



# Media Release

9 November, 2020

## **Don't feed the birds, but do give them a clean bath!**

Cockburn residents are encouraged to plant bird-friendly gardens and leave out a clean freshly-filled bird bath to help attract native birds, rather than feeding them.

The City's Environment team is reminding locals that the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' Parks and Wildlife Service says feeding birds can alter their natural behaviour and seriously harm their health.

It is also now an offence in Western Australia to feed native fauna, including birds, without a licence.

Fines of up to \$20,000 are part of updated regulations under Section 155 of the West Australian Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

Parks and Wildlife Service Regional Parks Unit Manager Tim Fisher said feeding native birds could lead to an unhealthy dependence on humans for food, and food being given to native birds was often not suited to their physiology.

"It can draw birds into unsafe areas where they may be predated on. Feeding commercially available bird seed can also spread weeds and may be a blend that isn't suitable to native birds," Mr Fisher said.

While in recent years some national organisations and academics had moved to support bird feeding under strict conditions, City of Cockburn Acting Environment Manager Linda Metz said Cockburn had long advocated a no-feeding policy for wild fauna, including birds.

"Feeding not only causes problems for the animals themselves, but for the natural and built environment," Ms Metz said.

"For example, certain foods like bread and seeds cause eutrophication problems at the City's many wetlands and lakes.



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“This enhances conditions for diseases like botulism, which kills hundreds of birds in Western Australia each year, especially during the summer months when these water bodies heat up, encouraging the growth of water-borne bacteria that can also be toxic to humans.”

Ms Metz said there were instances of ducks crossing busy roads and suffering injury or death due to vehicle strike, as they flocked towards artificial food sources.

“Apart from the resulting bird poo problems of large, regular bird gatherings, artificial feeding favours dominant bird species which then start to outnumber some of the more threatened species we are trying to protect in the urban environment close to cities and towns.”

Ms Metz said there were also local instances of serious neighbour disputes caused by people feeding birds, with flocking birds caused unwanted noise, mess and property damage.

The City encourages residents to attract a variety of birds into their neighbourhoods by planting bird-friendly species for food and shelter, and providing fresh, clean water sources, especially during warmer months.

Local residents can apply to the City for a Waterwise Verge Rebate Program (\$500) to create bird havens. Neighbours are also welcome to combine forces and apply for a Sustainability Grant (up to \$4,000) to create a shared verge makeover.

Cockburn residents are also eligible for a Bird Bath Rebate of up to \$50.

More information about how to create a bird-friendly garden and apply for a bird bath rebate is available on the City's [website](#).

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