

Junior Explorer Activity



Activity Sheet 4.

Wildlife Diary – FEATHERED FRIENDS

opportunity » growth » lifestyle



There are plenty of cool natural places to look for birds in Frankston. Some of them are featured in our booklet “Natural Reserves within Frankston City” which you can find on Council’s website. Find a Bush Reserve near your place and check out some of our “Feathered Friends”.

HEADING OUT

Before you start out, here are some tips for keeping you and your park safe:

Know before you go!

Dress for the weather. Take a rain jacket or hat and wear sturdy covered shoes.

Let someone know where you are and stay with an adult.

Keep Our Parks Wild

Respect animal homes by leaving the bush undisturbed and stay on the tracks. Please resist any temptation to feed birds. They are healthiest and happiest eating food of their own choice.

Leave No Trace

The best souvenirs are your memories and photographs or drawings. Leave only footprints and always take your rubbish home.

BIRDS ARE:

Colourful: Many birds are brightly coloured, particularly the males who like to show off to attract a female.

Musical: The sound of all the birds calling out to each other at Dawn and Dusk can sometimes be almost deafening. Each bird’s call is unique.

Feathery: Feathers come in different colours, shapes and sizes. Some are for insulation, some for steering, some for flight.

Observant: Birds keep careful watch over their home. You will often see them perched high on a dead branch where they can see what’s going on.

Flying Aces: Birds are aerial experts, and can weave between trees in the forest chasing food on the wing. A few can even hover in midair while feeding from flowers.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A ROBIN

Today; AM



I like to get going early in the morning, as the Sun comes up.

Before leaving my roosting spot, I called out to all the other Robins in the area to make sure they know this is my home range.

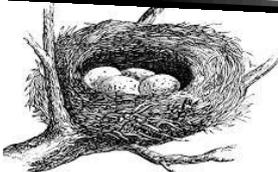
You've probably heard my call in the bush, a single repeated high pitched note.

The "morning chorus" sure gets noisy with all the birds calling out at once.

First job today was doing the rounds of my territory, before looking for breakfast.

My favourites are insects and spiders hiding among leaf litter. I do my morning yoga, hanging sideways on tree trunks, looking for any movements below.

I often wait for a human to walk past and disturb insects, then I fly down and grab them. YUMMY!!



Today; PM

It's breeding time soon, so I'm gathering materials to build a nest. Today I started my nest in the fork of a tree protected by thick foliage.

I'll make a cup-shaped nest from thin strips of bark and twigs bound with cobweb and big enough for 2 or 3 eggs.

Inside, I'll line it with mosses, grasses and more spider web.

And, I'll camouflage the outside with lichen and grey bark to make it blend into the bush. It should be ready next week.

After I lay my eggs, I'll have to watch out for Cuckoos. They don't care who's nest they lay their eggs in and then leave us to raise their chicks for them.

Last year I raised three beautiful little fluffy chicks and my partner fed me while I sat keeping them safe & warm.

We had to catch a lot of food for those hungry beaks.

FABULOUS FEATHERS

Bird feathers come in all shapes, sizes and colours, depending on the type of bird and what part of the bird they come from.



- Wing feathers are strong for flying
- Contour (body) feathers give a streamline shape
- Tail feathers are for steering and balance
- Down feathers are fluffy for keeping warm



From left to right: Cockatoo crest; Down; Emu; Rosella wing; Kookaburra tail; Duck wing

Equipment: Disposable gloves; magnifying glass; crayons and paper

Instructions:

- Wear your gloves when handling feathers
- Find a large feather in the bush (or your chook pen at home)
- Examine it closely with your magnifying glass - Note the shaft and the vanes
- Feel it in your hands.
 - Is it really "as light as a feather"?
 - Is it fluffy near the base?
 - Could you tickle a friend with it?
- Place your feather flat under a piece of paper and rub a crayon over it to make a "feather print"



Fast Fact: Did you know that every Emu feather is two feathers joined at the base.

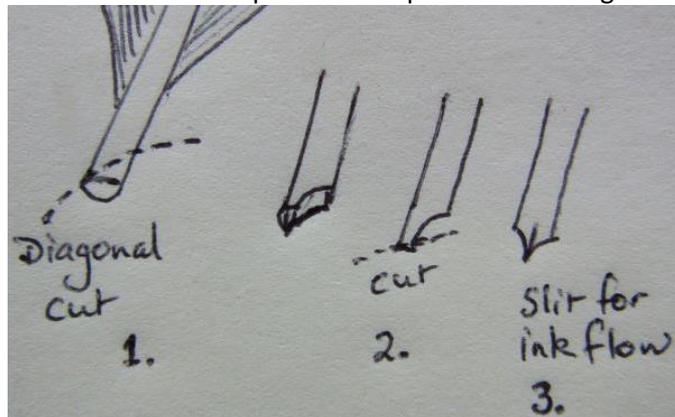
OLD TIMER'S WRITING

Before we had ballpoint pens, people used feathers dipped in ink for writing. Have an adult help you make a writing quill, following these instructions

Equipment: An adult; stanley knife; ink or coloured food dye; paper and paper towel.

Instructions:

- Choose a flight feather that feels good to handle
- Cut away the bottom barbs on the shaft
- Ask for adult help to cut the quill as in the diagrams



You can now dip your quill pen into food dye or diluted ink and write away!

Tips:

Your ink needs time to dry, so it wont smudge. In the old days we used "blotting paper" to carefully mop up excess ink. (paper towel might do)
Careful with ink – It stains your clothes and fingers.



NIFTY NESTS

Birds are expert engineers, able to make very complex nests to house a young family.



Some are made from mud, like this Mudlark nest, while others are made from twigs and strips of bark, usually in the fork of tree. Thick, bushy or prickly plants are favourite places for protection from predators such as cats, dogs, foxes and

bigger birds. Try making your own nest from natural materials.

Equipment: Natural materials; string or wool; scissors; paper plate; water and soil; newspaper and PVC glue.

Instructions:

- Collect from the ground some twigs, bark strips, leaves, feathers, moss, vine
- On a paper plate start by weaving a stick frame
- Keep adding twigs and bark to form a round cup shape.



- If you want, make thick mud with soil and water and smooth it around the outside of your nest
- Add short pieces of string or wool and keep building up the edges with more twigs, deep enough to hold eggs safely.
- Line the inside of the nest with moss and feathers
- Ready to lay some eggs?
- Scrunch some paper into an egg shape and cover with strips of newspaper soaked in water and PVC glue. (papier mache)
- When the eggs are dry you can paint them whatever colour you like.



Now you are ready for next Easter!!

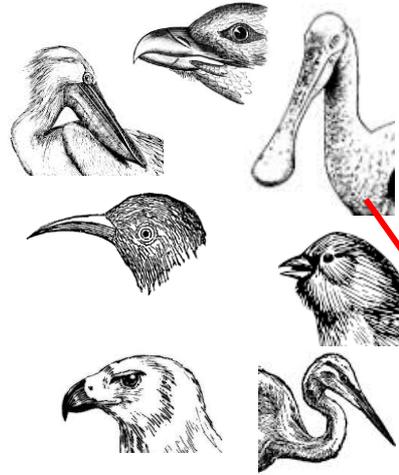
BUSY BEAKS

Birds are well equipped for feeding on their preferred foods.

Equipment: Pencil

Instructions:

- Draw lines to match up the beaks with the tools found in my tool box, that you might use for the same task.



- Watch the birds you see in the bush or your garden and notice how they use their beaks
- In the table below write the names of birds you see and draw their beak shape
- Now in the right column write what the beak is used for

Bird	Beak shape	Task
Cockatoo		Cracking seeds





BIRD SONGS

Dawn and Dusk are great times to listen for bird songs. They like to call out to each other as they wake up and before settling in to sleep.

At other times you may hear birds “sound the alarm” or go very quiet when danger is nearby. A hawk overhead, a cat out hunting or a person too close to a nest.

Birds talk to each other constantly to share information or to stake out a territory.

Equipment: Your ears; Field Guide Victoria app;

Instructions:

- Download the Fauna Field Guide app to your phone or tablet
<https://museums victoria.com.au/apps/field-guide-app-to-victorian-fauna/>
- Go outside in the early morning
- Warm up your ears by gently rubbing your hands over them
- Listen for bird calls around you for 5 minutes
- Count on your fingers (and toes) each different call
- Pick out a call that you can imitate, and call back
- Does the bird reply to your call?



Birdwatchers often “kiss” the back of their hand loudly to attract those small bush birds that are hard to see.

- Try it and see if those little birds come closer?
- Use the Field Guide Victoria app to identify birds you see and play back their calls to attract them.

Tips: Its best not to play back bird calls during breeding season (generally late winter).

We don't want to interrupt busy parents sitting on eggs or feeding young chicks.



Fast facts:

- Magpies calls are more complex than most birds
- They can imitate other bird songs
- Each magpie has its own individual call
- Males practice complex songs to attract a mate
- Try talking back to them by imitating their songs

BACKYARD BIRDS

Back gardens can be busy places for birds. There are usually lots of insects to eat, places to nest and hopefully water to drink and bathe in.

By planning your garden well, you can attract more birds. You just need to think about what birds need to survive.



Recipe for a bird-friendly garden:

- At least one large tree (with hollows if possible)
- Native flowering plants for nectar feeders
- Several layers of medium and small size plants
- Bushes with thick foliage for nesting birds
- Groundcover plants to forage among



- Some prickly plants for protection from predators
- One or more bird baths (fresh water)
- A predator free environment (keep your pets away)

Let me stay wild.

I prefer the food I find in your garden or the bush. You don't need to put out food for me, because it could make me sick and I get lazy and forget how to hunt on my own.

Backyard Bird Survey

Spend some time surveying birds in your backyard

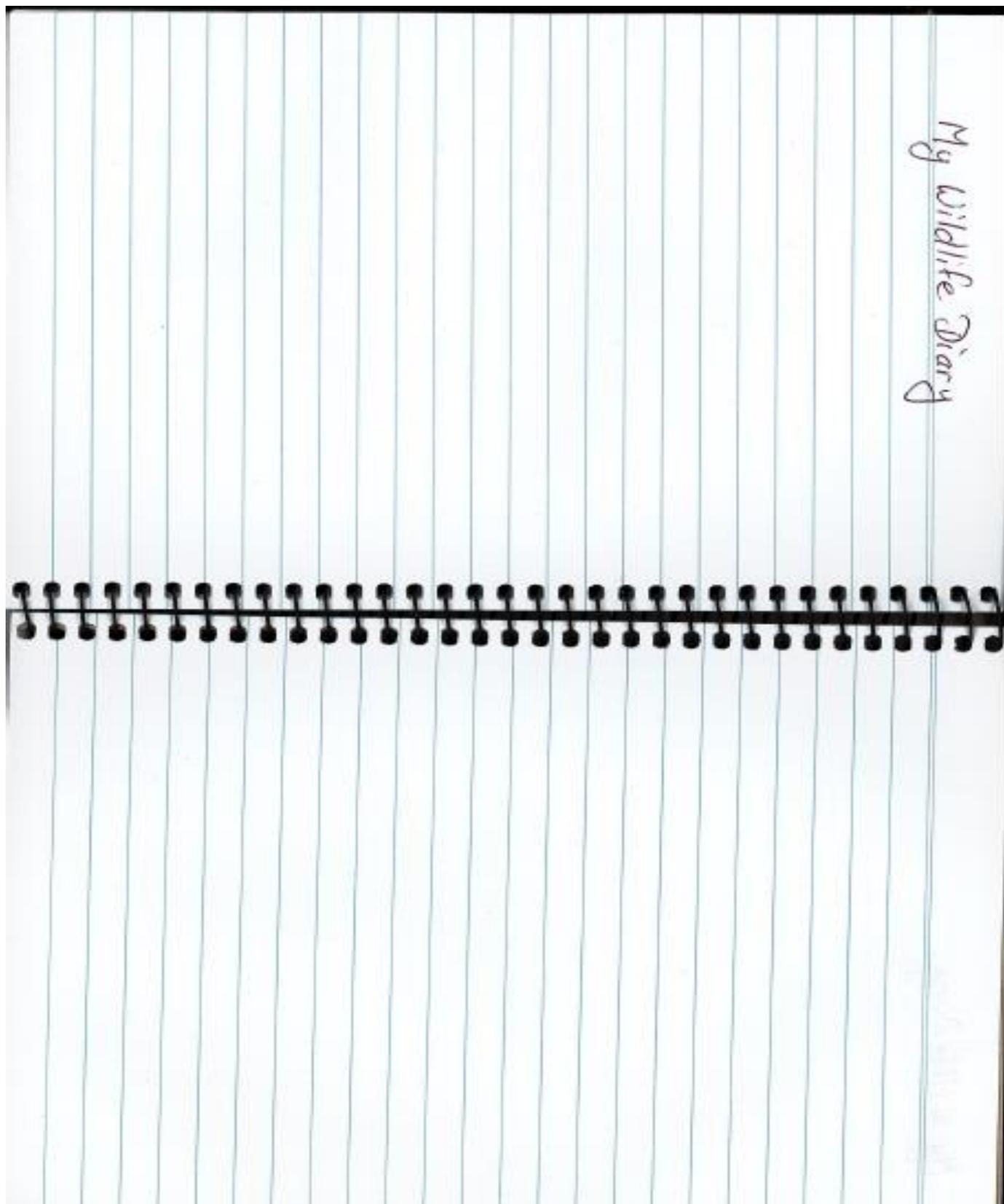
- 20 minutes at a time
- Three times a day for a week (morning / afternoon and midday)
- Use the diary pages overleaf to record what you see
- Note:
 - time of day
 - type of bird
 - number of each type
 - what are they doing

Become a Citizen Scientist

Participate in some real life bird research by sharing your survey results with BirdLife Australia. You can have your results included in their Seasonal Survey. Go to the website to find out how.

<https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/getinvolved/How-do-Birds-Backyards-survey>

USE THIS PAGE TO RECORD THE BIRDS YOU SEE THIS WEEK



COLOUR ME IN: I'M A RAINBOW LORIKEET



COLOUR ME IN: I'M A KOOKABURRA



FURTHER READING:

Australian Museum "Bird Fact Sheets" <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/>

BirdLife Australia "Birds in Backyards - Bird Finder" <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/finder>

Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife "Backyard Buddies – Birds"
<https://www.backyardbuddies.org.au/explore/birds>

Frankston City website (downloadable booklets)

[https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment and Waste/Environment/Biodiversity](https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment%20and%20Waste/Environment/Biodiversity)

- Natural Reserves within Frankston City
- Indigenous Fauna Guide
- Indigenous Plant Guide
- Sustainable Gardening in Frankston City

Gould League of Victoria "Urban Wildlife" - a Survival Publication

BIRDS OF FRANKSTON

- 41 Water Birds (ducks, herons, cormorants, spoonbills)
- 15 Birds of Prey (eagles, hawks, kites)
- 11 Quails, rails and crakes (incl. moorhens and swamphens)
- 7 Plovers (lapwings, dotterels and plovers)
- 26 Waders (stints, stilts, sandpipers, turnstones, snipes, curlews, oystercatchers, avocets)
- 6 Gulls and Terns
- 3 Pigeons (Bronzewings, crested)
- 6 Cockatoos
- 13 Parrots (lorikeets, cockatiel, rosellas, parrots)
- 6 Cuckoos
- 4 Kingfishers (Kookaburra & kingfishers)
- 4 Owls
- 2 Nightjars (frogmouth and nightjar)
- 8 Swallows (swifts, swallows, wood swallows and martins)
- 7 Larks and Thrushes
- 7 Robins
- 4 Whistlers (shrike-tit, whistlers, shrike-thrush)
- 6 Fantails and Flycatchers
- 1 Babbler
- 6 Wrens (warblers, wrens)
- 10 Scrub wrens, Thornbills and Treecreepers
- 14 Honeyeaters
- 5 Flowerpeckers (silveryeyes, pardalotes, chats)
- 1 Firetail (finch)
- 5 Magpies (mudlark, magpie, currawong, butcherbirds)
- 2 Ravens



Some wading shorebirds travel up to 11,000 kms from the Northern Hemisphere to spend Summer and Autumn at places like Seaford Wetlands.

As winter approaches they fly all the way back to spend 6 weeks breeding, before returning again.



Happy Backyard Birding!!!