

Common Name/Scientific name: White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike / *Coracina papuensis*

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes live in open eucalyptus forest and woodland around the north and east of Australia, avoiding the colder mountain areas. Distributed in a broad band reaching up to about a hundred kilometres inland and running along the coast from the Kimberley through the Top End to Cape York and down the east coast to Victoria and across Victoria to south-east South Australia.



Description: The White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike is a mainly grey bird with a black band between eye and beak. In males this is dark black, in females it is grey. Eye is black, bill and feet black. Length is 26 to 28 centimetres. Upper parts of head, neck and upper back are mainly grey. Flight feathers are dusky grey. Tail feathers are dusky grey tipped white. Upper breast is pale grey. Underpart colour varies; in the northwest the under parts are nearly pure white, in the northeast they are pale grey and mid-grey in the southeast.

In southeast Australia (from approximately lower SE Queensland to South Australia) the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike has a brown-black head with a dark mottled upper breast merging into horizontal bars on the breast, the bars fade to white towards the tail.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: They forage on the tree canopy and under-story shrubs, flying from vantage perches and diving onto insects and fruit. When they land the birds settle their wings by flicking each separately into place.

Breeding and Nesting: Breeding takes place from August to March. The nest, built by both parents, is a shallow saucer of fine twigs and bark bound with spider web and moulded into the horizontal fork of a tree high above the ground. Two or three eggs are laid; green with brown and grey markings; oblong-oval, about 30 by 22 millimetres. Incubation by both parents takes about 20 days. Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes may mate with the same partner each year, and may use the same territories year after year. The nest is remarkably small for the size of the bird. It is a shallow saucer of sticks and bark, bound together with cobwebs. Both partners construct the nest and care for the young birds.

Similar species seen in the gardens: The larger Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes *Coracina novaehollandiae* may be confused with the White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike which has a black eye stripe. As expected, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes have a mostly full dark face, and are regularly seen in the Maroochy gardens. Another (but smaller) cuckoo shrike, the varied triller, has also been recorded occasionally at the Maroochy Gardens.