

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,  
Jim Butler



## CLEVER SILVEREYES!

It feels good to learn something new about a bird that has been with you all your life. I grew up with Silvereyes in the bush at Ramsgate on Botany Bay. (They were certainly there when Captain Cook walked around the Bay in 1770). Then I moved to Kenmore and they were here; and later I took my science students to Heron Island and Silvereyes were everywhere; all with individual leg bands to distinguish them so that they could be studied by the UQ Research Centre. The Silvereye is a very obvious bird and a much-studied bird, the name is so apt! They live in large flocks, travel hard and feed fast, and all done with constant chatter.

It is one of their feeding behaviours that I have only now observed. It all came about because Ed Frazer improved his camera equipment and a Silvereye was captured eating in a manner that we had never observed. What we learnt is that the Silvereye uses the "throwing up and catching"



process to get large berries into its gullet. The sequence of images shows the Silvereye taking a berry with its bill tip, throwing the berry into the air and catching it so that it is lodged into the back of the mouth and from there could be swallowed. This behaviour was so unexpected in this tiny bird; and yet so familiar as part of my grandson's behaviour eating grapes!

Sometimes it is not until you get improved images that you get to analyse the odd little intimate intricacies of bird behaviour and can piece together the puzzle that was always scatted across the daily activities of a very well-known bird. This behaviour is probably used by a number of frugivorous bird species to consume whole smooth round fruit that are difficult to manoeuvre with a rigid beak.

Happy surprising birding!

~ Jim

Contact Jim: [beautifulbirds@y7mail.com](mailto:beautifulbirds@y7mail.com)

Image: Silvereye taken by Ed Frazer at Brookfield