



Scarlet Robin - male



New Holland Honeyeater

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIRDS

Discover the birds in your area by looking and listening. Binoculars will help you see the detail needed for positive identification.

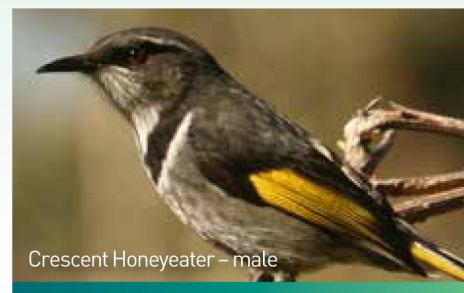
Birds have distinctive calls and with practice you will learn what they are saying and why. Bird books (e.g. Field Guide to Tasmanian Birds by Dave Watts) and phone apps (e.g. Bird in Hand by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service) will help you identify local species.



Yellow Wattlebird
- Australia's largest honeyeater



Noisy Miner - an aggressive bird that thrives in modified environments



Crescent Honeyeater - male

NOISY MINERS, PATCH SIZE, UNDERSTOREY AND ISOLATION

One reason for species loss may be an influx of aggressive bird species like the Noisy Miner which thrive in modified environments. This medium-sized native honeyeater forms social colonies and in small (less than 20-30 ha) remnants will mob and drive out other usually smaller bush birds.

Other dominating species like the butcherbird, Magpie, currawong and raven, can co-exist with the Noisy Miner but the overall net effect is species loss.

Loss of the understory or tree layer can also make a site unsuitable for some bird species: shrubs are a rich food source of insects and nectar, and trees provide lerp, manna and a host of invertebrates on their trunks, branches and foliage.

Some bird species will not fly more than 100 metres across open ground without some cover in which to hide. Most won't fly more than a kilometre.

Either separately or in combination, loss of understory, small patch size and increasing isolation account for much of the decline in bird species compared to those in structurally intact bush.

RESTORING EXISTING BUSH

Improve species and structural diversity of existing bush remnants by:

- never clearing understory
- reducing grazing/browsing impacts
- burning or disturbing soil to help seed germination and survival
- planting missing grasses, shrubs or trees
- removing weeds

Restoration is used to increase the 'health' of bush, habitat patches and stepping stones.

Priority for restoration depends on the health of each patch. If all the layers (structural elements) are already there, restoration isn't needed. See which elements are missing and work out the best way to restore them. Some bush is naturally deficient in some structural layers, so if in doubt, have an experienced botanist look at your bush before commencing work.

PLANTING

Planting means direct seeding, planting or transplanting native species in cleared (non-native) areas or home gardens. Planting is mainly used to protect and connect existing patches, but can also provide new habitat in gardens. See <http://understorey-network.org.au/municipalities.html> for species lists.

BUSH BIRDS

MAKING YOUR PLACE THEIR PLACE TOO



This fact sheet explains which bush birds may be present or absent from your place and what you can do to encourage a greater diversity to live with you.

The drier, settled areas of southern Tasmania, compared to other places, still have much of their original bush. In many instances the clearing for agriculture and urban development has produced a mosaic of habitats including highly modified treeless paddocks through to fully vegetated hills, in which many species of birds still thrive. But bird species begin to decline or will be absent where intact patches of bush are lost or if this mosaic becomes too highly modified.

About 60 species of birds live within the bush of southern Tasmania. Common groups of species include honeyeaters, parrots,

robins, pardalotes and whistlers. Some, like Pink Robin and Scrubtit, prefer wet forest and others, such as Forty-spotted Pardalote are rarely seen outside their preferred specialist habitat.

Some species live in the same bush all year, whilst others migrate in the late autumn to increase their foraging range, descend in altitude or cross Bass Strait to spend their winter on mainland Australia. Bush habitat also supports birds of prey, water birds in creeks and wetlands, and a small number of other species using heaths or grasslands on the forest fringe.



The Yellow-throated Honeyeater needs bush with good structure, as it forages high in trees but nests in shrubs close to the ground.

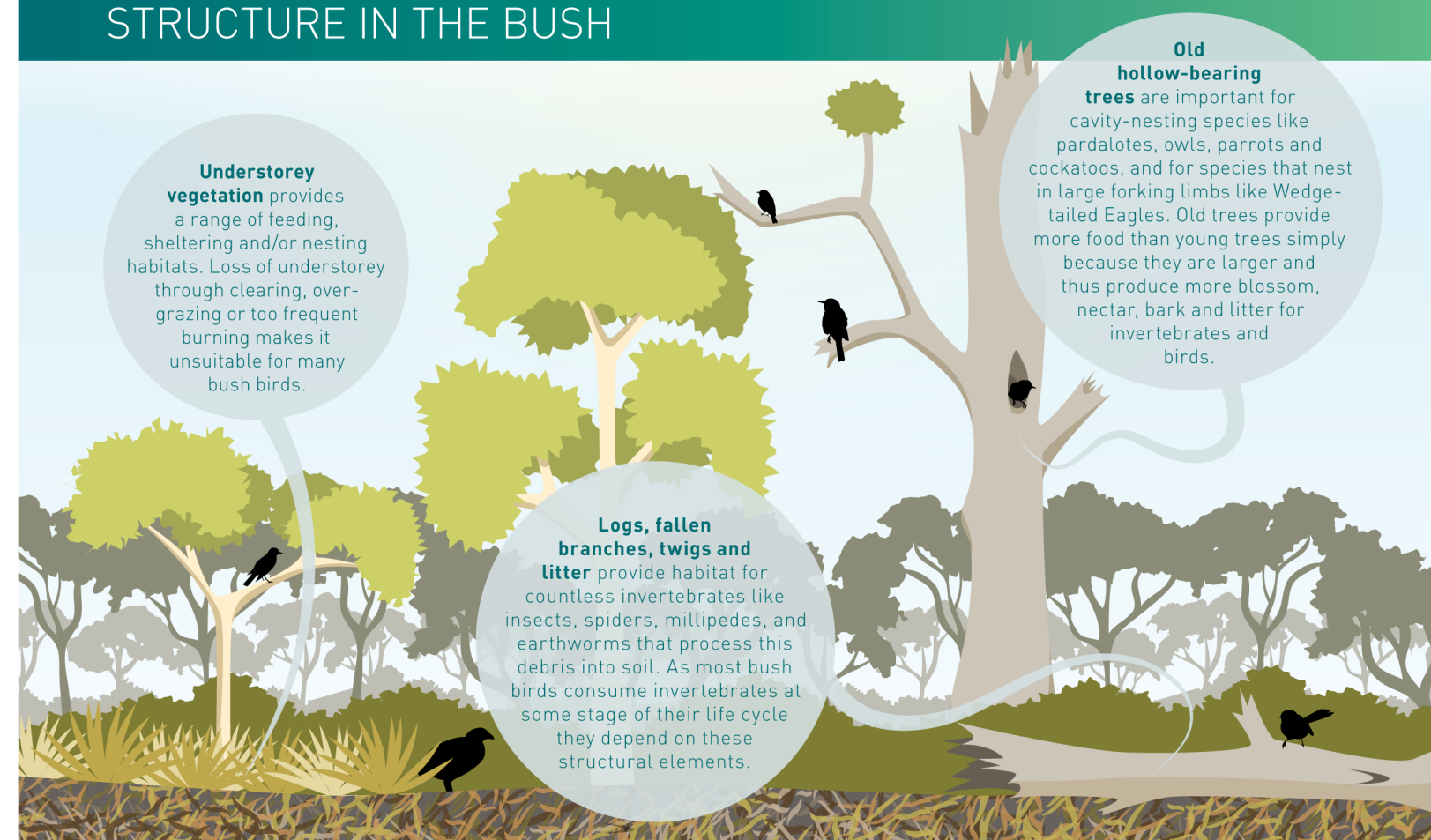
BUSH BIRDS' HOMES

Just like us, birds have three basic needs:

1. Their preferred food.
2. Places to rest and hide from danger and inclement weather.
3. A safe place to raise young.

And just like us, different species of bird have their preferences in where they find these basic needs.

STRUCTURE IN THE BUSH



Photos by Sarah Lloyd

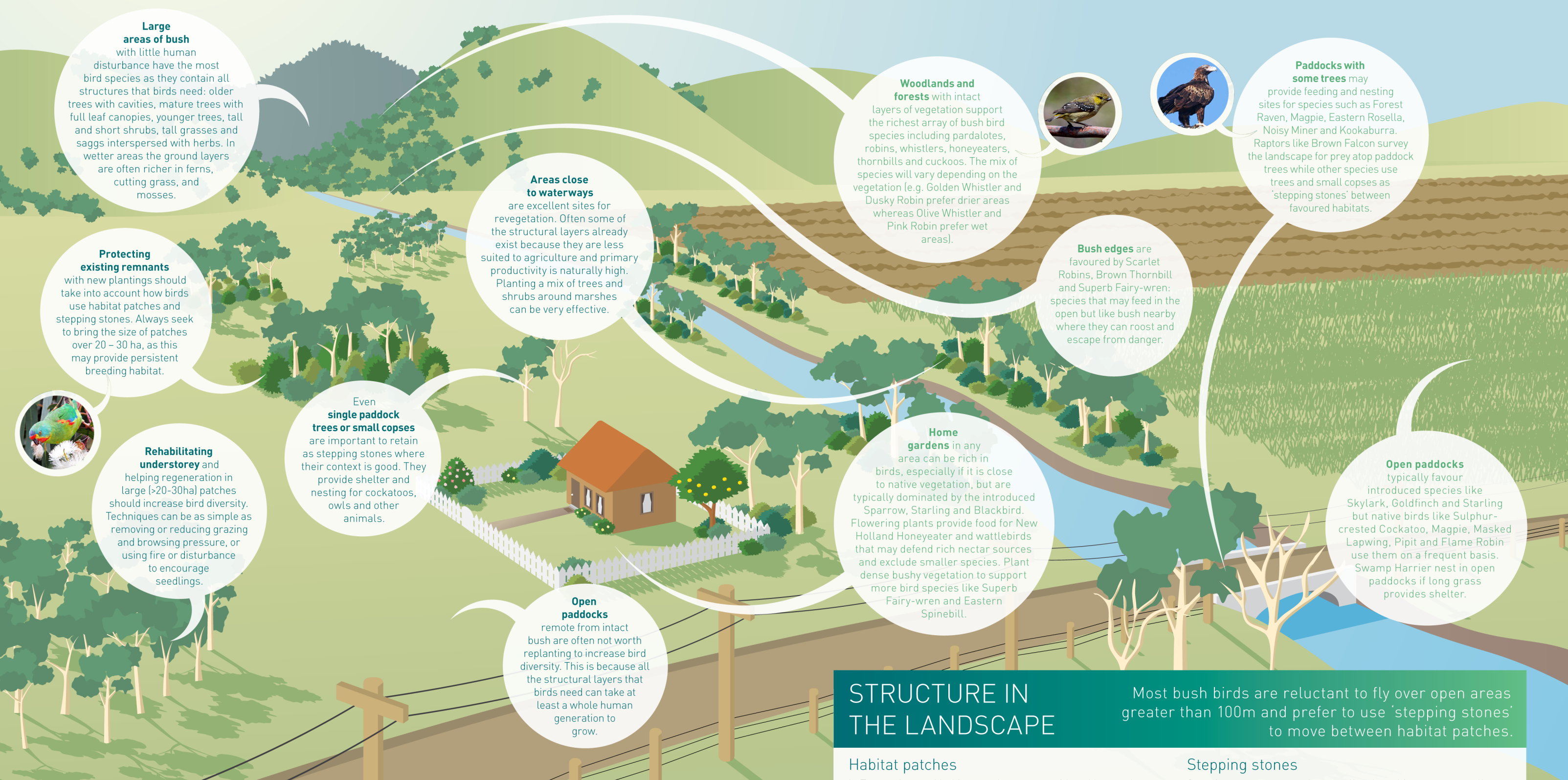
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Messy is good!

Intact bush usually has a full range of structures - a varied understorey of grasses and herbaceous plants, small and tall shrubs and different aged trees especially large old eucalypts with hollows.

PATTERNS OF HABITAT IN THE LANDSCAPE

PATTERNS OF BIRDS IN THE LANDSCAPE



IMPROVING HABITAT FOR BUSH BIRDS

Retain and restore existing bush, then buffer and reconnect - this is the priority order of work to help bush birds survive, thrive and recolonise.

1. As the highest priority, retain extensive areas of bush with structurally diverse vegetation, good understorey and especially bush that is close to waterways.
2. Where extensive areas are structurally degraded, restore missing structural elements by excluding or reducing grazing and browsing, active regeneration or even selective replanting.
3. Retain habitat patches larger than 20-30ha and restore missing structural elements.
4. Retain smaller patches, copses and even single paddock trees, where they can act as 'stepping stones' between habitat patches and restore missing structural elements.
5. Increasing the size of bush remnants by buffering them with new plantings
6. Weeds — especially gorse and blackberry — may be extremely important in retaining bird diversity in areas where native understorey has been lost. A cautious and staged approach to their control is necessary if it is the only remaining habitat.

STRUCTURE IN THE LANDSCAPE

Most bush birds are reluctant to fly over open areas greater than 100m and prefer to use 'stepping stones' to move between habitat patches.

