

**Common Name/Scientific name: Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*)**

The Rufous Whistler is a common Australian songbird found in open forests and woodlands throughout mainland Australia and also in New Caledonia. The Rufous Whistler is one of Australia's finest songsters, and its far-carrying, rich, musical song can be heard throughout much of forested Australia. This song is sometimes triggered by a loud noise, such as a clap of thunder, gunshot or passing train or car, though the response is reduced if the sound is repeated. This has led to the species sometimes being referred to as the 'thunder bird'. The song is characterised by repeated whip-cracks interspersed with a variety of whistles and trills given at various volumes, rhythms and tempos.

**Description:** The Rufous Whistler is a stocky bird with a large head, short stubby bill and a narrow, relatively long tail with a square or slightly forked tip. The sexes differ, with the male dark-grey above with a white throat, black breast and a reddish underbody. Many males also have a black face mask (except in northern subspecies). Females are dull grey to brown, with streaked underparts. Young birds are much redder than adults and have heavily streaked underparts.

**Feeding & Behaviour in the**

**gardens:** The Rufous Whistler mainly eats insects, and sometimes seeds, fruit or leaves. It usually forages at higher levels than other whistlers, and is rarely seen on the ground.



**Breeding and Nesting:** The Rufous Whistler breeds in monogamous pairs, and both sexes incubate the eggs and care for the young. The female builds a fragile, cup-shaped nest from twigs, grass, vines and other materials, bound and attached to a tree fork with spider web. Two broods may be produced in a season.

**Similar species seen in the gardens:** The male Golden Whistler (seen very often in the Maroochy gardens) is similar in size, shape and behaviour but has a bright yellow underbelly and a black head. The male Rufous Whistler is quite

distinctive with its reddish underparts, grey head and white throat, combined with black mask. Female and immature Rufous Whistlers can be distinguished from other whistlers by heavy streaking on the underparts.