



El Questro  
THE HEART OF THE KIMBERLEY

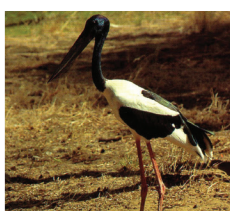
## EL QUESTRO TOP 20 BIRDS



### BROLGA

*Grus rubicundus*

No bird is more symbolic of Northern Australia than the Brolga. Their courtship dances are not confined to the breeding season and pairs seem to dance just for the fun. They reach almost 1.5 metres and their head is bright red to orange. When not breeding, family groups may converge into large groups in search of food. They breed in shallow swamps in the wet season. Brolgas usually produce 2 young and both parents care for them for up to one year.



### JABIRU

*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

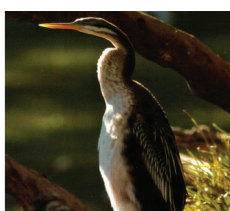
The black necked stork or jabiru is Australia's only stork. This bird is a little inelegant taking off but once in the air it flies with consummate ease and soars to several hundred metres. Jabirus have oversized black bills for scooping their food from the water. The males have dark eyes while those of females are yellow. They live in swamps and freshwater pools. Jabirus breed from February to June. Their nest are a massive structure of sticks and reeds placed in the top of a tree.



### AUSTRALIAN BUSTARD

*Ardeotis australis*

The bustard was a prized meal for early settlers. The Kimberley is one of few areas in Australia where you can still find them. Laborious wing beats give the appearance of great unwillingness to fly. These birds may grow up to 1.2 metres. The males try to impress the females during courtship by inflating their neck and strutting about noisily. One or two eggs are laid on bare ground. The female incubates the eggs and raises the young. They are nomadic and move to areas of good rain.



### DARTER/SNAKEBIRD

*Anhinga melanogaster*

With only its head and neck rising from the water, the darter resembles a snake, hence its other name snakebird. The water bird quietly submerges its body then suddenly strikes with its S-shaped body. Small fish and aquatic animals are speared with the sharp bill. They grow up to 90 cm tall. The male is predominantly glossy black while the female is greyish brown. Darters are found throughout most of Australia and live along rivers, lakes and estuaries.



### LITTLE PIED CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

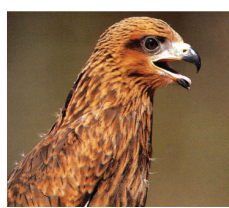
The little pied cormorant is the smallest Australian cormorant. It is fairly common on El Questro waterways and can be seen sitting on exposed rocks along the route of the Wandjina boat in the Chamberlain Gorge. This bird roosts and nests mostly in colonies, but fishes alone. The nest is a small, shallow structure of sticks. It breeds throughout most of the year and lays 2-5 whitish blue eggs. Cormorants are closely related to darters. Both species lack a protective coating of oil on their feathers, hence the typical spreading of wings to dry them out after diving.



### TORRESIAN CROW

*Corvus orru*

Pairs of crows hold permanent territories and flocks of about 50 non breeding birds are often seen around El Questro. Adults have white eyes. Their slow but loud call is often heard at dawn and makes for an early rise when camping. Crows mainly feed on the ground by walking or hopping, one foot in front of the other and will eat almost anything from anywhere. They breed between August and February.



### BLACK KITE

*Milvus migrans*

Black kites are the seagulls of the Kimberley. These scavenging birds are often seen around the Station Township rubbish tip. They usually forage in flocks and often follow fires, circling and dropping through the smoke in search of an easy meal. Although the bulk of their diet is carrion, kites sometimes swoop on live rodents, which might be swallowed in flight. They build a nest of sticks high above the ground. The 2-3 eggs are incubated by the female. During the nesting the male obtains most of the food but does not directly feed the young.



### WHITE BILLED SEA EAGLE

*Haliaeetus leucogaster*

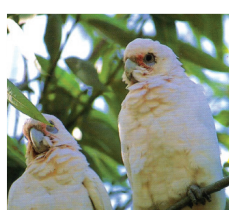
Sea eagles can be seen on high vantage points near water or swooping down to fish. They land on the ground to tear their prey apart with large talons. Waterbirds, turtles, snakes and carrion supplement the diet of the fish. Females reach up to 80cm whereas males are slightly smaller. It favours sea shore and inland waterways and can sometimes be seen on the Chamberlain Gorge cruise. Between May and October two eggs are laid several days apart. The first born usually monopolised all the food and the younger one dies. Both parents help rearing the brood.



### RED TAILED BLACK COCKATOO

*Calyptorhynchus banksii*

These spectacular birds were the first parrots to be illustrated during Captain Cook's explorations in 1770. Usually they are first detected by their rasping cries as a small flock flies overhead with slow, languid wing beats. The red on the fanned tail of this cockatoo identifies the male; the tail of the female is yellow-orange. They nest in tree hollows which the parents enter tail first. It feeds on seeds of eucalyptus and other plants.



### LITTLE CORELLA

*Cacatua sanguinea*

These raucous birds form huge flocks that roam the countryside in search of food and water. Such flocks are a common sight on El Questro Wilderness Park. Little corellas favour trees along watercourses for roosting and nesting and open greasy areas with low vegetation for feeding. They can chew wood chips of their nesting hollows and lay 2 or 3 eggs on the resultant padding. Their favourite food is grass seeds collected from the ground.



**RAINBOW LORIKEET**  
*Trichoglossus haematodus*

Screeching flocks of rainbow lorikeets often fly overhead in the Kimberley, as they commute between roosting and feeding areas. They sometimes travel long distances in groups of up to 50 looking for blossoms of grevilleas and paperbarks. Like honeyeaters, lorikeets have brush tipped tongues to extract nectar from flowers. This staple is supplemented by ripe fruit and insects. Breeding takes place between August and January, when the female lays two eggs in a tree hollow.



**ROCK PIGEON**  
*Petrophassa albipennis*

This pigeon is a typical bird of the Kimberley, being confined to the sandstone hills and cliffs. When startled, they will often leave their perch with a loud clapping of wings. They spend their time on ledges or sandstone boulders foraging for all sorts of seeds and insects. Rock pigeons nest during the dry season and lay 2 eggs in rocky crevices lined with spinifex and grass. Both parents assist in nesting duties.



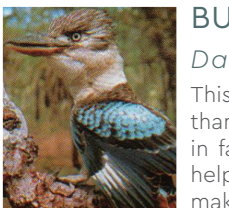
**PEACEFUL DOVE**  
*Geopelia placida*

The dove is the source of the gentle cooing you will hear when setting up camp along the Pentecost River. In the afternoon they also frequent tracks around the Station, looking for seeds in the sand. The courtship displays of the males involves bowing, tail fanning and clapping their wings. These birds favour grassed woodlands with nearby water. Peaceful doves breed all year and build their nests with sticks amongst vegetation.



**GREAT BOWERBIRD**  
*Chlamydera nuchalis*

These are the birds that steal your food at Emma Gorge Resort, if not careful. Male white bowerbirds collect a variety of white or shiny objects to adorn their bowers. These bowers are avenues of twigs often left open at the top and usually hidden beneath bushes or other low vegetation. Objects are seemingly placed at random in front of the bower. If switched around, the male usually puts them back in their original place as soon as the intruder leaves. Males attract females by their collection of objects and by spreading the small patch of feathers on the back of their neck, which reveals a lilac spot. Bowerbirds eat mostly fruit and can be seen in trees or near waterholes. They also take insects and are very adaptable towards human environments. Mating takes place inside the bower around October. Once done, the male shows little interest and chases the female away. She then builds a simple nest in a tree, well removed from the bower and raises one or two young as a single mother.



**BULE WINGED KOOKABURRA**  
*Dacelo leachii*

This kookaburra is slightly smaller, but prettier than its southern relative. Kookaburras usually live in family groups and all members of the group help to feed and protect the young. These groups make themselves known at Black Cockatoo campsite by a noisy cacophony of cackles, often in chorus. They live in moist forest, especially along creeks. While hunting insects and small animals, kookaburras perch motionless on a branch until they spot their prey, then fly to the ground and seize it in their bill. Breeding takes place in the wet season. The eggs are incubated by all members of the group.



**BARKING OWL**  
*Ninox connivens*

This owl resembles its cousin, the southern boobook. Barking owls are often seen sitting on unsealed roads in the dark, dazzled by car headlights. Its unmistakable dog-like bark can be heard at night. It roosts by day, often in pairs near a watercourse. Nesting takes place between July and November. The female lays 2-3 eggs in a tree hollow or occasionally on the ground.



**PIED BUTCHERBIRD**  
*Cracticus nigrogularis*

The fluted, piping calls of the butcherbird are often heard in the woodlands, especially during the breeding season when the male and female of a pair will sing in duets, alternating with one another. They feed by perching in the open and then pouncing on their prey, which includes other birds, mice, large insects and reptiles. Butcherbirds often live in groups with the young of previous years helping to feed later broods. They defend their nests aggressively, chasing other species away.



**RAINBOW BEE EATER**  
*Merops ornatus*

Seen as brilliant flashes of golden-bronze, turquoise and green, rainbow bee eaters swoop and glide in elegant manoeuvres. All their food is captured on the wing. With a bee or wasp, bee eaters will perch and batter it against a branch to know out the sting before swallowing. Some rainbow bee eaters are present all year round. Others move to Indonesia or New Guinea to breed during March - April. Bee eaters nest in burrows along creek banks and in sandy soil. The eggs are incubated for almost a month by all members of the group.



**BROWN HONEYEATER**  
*Lichmera indistincta*

These noisy birds are the most common honeyeaters on El Questro, ranging from woodlands to gorges and often found along creeks. Like most honeyeaters they are nomadic, following the flowering of their favourite trees. They feed mostly on nectar and have brush tipped tongues to lick nectar from the flowers. Lerp on eucalyptus leaves are also an important source of food. Brown honeyeaters nest from June to January and after two weeks, the young hatch.



**WILLY WAGTAIL**  
*Rhipidura leucophrys*

The willy wagtail is a common, well-loved little bird. They take insects in twisting flights in foliage or on the ground, seemingly disturbing them by jerky sweeps of the tails and sudden wing beats. Large butterflies are dewinged before eating. Wagtails seem to skirmish with other birds, especially black and white ones lie the magpie lark. Breeding takes place in August - January. Willy wagtails build a shallow grey cup of fine grasses, bark shreds and rootlets; felted with spider webs and feathers. 2-4 creamy white or spotted eggs are incubated by both sexes and the young start to fly two weeks after hatching. Wagtails inhabit most of Australia and parts of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.