

Red-browed finch.



Small native birds are being lost from our urban areas. The Habitat Network aims to recreate habitat corridors through public lands and backyards to reconnect isolated populations of native birds, animals and plants.

By listening, looking and considering—the management of bushland and gardens can include the needs of native birds and animals.

If small native birds are not present in an area the environment is probably out of balance:

- it may be too open without sufficient protective dense shrubs and diverse layers of vegetation
- **in a garden** there may be too many plants with bright showy flowers, such as hybrid grevilleas, which attract territorial honeyeaters
- **in bushland** edges may be too open and need to be closed with native shrubs and vines to discourage larger birds from entering the lower levels.



Small birds regularly nest in this weedy area at Riverglade Reserve, Gladesville.

Habitat planting at Riverglade Reserve to connect 2 areas used by small birds.



## Why preserve native habitat?

Preserving and re-creating the right kind of habitat has many advantages for us and for small birds. Native habitat provides a place for:

- migratory birds to stop, rest and revive
- small birds, insects and animals to live safely
- new populations of birds to establish if bushfires have destroyed similar local habitat
- introducing children to the wonders of the natural world.

### To learn more:

- join the Habitat Network by contacting Bev at [info@iewf.org](mailto:info@iewf.org) or 0419 206 253—there is no obligation except to preserve and create native habitat, and we will keep you informed of related activities and give advice on habitat creation
- join your local bushcare program by contacting your local council's bushcare officer, or visit the Sydney Metropolitan CMA's Sydney Bushcare page at [www.sydney.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sydney.cma.nsw.gov.au)
- for more information visit us at [www.habitatnetwork.org](http://www.habitatnetwork.org), [www.iewf.org](http://www.iewf.org) & [www.rncalliance.org](http://www.rncalliance.org).

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# weed removal & habitat



Male and female superb fairy-wren in a lantana patch that has been retained for them on an urban bushcare site.



before you start ...  
look, listen & consider



## Look—hidden habitat

Many overgrown areas—either native or weedy—provide the only remaining habitat for our small native birds. These may be within bushland, on private property or in “waste” land. Unless we stop, look and listen we may inadvertently remove the last safe haven for the small birds in the area.

When small birds lose their sanctuary or nesting site they are forced into the open where they may be attacked by dogs, cats and larger birds such as ravens, noisy miners, wattlebirds or other territorial birds. Or they may simply be unable to feed or nest. The result is the same—fewer small birds.

Many small birds do not travel far so once lost may never return.

Look to see what plants the small birds use. Tall trees, scattered shrubs and open grassy areas offer little protection for most small birds.

## Listen

A great family activity is to go for a walk early morning or late afternoon and LISTEN to the birds in your backyard, nearby bushland and “waste” land. What can you hear? Listen for the sweet calls of small birds and get to know where they live.

Learn to recognise the calls of birds by visiting [www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

**Listen for native small birds** such as:

- eastern spinebill
- red-browed finch or firetail
- silvereye
- spotted pardalote
- superb fairy-wren
- white-browed scrubwren



*Acacia ulicifolia.*



*Fairy-wren nest in Hakea.*

## Consider

Consider what you are hearing. Are the small birds just passing through or are they often concentrated in the one area? If concentrated then probably this is where they are living. If you are a bush regenerator or a home gardener please do not weed or tidy up this area until alternative, similarly structured native habitat is fully established and being used by small birds. Protect it as an important interim habitat area—ask your council to do the same.

Consider:

- how to expand the actively used habitat area using native plants
- how to recreate a similar structure of vegetation nearby using native plants
- how to create a connection with another habitat area
- who owns the land—you need to consult with the land owner prior to undertaking any work.

1 Eastern spinebill feeding in a cumquat tree. 2 Silvereye in a plum tree. 3 Spotted pardalote in a Hakea. 4 Superb fairy-wren hunting insects at a compost bin. 5 White-browed scrubwren perching in a messy corner of a garden.

## Creating habitat

The structure of plant islands used by small birds is like a large ball—closed and dense around the outside—more open yet protected on the inside.

To create a habitat haven, try reproducing what you see using local native plants and, in your own garden, citrus trees make a useful addition.

Closely plant a small area with, for example, *Cassinia* and *Leptospermum*, around these plant spiky plants, such as *Hakea* and *Acacia ulicifolia*, creating a protective circle. Finish with an outer circle of grasses and small shrubs as an additional food source. Vines such as *Hardenbergia*, or if you have more space, *Clematis* can be added. When they scramble over the shrubs, vines provide additional protection and another food source.

Lightly prune the taller shrubs occasionally to thicken the foliage and allow grasses to seed. Avoid using pesticides (see [www.iewf.org](http://www.iewf.org) for more detail).

## Learn from the past

In our parents' days there were untidy, productive areas at the back of the yard. Here we found the compost heap, citrus trees, native plants, native and food vines growing over fences and maybe the chook enclosure or an arbour, the incinerator, the veggie patch, piles of dirt and building materials. All of this added up to great biodiversity and habitat for many native small birds, lizards, frogs and insects.

Now, with our tidy yards, small native birds have become isolated in pockets within bushland, weedy “waste” land and in a few special back gardens.

Consider creating your own special corner in your backyard—a pocket—which includes habitat and the elements of a sustainable garden.

