

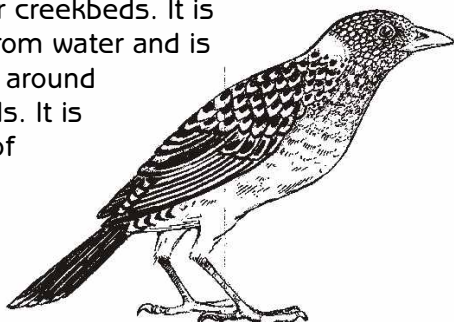
Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

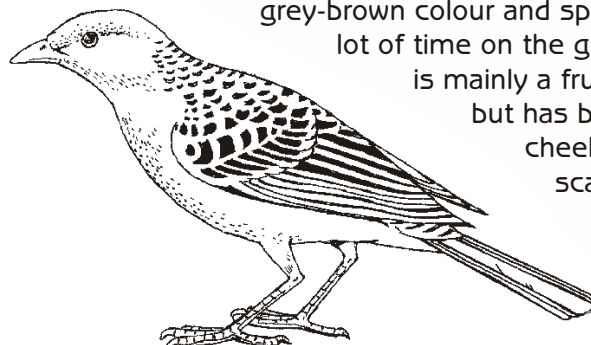
BOWERBIRDS

Australia has seven species of bowerbirds. In the Northern Territory bowerbirds begin breeding in August or September. In the months beforehand the males spend much of their time rebuilding elaborate playgrounds to attract a mate.

The **Spotted Bowerbird** *Chlamydera maculata* of Central Australia lives in rocky places near creekbeds. It is never far from water and is often seen around homesteads. It is very fond of native figs, other fruit, nectar and insects.



The **Great Bowerbird** *Chlamydera nuchalis* is common in Top End picnic areas. It is a grey-brown colour and spends a lot of time on the ground. It is mainly a fruit eater but has become a cheeky scavenger.



Great Bowerbird
Bower



The tunnel-shaped bowers are built from grass and sticks. They normally line up in a north-south direction. They are usually built underneath a large shrub, so that large animals, like kangaroos, do not trample them. At each end is an area cleared and then decorated called the **apron**. The clear tunnel-like part in the middle is called the **avenue**.

The **Spotted Bowerbird** actually paints the inside walls of its bower with a red-brown mixture of saliva and grass juices. The apron is decorated with white and pale green objects.

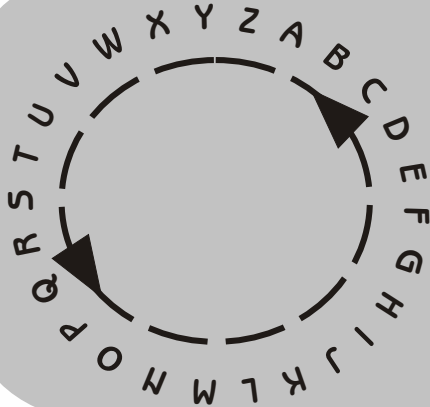
They are not nests but playgrounds to attract the females. Male bowerbirds with the best decorated bowers find themselves with the most females. All male bowerbirds mate with more than one female. Mating takes place in the bower, but the female then leaves to raise the babies on her own. She lays her eggs in a saucer-shaped nest which she builds in a tree, well above the ground. The nest is always well away from the bower and is often hard to find.

Want to learn more about birds?

Check out the affordable field guides *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* by either *Simpson & Day* or the one by *Pizzey & Knight*. Another good book is the *Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds*.

NATURE'S GREATEST COLLECTOR

The male bowerbird covers the floor of his bower with a collection of objects for his mate. When a female walks into the bower he will offer her some of these things. Decode the following puzzle to find out the kinds of things he collects for her.



Turn each letter into the one that comes before it in the alphabet.

T U P O F T T I F M M T
 , ,
 H M B T T C P O F T
 and .

The **Satin Bowerbird** *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* of eastern Australia collects blue objects for his mate. In Queensland plastic milk containers were once marked with blue caps. The Satin Bowerbirds loved to collect these and the blue locking rings. Unfortunately many birds were strangled and died as the rings got caught around their necks. Fortunately when the milk company was alerted to this they changed the cap colour.

The **Great Bowerbird** of the Northern Territory collects objects of a different colour to decorate its bower avenue and aprons. To find out what colour they like, you will need to solve the following puzzle.



A letter has been left out of each word on the first line. A different letter has been left out in each other line. Build the mystery colour by working out the 5 missing letters.

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1. T _ I G | _ A T E R | B O _ E R | _ O O D L A N D |
| 2. C _ E E K Y | _ O P P I N G | T _ I C K | C O U R T S _ I P |
| 3. S T _ C K S | P _ C N _ C | R _ V E R | F R A _ L |
| 4. _ U N N E L | M A _ E | F R U I _ | A _ _ R A C _ |
| 5. F _ M A L _ | _ G G S | G O R G _ | N _ S T |

The mystery colour is

1 2 3 4 5

