

Wildlife and your backyard

What?

Wildlife simply refers to animals that are living in their natural habitat

Possums, lizards, frogs, butterflies, birds and echidnas are just a few that are common to backyard gardens and local bushland areas

Why?

Australian native wildlife is under increasing threat due to loss of habitat through urban expansion

Creating a haven for wildlife in your community is as easy as establishing a native backyard garden. This is a great way to help increase wildlife populations

Furthermore, if you can inspire neighbours to follow your lead, then as a community you can successfully form part of a wildlife corridor. Wildlife corridors are usually smaller patches of vegetation linked to larger areas of vegetation. Native wildlife especially use these corridors to move from place to place

How?

By recreating lost habitat in your backyard, you will generate a more balanced ecosystem that will benefit your garden in a number of ways:

- native birds are a natural control for insect or pest attack
- native gardens and wildlife can create ambience and positive health benefits by keeping you active!
- a garden full of wildlife is a fun place for kids to learn about biodiversity. It also encourages them to participate in healthy outdoor activity

Attract more wildlife to your backyard by providing:

- food
- water
- nesting and wildlife friendly materials
- shelter and protection

Food

Food can be made available by planting native trees, shrubs and grasses. These provide a variety of nectar, fruits and seeds for feeding birds, as well as insects

Consider planting:

- Bottlebrushes, Banksias, and Wattles – these are ideal for nectar sourcing birds and attracting insects
- Grasses, Casuarinas, and Eucalypts – these provide fruits for seed eating birds such as Finches, Parrots, and Rosellas. Flying Foxes and Possums also enjoy fruit-bearing plants

Water

Water sources can be created with small ponds or birdbaths, this will attract frogs, small lizards, and birdlife. Consider using an old bath or sink as a pond. You can also include water plants in your garden, which provide food and protection

Nesting and wildlife friendly materials

Nesting and wildlife friendly materials can be created easily and often with little or no cost involved. They can be items as simple as an old boot which makes a great home for a spider, or a second hand piece of terracotta piping, a perfect lizard hideaway. By encouraging leaf litter and bark in specific areas in your garden, you can provide habitat for small insects. Some other common materials to use are

- An old concrete pipe, perfect for a small reptile to make a home in
- Exposed branches of trees are a great vantage point for birds
- Planting climbers, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers and native trees help make backyards a diverse playground for wildlife to live in
- Flat rocks in your garden provide sunny spots for cold blooded lizards to bask.
- Mulch, leaves and twigs are a great way to attract insects



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Make sure you avoid:

- Letting cats roam at night
- Encouraging feral animals such as Myna birds to nest in your roof eaves and guttering

Shelter and protection

Shelter and protection can be created in many ways. Nesting hollows in old mature trees are a safe place of refuge, or you may consider constructing nestboxes with various sized entrance holes. These can be placed within trees and shrubs in your backyard

Plant prickly plants such as Bursaria to protect small birds like Wrens from predators

When pruning your garden, do so gradually to allow for wildlife to adjust to changed conditions

Where to go?

If you can't find enough stuff at home to create wildlife shelters and nesting sites then head to your local reuse centre, garage sale, council clean up or even the tip!

How much will it cost?

Making your garden wildlife friendly doesn't have to cost much at all and often you can reuse household items such as old boots, kids toys or plant pots

If you keep your eyes open you can welcome wildlife into your garden virtually for free!

Want to know more?

Have a look at some of these websites:

Nestboxes:

http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/infosheets/05_nestboxes.pdf

Plants for Attracting Birds:

<http://www.floraforfauna.com.au/>

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/spaces/bird-attracting-plants.cfm>

Bird Identification:

www.amonline.net.au/sand

<http://basna.birdsaustralia.com.au>

www.backyardbuddies.net.au

<http://sres.anu.edu.au/associated/myna/index.html>

Creating Frog Habitat:

<http://www.frogsaustralia.net.au/conservation/creating-habitat.cfm>

Making Your Garden Wildlife Friendly:

http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/wildlife_friendly.asp

Attend a workshop run by your local council:

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| Camden | 4654 7777 |
| Campbelltown | 4645 4000 |
| Liverpool | 1300 36 2170 |
| Wollondilly | 4677 1100 |
| Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living | 4647 9828 |