



FEEDING WILD BIRDS

A Controversial Subject!

In NSW, our National Parks and Wildlife advises the public 'Don't feed wild birds'. This policy is based on:

- The food fed by the public is often poor in nutrition for the needs of the wild birds.
- If wild birds start to depend on being fed this poor diet, they will not seek out their natural food and they will become sick and lose general immunity.
- They will also become sick from poorly cleaned, unhygienic feed bowls, left out with food going off – and with other birds' droppings in the mix!
- Birds used to being fed will react, often in negative, aggressive ways, if the food source suddenly stops for some reason (like the feeder goes away on holidays). In the case of Sulphur Crested Cockatoos in particular, they can be very destructive to plants and buildings.

All these points are very valid and must be taken into account. There are some nasty bird diseases out there too – they are spread at busy 'feed stations' to birds who have vulnerable immunity because of their poor diet. See left – a cockatoo with 'Beak & Feather Disease'



HOWEVER - Connecting with nature and feeding the birds in our backyard is important to many of us. Knowing many people will continue to feed, how can we compromise – at the same time making sure we don't harm the birds, or ourselves?

1. **We should never feed Sulphur Crested Cockatoos!** This means we DO NOT put out bird seed of any sort. It is unfortunate for the other parrots and birds who like the same seed, but it is the best way to manage cockatoos. Also - spilled seed attracts vermin, which we don't want.
2. **We should not feed bread to any bird.** Bread is not digested well. It causes bloat, it doesn't provide any nutriment, it fills the gut, so the bird won't go looking for its native good food.

NO SEED or BREAD!

3. **Feed minimal amounts** and for a short period each day. Our food is a small supplement only. We do not want the birds to become totally dependent on us. They must search for their own native food to remain healthy.
4. **Wash feeding dishes** and clean surrounding areas each day.
5. **Supply clean drinking water** always- close to the food source.
6. **Feed the correct food for each type of bird.** See over for simple food mixes to buy and make up for the following birds:

Kookaburras, Magpies, Currawongs, PeeWees, Butcherbirds, Lorikeets, Honeyeaters, Noisy Miners

SYDNEY WILDLIFE RESCUE

Emergency Rescue Line 24 hrs (02) 9413 4300

Information Email: info@sydneywildlife.org.au Website: www.sydneywildlife.org.au

LORIKEETS, HONEYEATERS & NOISY MINERS

are all **nectar eaters**. Their usual food is the nectar from native flowers, eg. grevillea, bottlebrush

Feed them a nectar substitute like 'Harmony, Lorikeet and Honeyeater'. This is a white powder (not seed), which can be served dry (preferable) or moistened with water. It is available at some supermarkets or at pet shops. 2 tablespoons are ample for a snack for several birds each day.



These birds also like fruit, particularly apple, pear, melon or grapes. Feed in chunks, peeled if possible. Other good Lorikeet foods are:

Trill Pet Lorikeet Mix

Vetafarm Golden Lorikeet Food

Vetafarm Nectar Pellets for Lorikeets

All these products are available at some supermarkets, and most pet shops.



KOOKABURRAS, MAGPIES, CURRAWONGS, PEEWEES, BUTCHERBIRDS

are **insect or meat eaters**. Their usual foods – insects, worms, small lizards, mice. Note – this food is whole, it contains all the nutrients, minerals, fibre etc needed. A diet of minced meat alone, often fed to wild birds, is not adequate, it does not contain the extra nutrients needed.

Wombaroo 'Insectivore' – available at pet shops and Vets.

- Feed minced lean beef WITH Wombaroo 'Insectivore'. Mix in ratio 1 Insectivore to 2 minced meat (by weight). Make up in small bead sized balls, to feed. Add some water to mix. A small handful would be ample for several birds.
- Feed egg, boiled and mashed, WITH 'Insectivore'. Mix in ratio 1 boiled egg to 20g. Insectivore, mixed in water, to make small balls.

Another option for these birds is Vetafarm 'Insecta Pro'. It is fed alone, with water to make a crumble. See instructions on the pack. Vetafarm products are sold at pet shops.



Vetafarm Insecta Pro

'Nature's Goodness' Puppy Sausage.



Kookaburras and magpies can also be fed a good quality puppy sausage – diced up into bite sized pieces. This is available at supermarkets and pet shops. Keep refrigerated.



Wombaroo Insectivore



Acknowledgement: Dr. Darryl Jones, Urban Ecologist, and author of 'The Birds at my Table', and 'Curlews on Vulture Street'.