

Common Name/Scientific name: Varied Triller / *Lalage leucomela*)

The varied triller (like its better-known relative the white-winged triller) is a smaller member of the cuckoo-shrike family, Campephagidae. Varied trillers prefer warm, reasonably moist environments and are found in New Guinea, along much of the tropical and sub-tropical coastal hinterland of eastern Australia, north from about Sydney to the tip of the Cape York Peninsula, and in the moister part of the Kimberley, and throughout the Top End.



Description: The male adult Varied Triller is black above, with white markings on the wings and is white underneath, with grey barring on the breast. He has white eyebrows, a black eye-stripe and a rufous area on the rear underbody. The adult female is similar but browner above and her underparts are greyer with more pronounced grey bars across her breast. Juveniles are similar to the females. There are several subspecies of Varied Triller but the differences between them are fairly subtle. The Varied Triller is also known as the Pied, White-browed or White-eyebrowed Triller or Caterpillar-eater or Varied Caterpillar-eater.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: Varied trillers work their way slowly and methodically through foliage at any level (sometimes on the ground), searching in pairs or small groups for insects and fruit, and making repeated rolling contact calls almost continuously. Varied Trillers feed mainly on fruit and sometimes on seeds, nectar and insects. They mostly feed in the outer foliage of trees, but occasionally on the ground or on tree trunks near the ground. They are attracted to fruiting trees particularly to Fig and flowering eucalyptus trees.

Breeding and Nesting: The Varied Triller's nest is an open, shallow cup, barely large enough to hold a single egg. Nests are made of fine twigs, bark, vine tendrils, rootlets, plant stalks and grasses. The whole is bound together with spider web and lined with lichen or rootlets. The nest is usually in a horizontal fork, near the end of a thin branch of a small tree. Trees chosen are often paperbarks or mangroves. Both adult birds share the incubation of the egg and the feeding of the nestling. The incubation period is not known.

Similar species seen in the gardens: Two other cuckoo-shrikes have also been recorded at the Maroochy Gardens, the Black-faced cuckoo-shrike and the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Both are larger than varied trillers.