

Common Name/Scientific name: Pied Butcherbird/ *Cracticus nigrogularis*

The Pied Butcherbird, widespread throughout large parts of mainland Australia, is the familiar species of butcherbird to most people. One of the species' readily recognised aspects is its beautiful, haunting, flute-like song which may be given throughout the day and sometimes well into moonlit nights.



Description: The Pied Butcherbird is a medium-sized black and white bird. It has a full black hood, dark brown eye and long, hooked, grey and black bill. It has a broad white collar that goes all around its neck and a black bib (throat area). The rest of the underparts are white and the legs are black. The upper parts are mostly black, with large patches of white on the wings and rump. In flight, the white corners of the otherwise black tail are easily seen. Both sexes have identical plumage, but the male is slightly larger than the female. Young Pied Butcherbirds are generally duller than the adults are. The areas of black are replaced with brown and white areas are washed with buff. The birds also have an ill-defined bib, which becomes more distinct with age.

Where seen in the gardens: The Pied Butcherbird inhabits drier forests and woodlands and often approaches parks and buildings, so it can be seen in most areas of the gardens. Like the more numerous Grey butcherbird they often watch for visitors at picnic tables and outside the cafe, swooping in to steal a feed. It is more often heard than seen, as it sings from a prominent perch.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: All butcherbirds are aggressive feeders. Pied Butcherbirds prey on small reptiles, mammals, frogs and birds, as well as large insects. Most food is caught on the ground. The birds sit on an exposed perch and swoop down on their prey.

Nesting: The female constructs the nest and incubates the eggs alone, and is fed by the male and other members of the group. The nest is a bowl of sticks and twigs, lined with grasses and other finer material. It is usually built in an upright tree fork up to 5 m above the ground.

Similar Species in the gardens: The Pied Butcherbird is larger and more boldly marked than the Grey Butcherbird, *Cracticus torquatus*. It can be distinguished from other black and white birds, such as the Australian Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen*, and the Magpie-lark, *Grallina cyanoleuca*, by the black head and bib separated from the black back by a complete white collar, and white underparts. The bill is much larger than that of the Magpie-lark.