

TOP 20 BIRDS

INFORMATION GUIDE



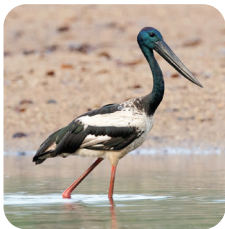
Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*)

No bird is more symbolic of Northern Australia than the Brolga. Their courtship dances are not confined to the breeding season and pairs seem to dance just for the fun. They reach almost 1.5 metres and their head is bright red to orange. When not breeding, family groups may converge into large groups in search of food. They breed in shallow swamps in the wet season. Brolgas usually produce 2 young and both parents care for them for up to one year.



Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*)

Pairs of crows hold permanent territories and flocks of about 50 non breeding birds are often seen around El Questro. Adults have white eyes. Their slow but loud call is often heard at dawn and makes for an early rise when camping. Crows mainly feed on the ground by walking or hopping, one foot in front of the other and will eat almost anything from anywhere. They breed between August and February.



Black-necked stork/Jabiru

(*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)

The black necked stork or jabiru is Australia's only stork. This bird is a little inelegant taking off but once in the air it flies with consummate ease and soars to several hundred metres. Jabirus have oversized black bills for scooping their food from the water. The males have dark eyes while those of females are yellow. They live in swamps and freshwater pools. Jabirus breed from February to June. Their nests are a massive structure of sticks and reeds placed in the top of a tree.



Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)

Black kites are the seagulls of the Kimberley. These scavenging birds are often seen around the Station Township rubbish tip. They usually forage in flocks and often follow fires, circling and dropping through the smoke in search of an easy meal. Although the bulk of their diet is carrion, kites sometimes swoop on live rodents, which might be swallowed in flight. They build a nest high above the ground, where 2-3 eggs are incubated by the female, while the male obtains most of the food but does not directly feed the young.



Australian Bustard (*Ardeotis australis*)

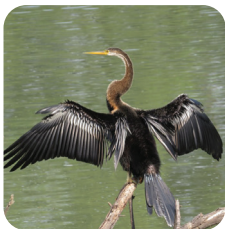
The bustard was a prized meal for early settlers. The Kimberley is one of few areas in Australia where you can still them. Laborious wing beats give the appearance of great unwillingness to fly. These birds may grow up to 1.2 metres. The males try to impress the females during courtship by inflating their neck and strutting about prissily. One or two eggs are laid on bare ground. The female incubates the eggs and raises the young. They are nomadic and move to areas of good rain.



White Bellied Sea Eagle

(*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

Sea eagles can be seen on high vantage points near water or swooping down to fish. Waterbirds, turtles, snakes and carrion supplement their diet of fish. They land on the ground to tear their prey apart. Females reach up to 80cm whereas males are slightly smaller. Between May and October two eggs are laid several days apart. The first born usually monopolises all the food and the younger one dies. Both parents help rear the brood.



Darter/Snakebird (*Anhingidae*)

With only its head and neck rising from the water, the darter resembles a snake, hence its other name snakebird. The water bird quietly submerges its body then suddenly strikes with its S-shaped body. Small fish and aquatic animals are speared with the sharp bill. They grow up to 90cm tall. The male is predominantly glossy black while the female is greyish brown. Darters are found throughout most of Australia and live along rivers, lakes and estuaries.



Red Tailed Black Cockatoo

(*Calyptorhynchus banksii*)

These spectacular birds were the first parrots to be illustrated during Captain Cook's explorations in 1770. Usually they are first detected by their rasping cries as a small flock flies overhead with slow, languid wing beats. The red on the fanned tail of this cockatoo identifies the male; the tail of the female is yellow-orange. They nest in tree hollows which the parents enter tail first. It feeds on seeds of eucalyptus and other plants.



Little Pied Cormorant

(*Microcarbo melanoleucos*)

The Little Pied Cormorant is the smallest Australian cormorant. It is commonly seen sitting on exposed rocks along the Chamberlain Gorge. This bird roosts and nests mostly in colonies, but fishes alone. The nest is small, shallow structure of sticks. It breeds throughout most of the year and lays 2-5 whitish blue eggs. Cormorants are closely related to darters. Both species lack a protective coating of oil on their feathers, hence the typical spreading of wings to dry them out after diving.



Little Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*)

These raucous birds form huge flocks that roam the countryside in search of food and water. Such flocks are a common sight on El Questro Wilderness Park. Little corellas favour trees along watercourses for roosting and nesting and open greasy areas with low vegetation for feeding. They can chew wood chips of their nesting hollows and lay 2 or 3 eggs on the resultant padding. Their favourite food is grass seeds collected from the ground.

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Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*)

Screaming flocks of rainbow lorikeets often fly overhead in the Kimberley, as they commute between roosting and feeding areas. They sometimes travel long distances in groups of up to 50 looking for blossoms of grevilleas and paperbarks. Like honeyeaters, lorikeets have brush tipped tongues to extract nectar from flowers. This staple is supplemented by ripe fruit and insects. Breeding takes place between August and January, when the female lays two eggs in a tree hollow.



Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens*)

This owl resembles its cousin, the southern boobook. Barking owls are often seen siting on unsealed roads in the dark, dazzled by car headlights. Its unmistakable dog-like bark can be heard at night. It roosts by day, often in pairs near a watercourse. Nesting takes place between July and November. The female lays 2-3 eggs in a tree hollow or occasionally on the ground.



Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

This pigeon is a typical bird of the Kimberley, being confined to the sandstone hills and cliffs. When startled they will often leave their perch with a loud clapping of wings. They spend their time on ledges or sandstone boulders foraging for all sorts of seeds and insects. Rock pigeons nest during the dry season and lay 2 eggs in rocky crevices lined up with spinifex and grass. Both parents assist in nesting duties.



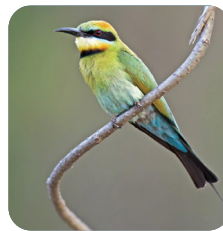
Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*)

The dove is the source of the gentle cooing you will hear when setting up camp along the Pentecost River. In the afternoon they also frequent tracks around the Station, looking for seeds in the sand. The courtship displays of the males involves bowing, tail fanning and clapping their wings. These birds favour grassed woodlands with nearby water. Peaceful doves breed all year and build their nests with sticks amongst vegetation.



Pied Butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*)

The fluted, piping calls of the butcherbird are often heard in the woodlands, especially during the breeding season when the male and female of a pair will sing in duets, alternating with one another. They feed by perching in the open and then pouncing on their prey, which includes other birds, mice, large insects and reptiles. Butcherbirds often live in groups with the young of previous years helping to feed later broods. They defend their nests aggressively, chasing other species away.



Rainbow Bee Eater (*Merops ornatus*)

Seen as brilliant flashes of golden-bronze, turquoise and green, rainbow bee eaters swoop and glide in elegant manoeuvres. All food is captured on the wing, then bee eaters will perch and batter it against a branch to knock out the sting before swallowing. Some rainbow bee eaters are present all year round, others move to Indonesia or New Guinea to breed during March - April. Bee eaters nest in burrows along creek banks and in sandy soil. The eggs are incubated for almost a month by all members of the group.



Great Bowerbird (*Chlamydera nuchalis*)

Bowerbirds eat mostly fruit and insects, but will steal your food at Emma Gorge Resort, if not careful. Male bowerbirds collect a variety of white or shiny objects to adorn their bowers. Objects, seemingly placed at random, are well tended and used to attract females. Males also spread a small patch of feathers on the back of their neck, which reveals a lilac spot. Mating takes place inside the bower around October. Once done, the male chases the female away, who retreats to build a nest and raise one or two young alone.



Brown Honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*)

These noisy birds are the most common honeyeaters on El Questro, ranging from woodlands to gorges and often found along creeks. Like most honeyeaters they are nomadic, following the flowering of their favourite trees. They feed mostly on nectar and have brush tipped tongues to lick nectar from the flowers. Lerps on eucalyptus leaves are also an important source of food. Brown honeyeaters nest from June to January and after two weeks, the young hatch.



Blue Winged Kookaburra (*Dacelo leachii*)

This Kookaburra is slightly smaller, but prettier than its southern relative. Kookaburras usually live in family groups and all members help to incubate eggs and raise the young. Groups make themselves known at Black Cockatoo campsite by a noisy cacophony of cackles, often in chorus. They live in moist forest, especially along creeks. While hunting insects and small animals, kookaburras perch motionless on a branch until they spot their prey, then fly to the ground and seize it in their bill. Breeding takes place in the wet season.



Willy Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

The willy wagtail is a common, well-loved little bird. They take insects in twisting flights in foliage or on the ground, seemingly disturbing them by jerky sweeps of the tails and sudden wing beats. Large butterflies are dewinged before eating. Wagtails seem to skirmish with other birds, especially black and white ones like the Magpie Lark. Breeding takes place in August - January. Willy wagtails build a shallow grey cup of fine grasses and bark shreds felted with spider webs and feathers. 2-4 creamy white or spotted eggs are incubated by both sexes and the young start to fly two weeks after hatching. Wagtails inhabit most of Australia and parts of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.