

Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

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HELPFUL PHONES IN THE AVIARY!

"Australians live in a big open-air aviary"! This is what an awed friend from overseas recently said to me soon after his arrival. Because this is so true, we need field-guides to identify and appreciate the approximately 300 birds we can see around our homes and in the bush. There are excellent Australian field-guides but they have one drawback. They are large and heavy because they contain information on and images of the 900 species of birds found throughout the Australian mainland and its islands. There are about six popular field-guides and any one of them is sufficient to get to know the birds around us in the aviary. However, in the last twelve months the usefulness and availability of the knowledge contained in these field-guides, particularly while walking in the bush, has been radically improved.

Two of the best Australian field-guides have been transformed into apps on smart phones and pads. The first to appear as an

app was Michael Morecombe's "eGuide to the Birds of Australia" and is available at the iTunes store for \$38. The second field-guide app is the Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight's "Birds of Australia - Digital Edition" and is available for \$50 at the iTunes store. The extra cost of the latter app buys greater value in terms of greater functionality. There is a free LITE version of the Morecombe eGuide available to trial, download it now! These apps put the field-guides in your pocket! Not only do they contain the images and information from the field-guides, but they can interactively suggest names and compare birds for identification. They also store your personal bird-list with dates and locations. These apps are so excitingly helpful, so much more than the field-guide books, that it is a new era of information-rich birding.

Happy birding with a phone (Part 1)!

~ Jim

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