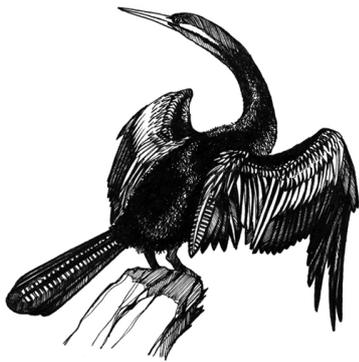


# Learning About Birds

Exploring the rich and varied world of ornithology to add depth and understanding to your birding



Darter © BirdLife Australia

*It is human nature to want to learn more. This is no different for birdwatchers and ornithologists. All birdwatchers, when starting out, begin to recognise the birds that live around us, and gradually there follows an understanding that each species behaves differently, and has different requirements from all the others. Observing birds is one of the most effective ways of learning about them, because the more you look, the more you learn. However, enthusiasts have been looking at birds for many years, and there is a huge body of knowledge amassed and available for anyone with an interest in birds to further their understanding of what birds are, why they do what they do, and where they fit into the scheme of things. There are many ways of tapping in to this rich source of information.*

## Field Guides and Other Books

Although field guides are primarily concerned with aiding the identification of birds, most also contain much useful information about other aspects of the ecology of our birdlife, such as habitats, breeding information (season, descriptions of nest and eggs), geographical range and movements, descriptions of different calls and songs, and behaviour. There are a number of different field guides, each providing different amounts of information, and a quick glance through a selection will reveal which best suits your needs. They are a good place to start when beginning to learn about birds.

Of course, field guides are not the only books on birds that are available. A visit to your local bookshop will probably reveal many shelves displaying a plethora of bird books of different sizes, formats and content. Some of the most popular bird books are coffee-table books, which usually feature large, glossy photographs of birds, but otherwise contain little information, so, although they are pleasant to look at, most offer little scope for learning about birds. On the other hand, some books, like our *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, are encyclopaedias which cover everything there is to know about birds. In between these extremes, there are many books about the birds of different regions and countries, and there is even a growing number of books about the birds which live in local areas; there are books about different groups of birds, and some books are devoted to individual species; there are even books on where to go birdwatching in different countries or regions. Whatever your interest in birds, there is a book for you. Many bookshops have a good range, but there are also specialist bird bookshops which cater for those people who have more specific needs. The best-known of these is the Andrew Isles Natural History Bookshop, and you can check out the wide range of books at [www.andrewisles.com](http://www.andrewisles.com).

## The HL White Library

If the prospect of buying a library full of books seems too daunting, why not borrow some from the library instead? Most public libraries have at least a few basic books on birds, but if your needs are more specific, the H.L. White Library at the BirdLife Australia National Office is one of the best ornithological libraries in Australia. It is open to the general public to visit, but books may only be borrowed by

birds are in our nature

members of BirdLife Australia. Members who find it inconvenient to visit the library in person may borrow books for the cost of registered return postage, and for a small cost may also order photocopies of papers from journals.

## Multimedia and the World Wide Web

With technological advances, many photographers and film-makers record images of birds and their and behaviour on DVDs or on video. Wildlife documentaries often provide an easy-to-digest diet of information, making it easy to learn about birds by watching little-known or difficult-to-see aspects of their lives. In addition, there are many websites that cater for this need. One of the best is the HBW Internet Bird Collection, which you can view at [ibc.hbw.com/ibc](http://ibc.hbw.com/ibc); it has footage of thousands of different species of birds from throughout the world, going about their daily lives.

In addition, sound recordists often produce CDs of bird song, and these are also widely available. There are also many websites devoted to providing information about birds. A few bird calls are available on BirdLife Australia's website and many more can be found on our Birds in Backyards website [birdsinboxyards.net](http://birdsinboxyards.net) as well as lots of other information about native birds. At our Birddata website [birddata.com.au](http://birddata.com.au) you can have an interactive look at distribution maps for all Australian bird species, and generate a bird list for your local area, or anywhere else in Australia you plan to visit.

## Journals

Reading about ornithological research in journals is not always easy, as scientific papers usually follow a format that is often very dry. Nevertheless, many contain details of original observations or experimental results that tell us something new about birds. Like birdwatching itself, perseverance with these journals can be worthwhile. There are many high-quality ornithological journals published throughout the world, but the one with the best coverage of Australia and the surrounding region is *Emu* – *Austral Ornithology*, published by CSIRO publishing on behalf of BirdLife Australia. This is essential reading for anyone seriously interested in the birds of our region. Subscription to *Emu* is additional to standard membership of BirdLife Australia, but offered at a discounted rate. Further information is available by contacting us at [membership@birdlife.org.au](mailto:membership@birdlife.org.au).

## Birds in Schools

BirdLife Australia has a growing number of educational resources for all ages. For more information and links visit our website.

## Tertiary Studies

There are often courses available through the Council of Adult Education and other bodies. Most universities offer courses on biology or similar subjects which include aspects of ornithology in their curriculum, however, the only institution that currently offers a specialised post-graduate degree in ornithology is the Charles Sturt University. The Graduate Diploma of Ornithology and the Graduate Certificate of Ornithology both cater for the professional who has developed ornithological skills in the field and wishes to upgrade his or her knowledge and gain formal qualification, or the amateur wanting a more formal understanding of ornithology. Further information is available at: [www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/ornithology](http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/ornithology).

### Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

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Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats