

**Common Name/Scientific name: Eastern Spinebill / *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris***

The Eastern Spinebill inhabits shrubs and trees in open eucalypt forests, as well as shrubland, heathland and suburban gardens. They use their long, slender, decurved bills to probe deep into flowers, at all levels from the canopy down to the undergrowth, to feed on the sweet nectar. Some plants appear to have evolved specially to be pollinated by them. Fuelled with energy-rich nectar, Eastern Spinebills are also often seen actively darting about on whirring, fluttering wings, after flying insects.



**Description:** The Eastern Spinebill is most easily recognised by its very long, fine, down-curved beak and energetic flight, during which its white outer tail feathers are prominent. Males have a grey-black crown which extends in a black line on either side of the breast. The breast and throat are white, with a rufous patch in the centre of the throat. The wings and lower back are dark grey and the underparts and upper back are buff. Females are similar to males but have less distinct markings.

**Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens:** The Eastern Spinebill feeds on insects and nectar while perched or while hovering. Nectar is obtained from a wide array of flowers, including grevilleas, but its beak is particularly well-suited to extracting nectar from tubular flowers such as many of the Australian heaths.

**Breeding and Nesting:** The Eastern Spinebill's nest is a small cup of twigs, grass and bark, combined with hair and spider's web, built in a tree fork, generally between 1 and 5 metres from the ground. Only the female builds the nest and incubates the eggs, but both parents feed the young when they hatch.

**Similar species seen in the gardens:**