bellbird	4, 9	B	C	R

WOODSWALLOW

White-breasted

Woodswallow 2, 3, 12	B	M	R
Masked Woodswallow 5, 10	B	U	No
Black-faced Woodswallow 5, 10	B	U	R

BUTCHERBIRD, CURRAWONG

Grey Butcherbird 4, 5, 9	B	U	R
Pied Butcherbird 5, 9, 10	B	M	R
Australian Magpie 5, 10	B	U	R

FANTAIL

Grey Fantail 2, 4	B	I	Vi
Mangrove Grey Fantail 2	B	M	R
Willie Wagtail W	B	C	R

CROW, RAVEN

Australian Raven 10, 13		Ra	Vag
Little Crow 5, 10	B	C	R
Torresian Crow 13	B	M	R

FLYCATCHER, MONARCH

Magpie-lark 7, 12	B	C	R
-------------------	---	---	---

ROBIN, SCRUB-ROBIN

Red-capped Robin 9	B	U	R
Hooded Robin 10		Ra	R

LARK

Horsfield's Bushlark 6, 7, 11	B	M	R,Vi
-------------------------------	---	---	------

OLD WORLD WARBLER

Australian Reed-Warbler 12		M	R
Little Grassbird 2, 6, 7	B	U-M	R
Rufous Songlark 7, 13	B	M	Vi
Brown Songlark 6, 7	B	M	Vi

WHITE-EYE

Yellow White-eye 2, 6, 8	B	C	R
Silvereye 2, 4	B	C	R

SWALLOW, MARTIN

White-backed Swallow 5, 10, 11	B	U	R
Welcome Swallow W	B	C	R
Fairy Martin 12, 13	B	U	
Tree Martin 11, 12, 13	B	C	R

FLOWERPECKER

Mistletoebird 4, 9	B	U	No
--------------------	---	---	----

FINCH

Zebra Finch 13, 8, 13	B	C	R
Star Finch 12	B	No	R
Painted Finch 5, 13		Ra	No,Vag

PIPIT, WAGTAIL

Australian Pipit W	B	C	R
Eastern Yellow Wagtail 14		Ra	Vag

Carnarvon contacts

Les George

T (08) 9941 2217

Tony Taffe

T (08) 9941 2740

REFERENCES

Atlas records supplied by Birddata © BirdLife Australia.

Brooker, M.G. and Estbergs, A.J. (1976). A survey of terrestrial vertebrates in the Carnarvon Region, W.A. *Western Australian Naturalist* 13: 160-170.

Database: BirdLife Western Australia.

Johnstone, R.E. (1990). 'Mangroves and mangrove birds of Western Australia'. *Records of the Western Australian Museum* Supplement No. 32.

Johnstone, R.E., Burbidge, A.H. and Stone, P. 'Birds of the southern Carnarvon Basin, Western Australia: distribution, status and historical changes'. *Records of the Western Australian Museum* Supplement No 61: 371-448 (2000).

Personal records of members.

Storr, G.M. 'Birds of the Gascoyne Region, Western Australia'. *Records of the Western Australian Museum* Supplement No. 21.

Guide No. 05ab. Updated June 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following for their generous support in the preparation of this guide. Allan Jones, Allan Burbidge and members of Birds Australia Western Australia (now BirdLife Western Australia) for preparation of the original guide. Atlas of Australian Birds, BirdLife Australia for records; Les George for further local records. Shire of Carnarvon for financial support and assistance. Susan Tingay, Pam Free, Martin Thompson and Judy Blyth for illustrations. Rose Jones for habitat photographs. Georgina Steytler for cover photograph of Mulga Parrot.

Western Australian members are offered a variety of activities and services including conservation and research projects, excursions, campouts, surveys and social activities. There is also a library and books for sale at the office. To view the full range of bird guides visit the website.

Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats. With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

birdlife.org.au