

CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT

Crested Shrike-tits inhabit woodlands and riparian forests. Populations of Crested Shrike-tits are declining across Australia due to habitat loss associated with land clearing. The Crested Shrike-tit is an excellent indicator species for healthy, well-connected native remnant vegetation.



Male Crested Shrike-tit
© Chris Tzaros



Female Crested Shrike-tit (note olive throat)
© Dean Ingwersen

HOW TO IDENTIFY A CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT

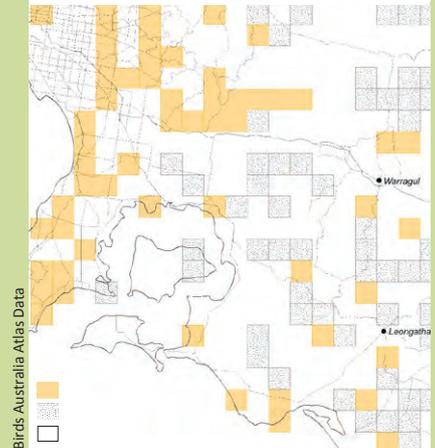
The Crested Shrike-tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*) is a medium-sized bird (17–20 cm long) with a striking black-and-white pattern on its head, a short crest, olive upperparts and yellow underparts. Females differ slightly from males, having a smaller crest and an olive-green throat. Young birds have a pale throat and a brown back. Their alternative name of ‘Bark-Tit’ is an apt description of their tendency to cling to tree trunks while stripping bark with their robust bill in search of insects and larvae. Their call is described as ‘*knock-at-the-door-whack*’. They occur singly, in pairs or small groups.

Similar species: Golden Whistler

ANNUAL LIFE CYCLE OF A CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Adults may feed fledglings until April, even though they are able to feed themselves.				Immature birds disperse from the breeding area. Well-connected habitat helps them disperse safely.			Breeding season: Both sexes incubate 2–3 eggs and feed the nestlings for 15–17 days before they leave the nest.				

Distribution in Western Port Catchment Area and Surroundings



WHAT MAKES GOOD CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT HABITAT?



Crested Shrike-tits live in dry forests, woodlands and streamside (riparian) eucalypt forests, feeding on insects on tree trunks and among the foliage of trees and shrubs. They play an important role in maintaining healthy native vegetation by keeping insect numbers balanced. In the Western Port region, Crested Shrike-tits feed mostly on eucalypts that lose their bark in strips or ribbons, such as Swamp Gum, Manna Gum and Mountain Ash. They require large, well-connected patches of forests and woodlands, between 100–400 hectares. They are seldom found in areas more than 1 km from their preferred habitat and are reluctant to cross large gaps (>200 m) between habitat patches. Crested Shrike-tits build their nests in slender forks of branches high in trees and saplings.

ENCOURAGING CRESTED SHRIKE-TITS ONTO YOUR FARM

Crested Shrike-tits respond best to well-managed remnant native vegetation and older re-vegetation (more than 15 years). The following pointers will help you improve the quality of patches of remnant native vegetation and re-vegetation on your farm and encourage Crested Shrike-tits into your area.

PROTECT REMNANT PATCHES

- Allow remnant native woodlands and forests on your farm to regenerate naturally by fencing off as much area as possible to exclude livestock. Avoid using barbed wire on the top strand of the fence as many animals can become entangled in it.
- Maintain a range of trees of different ages within remnant native patches. If eucalypt saplings fail to regenerate naturally, supplementary plantings using tube-stock or direct seedings may be required.
- Leave dead and fallen trees, branches, leaves and flowers to break down naturally to promote soil health, encourage regeneration and provide insect habitat.
- Remove weeds that may compete with native vegetation and control rabbits, foxes and cats.
- Increase borders of riparian zones to at least 30 m on either side of the creek or river and, where possible, connect remnant patches along creeks and gullies.

CREATE A HABITAT MOSAIC

- Include wildlife corridors in your farm and link up with catchment-wide corridors established by your local Landcare Group.
- Connect patches of remnant native vegetation with strips of planted vegetation that are at least 20 m wide and include trees with ribbon bark.
- When planting new vegetation, plant trees, shrubs and groundcovers that occur naturally in your area.
- In areas with large remnant patches where it is unfeasible to fence off completely, moveable electric fencing rotated over several years will reduce costs and encourage a habitat mosaic.



DID YOU KNOW?

 Farms with good quality remnant native patches are more likely to support declining and vulnerable species.

 Farms with naturally regenerating patches of native vegetation have 21% more woodland birds than planted areas.

 Insectivorous birds eat 60% of insects found in woodland forests.



Department of Sustainability
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FACT SHEETS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:

- GOLDEN WHISTLER
- STRIATED PARDALOTE
- SCARLET ROBIN
- JACKY WINTER

For more information and assistance contact:

Birds Australia

t: (03) 9347 0757

e: bof@birdsaustralia.com.au w: birdsaustralia.com.au

Bass Coast Landcare

t: (03) 5678 2335

Western Port Catchment Landcare

t: (03) 5941 8446

South Gippsland Landcare

t: (03) 5662 5759



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