

Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,

Jim Butler

Beautiful Winter Migrant

I ENCOUNTERED my first 2019 Rose Robin (11cm) at Deerhurst St Park in the middle of April. And there are other reports from throughout Brisbane of them arriving for the winter. The Rose Robin, endemic to Australia, is one of our most beautiful and most accessible winter



migrants. They do not come here to breed, rather to get more comfortable. They come from the southern forests and from higher altitude forests. Right now, is the ideal time to go bush and enjoy this distinctively beautiful Robin.

The context within which I found the Rose Robin was an exact replication of what we know about their behaviour. Studies have shown they are most often found in mixed-species feeding flocks composed of thornbills, fantails and other small insectivorous species. I had been walking along the main track at Deerhurst St Park for an hour meeting only three birds. Suddenly, a Rufous Fantail crossed the track, foraging low to the ground; and then another. These Fantails are rarely alone. So, I stopped and waited and was duly rewarded by a fast-travelling, feeding, mixed-species flock. In the flock there were: Spectacled Monarchs, Brown Thornbills, Variegated Fairy-wrens, Golden Whistlers, Yellow-faced and Lewin's Honeyeaters and the male Rose Robin. Within ten minutes they were all gone!

The Rose Robin is distributed east and south of the Great Dividing Range along the Australian coast in forests from Gladstone south to Mt Gambier. They are sexually dimorphic: males are dark grey with striking rose-coloured breasts and white stomachs, and females have a rose-pink blush on their breasts. Found in ones or twos, they tend to feed in the mid canopy in Brisbane and are aerial foragers, taking insects and spiders on the wing. They are rarely still. Unlike other robins, the Rose Robin does not return to the same branch while sally foraging.

Go bush now, enjoy these visiting Robins.

~ Jim

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Digital Bird Guide: <http://www.moggillcreek.org/>

Image: Female Rose Robin by Ed Frazer at Brookfield