

Common Name/Scientific name: Little Pied Cormorant / *Microcarbo melanoleucos*

The Little Pied Cormorant is at home in either fresh or salt water throughout Australia. It is often seen in large flocks on open waterways and on the coast, especially in larger bodies of water, where large numbers of fish are present. On inland streams and dams, (such as the lagoon at the Maroochy gardens) however, it is often solitary. The Little Pied Cormorant mixes readily with the similar sized Little Black Cormorant, *P. sulcirostris* (also occasionally seen at Maroochy gardens).



Description: The Little Pied Cormorant is one of the most common of Australia's waterbirds, occurring on water bodies of almost any size. It is entirely black above and white below. The face is dusky and, in adult birds, the white of the underside extends to above the eye. Immature birds resemble the adults except there is no white above the eye.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: Little Pied Cormorants feed on a wide variety of aquatic animals, from insects to fish. On inland streams and dams they turn to their most favoured food: yabbies (freshwater crayfish). These are caught by deep underwater dives with both feet kicking outward in unison. The prey is brought to the surface or back to the nearby bank, where the claws of the crayfish are shaken off before its body is eaten. Other crustaceans are also taken, with shrimps being a large part of their diet in winter months.

Breeding and Nesting: This species has not been seen breeding and nesting at the gardens. Usually (on larger water bodies than the lagoon at Maroochy gardens,) Little Pied Cormorants breed either in colonies or, less commonly, in single pairs. The nest is a flat platform of sticks, lined with green leaves and is usually placed in a tree. Both sexes share nest-building, incubation and feeding of the young.

Similar species seen in the gardens: Little Black Cormorants, which are black all over, are easy to pick from the Little Pied Cormorant, which is black on top, but white below. Usually white on the face is the easy pick.