

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

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## RECORDED SONGS IN THE AVIARY

The Whipbird is well-known but more often heard than seen! The Whipbird pair sings a striking duet initiated by a “whipcrack” sound by the male and the two note reply from the female. This duet keeps them in contact as they forage independently in the dense understory. Other birds, like the Welcome Swallow, are well-known by sight because they live out in the open sky and forage acrobatically pursuing insects on the wing. The Swallow is more often seen than heard!

When it comes to identifying birds in the Australian “aviary” many of the forest birds are more like the Whipbird than the Swallow, more often heard than seen. Identification of birds by their songs is a most important feature of bird surveys and bird studies. To identify birds in this way it is necessary to have the individual bird’s songs in your head or in your pocket. Most birders would know hundreds of bird songs and be able

to identify them accurately without sighting them. But in order to be able to learn this skill it is necessary to have access to accurate recordings of bird songs.

Fortunately for us the two phone apps – “eGuide to the Birds of Australia” and “Birds of Australia - Digital Edition” - featured in last month’s column, conveniently make available each Australian bird’s unique song. The songs in the eGuide app were recorded by David Stewart who lives at Mt Crosby and is one of Australia’s foremost nature recordists. Recording every Australian bird is an enormous undertaking but it enables every song to be carried in your pocket. It is now so amazingly convenient to learn the songs of the birds you can see, or check the songs of the birds you cannot see.

Happier birding with a phone (Part 2)!

~ Jim

Image: Eastern Whipbird by Ed Frazer ©