

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

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## NOT ALL BREEDING BIRDS BUILD NESTS!



**B**uilding an elaborate bird's nest takes a lot out of the builder. It may take weeks of constant work to complete. All of this effort is necessary because it is an essential structure for successful reproduction. However, some birds have evolved ways of avoiding this effort! I have written earlier articles about the big cuckoos that come down from Indonesia and lay their eggs in nests of local birds and let the hosts rear the young before taking them back north.

Another way of avoiding nest building is to take-over an already built nest. In Australia there are about 700 different bird species, and about 80 of them are known to usurp the old or fresh nests of other birds. One of those known usurpers is a very common bird in the western suburbs, it is the Blue-faced Honeyeater (l = 30cm). With its two-tone blue facial skin on show, and because it is happy living in the suburbs and near

shops, it is easily identified.

Not all breeding Blue-faced Honeyeaters take-over nests of other species. Some breeding pairs do build their own open cup-shaped nest; but other pairs have been observed forcing Grey-crowned Babblers out of their newly-made nests which are large, domed structures with short tunnels. This usurpation will obviously have a big impact on the ability of the Babblers to successfully reproduce; because there may not be time in the breeding season to start over again.

This process may be part of the explanation for the local extinction of the Grey-crowned Babbler in the Moggill Creek Catchment. They have disappeared in the last 20 years. Look out for the Blue-faced Honeyeaters and report any Babblers.

Happy Birding!

~ Jim

Image: Blue-faced Honeyeater by Mike Ford ©