

CURRAWONGS, MAGPIES, RAVENS Do you know the difference?

They wake you up early in the morning with their calls, they spread invasive weeds, disperse the contents of rubbish bins, consume baby birds for breakfast and swoop on you unexpectedly! However, they are all part of our shared environment.

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*

Size: 42–50 cm; Call: loud “currawong”, or deep croaks and wolf whistles.

The Pied Currawong is a black bird that can be distinguished by its robust bill, yellow eyes, a white patch on its wing and white tip and underparts of its tail. Both sexes are similar, although the female is smaller and is often greyer on the underparts. The Pied Currawong is found only on the east coast of Australia. It inhabits rainforests, forests, woodlands, inland/coastal scrub, garbage tips, picnic grounds, parks and gardens.

Pied Currawongs feed on small lizards, insects, berries, and small and young birds. Large prey items are stored in what’s called a “larder” (a tree fork or crevice) so prey can be eaten over a period of time. Grey Currawongs *Strepera versicolor* are also found in the district.



Pied Currawong

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*

Size: 38–44 cm; Call: Rich mellow, organ-like carolling.

The Australian Magpie is mostly black, with a prominent white nape (greyer in female), white shoulder and wing band, and a white rump and under tail. The eye colour of the Magpie is red to brown. It is found almost wherever there are trees and open areas.

Magpies feed on worms, small reptiles, insects and their larvae, fruits and seeds, and will also take hand outs from humans, a practice certainly not to be encouraged. During the breeding season, June–December, some individuals become aggressive towards intruders who venture too close to their nesting site. So be sure to replace your beanie with a sturdy ice-cream container if you want to observe a magpie’s nest closely.



Australian Magpie

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*

Size: 48–52 cm; Call: Loud wailing “aah-aaaah-aaaaah”.

The Australian Raven is black, has a robust bill and white eyes. When calling, the raven’s throat balloons out, exposing long throat hackle feathers beneath the bird’s bill. The Australian Raven can be found in eastern, southern and central Australia. It inhabits pastoral regions, farmlands, alpine regions, dunes (watch out hooded plovers), beaches, rubbish tips and urban areas.

The Australian Raven has a varied diet that consists of grains, fruits, insects, small animals, eggs and carrion. Sadly, the Australian Raven has also adapted well to eating rubbish and scraps from overflowing bins in urban areas. The more common Little Raven *Corvus mellori* and the Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus* are also found in the district.

References:

<http://birdsinbackyards.net>

Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight 2006 *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, 8th edn, HarperCollins Publishers.



Australian Raven

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