Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*)

Weighing in at around 6 grams and only 8-10cm in length the Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*) is one of the smallest and most colourful of Australian birds. The wings, tail and head of the male are black and covered with small, distinct white spots. These white spots give them the regal look of wearing a crown decorated by diamonds. Males have a pale eyebrow, a yellow throat and a red rump. Females are similar but have less-distinct markings.

Distribution occurs across eastern and south-eastern Australia from Cooktown in Queensland through to Perth in Western Australia. They occur in coastal areas, extending to the western slope of the Great Dividing Range in the east. The Spotted Pardalote remains relatively common in urban areas that have a high density of eucalypts.

The Spotted Pardalote is mostly found high up in the canopy of eucalypt forests and woodlands but also occurs in parks and gardens with a well-established eucalypt canopy. For this reason it is more often detected by its characteristic call. It communicates with a repeated three-note whistle, the second two notes higher than the first.

Look out for Spotted Pardalotes flittering through the canopy in search of lerps, which are one of their favourite foods. A lerp is a crystal-like honeydew casing that a psyllid insect creates as a shelter for its body. By feeding on lerps and psyllids they help to keep our bushland healthy. Psyllids are plant lice that suck the sap from eucalypts. When bushland is under stress because of weeds, drought, clearing or changed fire patterns, high numbers of psyllids can cause eucalypts to become sick and eventually die. So by eating lerps and psyllids, Spotted Pardalotes are playing their part to lessen the stress on our native plants.

Another reason why these birds are hard to find is the location of their nests. During the breeding season from July-January each year, Spotted Pardalote parents diligently drill a narrow, circular tunnel into an earth bank, sandbank or creek bank. At the end of a long tunnel, they excavate a large nest chamber, and line it with strips of bark. The chamber is generally higher than the entrance tunnel, presumably to avoid flooding. 3-5 eggs are generally laid and are incubated by both parents for 19 days until they hatch, with nestlings spending another 21 days in the nest. Spotted Pardalotes are very duteous parents, carrying many faecal sacs out of the nest to keep it clean.

Follow the link below to see these intriguing birds building their nest:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfGaWYtvC-kg

Be sure to keep your eyes and ears open for these beautiful birds whilst out in the bush!
Welcome to 2017, and another year of Bushcare volunteering in our local area! We welcome on board our new Bushcare officer Daniel who will be supervising groups on Thursday through Sunday. Find out more about Daniel below.

As for our groups, please note that Grant Reserve Bushcare Group, held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month, will now be known as Wylie’s Baths Bushcare. Our Parkcare Group who work near Coogee Surf Lifesaving Club will now be known as Grant Reserve Bushcare and continue to work on the third Wednesday of the month. If in doubt, always check the Bushcare Calendar or our website.

**Meet Council’s newest Bushcare Officer**

Hello everybody, my name is Daniel Hall (you can call me Dan) and I will be job sharing the Bushcare Officer role with Cian from Thursday – Sunday.

In 2010 I completed a Bachelor of Science with a major in Environmental Biology at the University of Technology, Sydney. After my studies I worked for 3 years as a bush regenerator working mostly on the north shore, northern beaches and eastern suburbs of Sydney. I then took a year off to go travelling through South America, North America and Europe. Upon my return I decided to try my hand at landscaping and got involved with a small company based out of Woollahra.

Over the past year I have diversified my construction and landscape maintenance skills. Although I enjoyed the role, it helped to confirm that my true passion lay in the environmental sector. I’m excited about my new role with Council and look forward to getting out in the field and meeting you all over the coming months.

**Bushcare Christmas Luncheon**

The Bushcare Christmas Luncheon held in November last year was again a great success. With a beautiful view out over Little Bay, guests enjoyed a presentation by local bee expert Elke Haege. Elke talked us through species of bees we are likely to encounter in the area, the types of flowers they are attracted to and the habitat they prefer. We have some great information to begin creating habitat on our Bushcare sites to help attract and protect native bee species.

We also savoured a delicious Christmas lunch and are already eagerly anticipating next year’s meal!

Thank you to all the volunteers who came along to the celebration. Congratulations to those who received awards and we look forward to working with all volunteers again in 2017.
Australian natives are often considered to be set-and-forget plants that will happily grow in most conditions with little maintenance. In reality native plants come from a range of habitats, soil types and different climates and have varying requirements. This includes their nutritional needs and common questions are: Do I need to feed my native plants and what should I feed them?

In the eastern suburbs and surrounds the soils are often sandy, very well drained and low in nutrients. Local or indigenous plants are well adapted to these soils and are very efficient at taking up what few nutrients are in the soil.

Certain plants such as members of the Proteaceae family, which includes the Banksias, Grevilleas and Hakeas, and also the Acacias, or Wattles, are known to be sensitive to too much phosphorus (P), which is one of the major plant nutrients. This shows up as yellowing leaves and brown edges on the leaves. The other two major nutrients plants require are nitrogen (N) and potassium (K) which, together with phosphorus (P), form the NPK ratio you can see listed on the back of fertiliser products.

In the home garden of native plant enthusiasts you often find a mix of native plants and although their nutritional needs may vary, it is beneficial to feed natives. They will be healthier, have a faster growth rate and be more likely to put on a beautiful flower display.

An ideal NPK ratio for native plants is 8:1:5 (Leake S., 1993). The ratio numbers will vary across different fertilisers but essentially this is a low-phosphorus ratio which is a best fit for most native plants.

Fertilisers can be divided into fast or slow acting depending how quickly they are released and can be absorbed by a plant. Here’s a summary of the different types suitable and how to use them.

**Controlled release fertiliser**: There are several brands of controlled release fertiliser which are suitable for natives. These fertilisers can be sprinkled around plants and are great for potted plants. They work by slowly releasing fertiliser to the plant over time. This type of fertiliser can last from three to nine months and is an easy reliable way to feed native plants.

**Liquid fertiliser**: In peak growing times such as spring and summer, using a liquid fertiliser will give native plants a boost. Liquid fertilisers are faster acting and are readily absorbed by plants. There is a good range available commercially and several are based on organic ingredients such as fish, blood and bone and seaweed extract.

Liquid fertilisers are mixed with water at the recommended rate in a watering can and watered on the desired plants, preferably in the morning before it gets too hot. Some brands are available in containers which can be connected to a hose and applied. As a general guide you can apply liquid fertilisers every two months in spring, summer and autumn.

**Slow Release Fertiliser**: Blood and bone is a slow release fertiliser which can be used for native plants. In phosphorus context it is a little higher and it may accumulate over time, so use it more sparingly for phosphorus-sensitive native plants.

**Iron Chelates and Iron Sulphate**: Phosphorus-sensitive plants suffer if members of the Proteaceae family and Acacias can show deficiency in iron or symptoms of phosphorus toxicity which look similar. To combat this use either iron chelates or iron sulphate. They are available as a powder that can be mixed with water according to label instructions and applied on plants with a watering can.

There are some fertilisers which are generally too strong for the more sensitive native plants and should be avoided in gardens with these plants. These include mushroom compost, poultry, cow, horse or sheep manure and worm castings (Sydney Environmental & Soil Laboratory). Instead, use these fertilisers for fruit and vegie plants.

Soil conditioners are beneficial for all gardens and differ from fertilisers in that they improve the soil structure and health and in turn improve plant health.

Compost as a wonderful soil conditioner as it adds organic matter to the soil. This is invaluable in local sandy soils, as this added organic matter helps to hold water and nutrients within the soil. Well-aged compost is also rich in beneficial micro-organisms and can help control damaging plant pathogens. Compost can be homemade or bought commercially and lightly mixed into the soil.

Seaweed extract is useful as both a soil and plant conditioner. It contains trace elements, natural plant hormones, antibiotics and vitamins. It helps to increase seed germination and vegetative growth and protects plants during stress. It’s great to use when putting new plants into the garden as it reduces transplant shock and stimulates root growth, helping the plant settle in.

A range of seaweed solutions are available commercially and, like liquid fertiliser, they are mixed with water at the recommended rate in a watering can and watered on the desired plants. They are also available in containers which can be connected to a hose and applied. Seaweed solution can be applied to all plants as often as every two weeks in spring, summer and autumn.


---

**New at the nursery**

*Davidsonia pruriens*  
**DAVIDSON’S PLUM**

This very ornamental bush food tree is also known as Coray. Slender and palm-like, it grows to 4-8m tall. The immature leaves are bright pink while the mature leaves are large and attractive. The reddish-brown flowers grow in clusters in spring, followed by deep purple fruit which resemble plums. The fruit can be a bit sour but make excellent jams and sauces, and a full-flavoured dry red wine. Native to the rainforests of north and south-east Queensland, the Davidson’s Plum prefers some shade and will grow indoors for extended periods. For best results add some organic matter to well-drained soil and maintain adequate moisture. Great feature tree and for edible or tropical gardens. Grows well in a pot.
Mountain Devil (Lambertia formosa)

Lambertia formosa is an attractive prickly shrub 2m tall by 1.5m in diameter. It has narrow rigid leaves commonly arranged in whorls of 3 to 5cm long. They are dark green and end in a sharp point. The pretty red tubular flowers are borne in erect clusters, usually of 7, surrounded by a ring of long coloured bracts. Flowers are produced most of the year, typically being more prolific over spring and summer when they produce copious amounts of nectar for birds. The unique fruit is a woody follicle with 2 valves, containing a beak and horn, resembling the head of a ‘mountain devil’.

L. formosa is widespread on sandstone areas in the Sydney district. It also occurs in the Blue Mountains, north and south coasts as well as the southern tablelands. It resides in dry sclerophyll forest, woodland and heath. It is very hardy, preferring well-drained soils in full sun or part shade. Propagation is from seed or cuttings. Seeds germinate readily but require a number of years to reach the flowering stage. Cuttings on the other hand are relatively slow to develop roots.

Every garden should have a specimen of this reliable plant.

Hollows as Homes

In urban and agricultural areas large, hollow-bearing trees are in decline, but many animal species depend on them for habitat. In NSW, hollow-using species include at least 46 mammals, 81 birds, 31 reptiles, 16 frogs and many insects. Of these, 40 species are listed as threatened with extinction. This is why the ‘loss of hollow-bearing trees’ has been listed as a key threatening process nationally.

‘Hollows as Homes’ is a citizen science program run by the Royal Botanical Gardens, University of Sydney and the Australian Museum. With the help of the community this project aims to assess the availability of tree hollows and their use by wildlife across the Sydney region.

Participating is easy - Just check the trees in your backyard, street, park, paddock or the brush, and report the hollow(s) on your phone, tablet or computer through www.hollowsashomes.com. You can provide details about the tree and hollow, such as tree height, direction the hollow is facing, as well as wildlife using the hollow. Ideally the hollow is in a location you regularly encounter, such as while walking the dog or out in the garden. If you see any animals using the hollow you can add these observations to your original report. Training and detailed information is available through the Hollows as Homes website listed above.

The information gathered will be accessible to the public and will help to advise Council’s conservation planning to retain important habitat trees, plant future habitat trees and supplement missing habitat. It will also help to increase our understanding of exactly which species are inhabiting our own backyards.

GROUP | LOCATION | DAY | TIME | APRIL | MAY | JUNE
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Sandstein Park | Car park on Domainian Crescent, Clovelly | Friday | 9.00am – 11.00am | Good Friday | 12 | 9
Fled Hollows Reserve | Bigh Place entrance, Randwick | Wednesday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 12 | 10 | 14
Gordon’s Bay | Access via UNSW Cloffin Campus Crossing, 45 Beach St, Coogee | Sunday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 3 | 14 | 11
Grant Reserve | Vegetable entry to Coogee Surf Life Saving Club | Wednesday | 8.00am – 10.00am | 19 | 17 | 21
Ladies’ Pool | McKess Rock Baths, Grant Reserve, Coogee | Sunday & Wednesday | 9.00am – 11.00am | 2 & 19 | 7 | 817 | 4 & 21
Lake Malabar | End of Manohering Avenue, Marrickville | Wednesday | 1.00pm – 4.00pm | 19 | 17 | 21
Long Bay Foreshore | Corner of Home Street and Bay Parade, Malabar | Saturday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 1 | 6 | 3
Marrickville Dunes | South Marrickville SLSC car park | Friday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 6 | 4 | 1
Prince Henry | Alternate between opposite 2 Millard Dr & the corner of Jenner & Harvey St, Little Bay | Saturday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 8 | 13 | 10
Randwick Environment Park | Corner of Doolagh Avenue and Burrangaling Street, Randwick | Wednesday & Saturday | 9.00am – 12 noon | 5 only | 3 & 20 | 7 & 17
Wylies Baths | At the picnic tables above Wylies Baths, Neptune Street, Coogee | Tuesday | 9.30am – 11.30pm | 11 only | 9 & 23 | 13 & 27
* Little Bay Landcare | Between 119 and 121 Birls Crescent, Malabar | Saturday | 8.00am – 12 noon | 8 | 13 | 10
* Magic Point (Malabar Headland) | Contact Claire Bettington on (02) 9344 8589 for the meeting place | Thursday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 13, 20, 27 | 11, 18, 25 | 8, 15, 22, 29
* Malabar Headland West | Contact Don Kerr on (02) 9311 2665 for more information | Sunday | 9.00am – 1.00pm | 2, 9, 16, 33 | 7, 14, 21, 28 | 4, 11, 18, 25
* Denotes non-Council run groups. Please contact organisers directly.

GROUP | LOCATION | DAY | TIME | APRIL | MAY | JUNE
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Alison Rd | Corner of Alison Road and Beach Street, Coogee | Wednesday | 8.00am – 10.00am | 26 | 24 | 28
Clyde Street | Clyde Street Reserve, Randwick | Saturday | 1.00pm – 3.00pm | Easter Saturday | 20 | 17
Old Terwilligs | Dudley Street entrance, Randwick | Tuesday | 8.00am – 10.00am | 13 | 11 | 8
A milestone work of memoir, travel writing and history, The Bush by Don Watson takes us on a profoundly revelatory and entertaining journey through the Australian landscape and character.

Most Australians live in cities and cling to the coastal fringe, yet our sense of what an Australian is – or should be – is drawn from the vast and varied inland called the bush. But what do we mean by 'the bush', and how has it shaped us?

Starting with his forebears' battle to drive back nature and eke a living from the land, Don Watson explores the bush as it was and as it now is: the triumphs and the ruination, the commonplace and the bizarre, the stories we like to tell about ourselves and the national character, and those we don't. Via mountain ash and mallee, the birds and the beasts, slaughter, fire, flood and drought, swagmen, sheep and their shepherds, the strange and the familiar, the tragedies and the follies, the crimes and the myths and the hope – here is a journey that only our leading writer of non-fiction could take us on.

At once magisterial in scope and alive with telling, wry detail, The Bush lets us see our landscape and its inhabitants afresh, examining what we have made, what we have destroyed, and what we have become in the process.

No one who reads it will look at this country the same way again.