

Common Name/Scientific name: Channel-billed Cuckoo / *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

Of the dozen or so species of cuckoos that occur in Australia, the Channel-billed Cuckoo is the largest. Being a cuckoo, it lays its eggs in the nest of another bird, and being a large cuckoo, it must lay its eggs in the nest of another large bird. The species usually chosen as foster parents are Pied Currawongs, Australian Magpies, crows and ravens, although occasionally eggs are laid in the mud-nests of White-winged Choughs or Magpie-larks, and very occasionally in the nests of birds of prey.



Description: Apart from the Channel-billed Cuckoo's large size, its massive pale, down-curved bill, grey plumage (darker on the back and wings) and long barred tail make it difficult to confuse it with any other bird. In flight the long tail and long wings give the bird a crucifix-shaped (cross-shaped) silhouette. Young Channel-billed Cuckoos have more mottled buff, brown and grey plumage. Although they are not nocturnal birds (night birds) in the strict sense, Channel-billed Cuckoos are notorious for calling all night long during the breeding season. This species is sometimes known as the Storm-bird or Stormbird.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: The favoured foods of the Channel-billed Cuckoo are native figs and native fruits, though some seeds, insects and even baby birds are also taken. The birds take figs from the tree with their massive bills.

Breeding and Nesting: The Channel-billed Cuckoo lays its eggs in the nests of the Australian Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, the Pied Currawong, *Strepera graculina* and members of the crow family (Corvidae). Unlike many other cuckoos, the young birds do not evict the host's young or eggs from the nest, but simply grow faster and demand all the food, thus starving the others. Often the adult female will damage the existing eggs in the nest when she lays her own and she may even lay more than one egg in a single nest.

Similar Species in the gardens: