

Common Name/Scientific name:

Spangled Drongo/ Dicrurus bracteatus



Description: The Spangled Drongo has glossy black plumage, with iridescent blue-green spangles (spots), a long forked fishtail and blood red eyes. Sexes are similar, but the female is slightly smaller. Occasional white spotting can be seen on the upper wings of both sexes. Young birds are more sooty black without the spangles and the eye is brown. The Spangled Drongo is noisy and conspicuous, usually active, and frequently aggressive to other species.

Where seen in the gardens: Spangled Drongos prefer wet forests, but can also be found in other woodlands, mangroves and parks. They can be seen in any forested area in the gardens and along the walks, and sometimes in the more open areas. Often seen either singly or in pairs.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: The Spangled Drongo is usually seen perched on an open branch, where it awaits a passing insect. Once seen, its prey is pursued in an acrobatic display, and is caught in the drongo's slightly hooked bill. The Spangled Drongo then returns to its perch to eat its victim. Insects are also taken from foliage and from under bark. Fruit and nectar also form part of their diet. They often mob owls and other birds of prey, sometimes striking them.

Nesting: The nest of the Spangled Drongo has been likened to a cradle or a hammock. Each nest is neatly woven from rootlets, vine tendrils and pieces of grass, and any potential threat that approaches is readily attacked. Spangled Drongos normally have only one clutch per season. Both adults participate in building the nest, a simple, shallow cup of twigs, vine tendrils and grasses, held together with spider web. It is placed in a horizontal fork of tree, normally toward outer edges and up to 10 m – 20 m above the ground. Both sexes incubate the eggs and care for the young.

Similar Species in the gardens: The Eastern Koel (syn. Pacific Koel) (*Eudynamys orientalis*), a migratory bird, has occasionally been recorded at the gardens between late September and March. The male Eastern Koel is glossy black with a red eye but is larger (400-450mm) and lacks the spangles and fishtail.