

Common Name/Scientific name: Variegated Fairy-wren/ *Malurus lamberti*

Although widespread across most of mainland Australia, in tropical, sub-tropical and temperate regions, the Variegated Fairy-wren inhabits a wide variety of dense thickets. The species is mainly terrestrial, foraging on the ground or in the understorey. Often their presence in the shrubs is betrayed by their soft, chirping contact calls, though the species calls less often than other fairy-wrens.



Description: The breeding male Variegated Fairy-wren is brightly coloured. The crown and sides of the head are blue, and the shoulder patch is a rich chestnut. The depth and variety of colours in the male varies among the four subspecies, distributed across the Australian mainland. Non-breeding males, females and young birds are brownish grey.

Where seen in the gardens: The Variegated Fairy-wren is found in forest, woodland and shrub land habitats. This would include most of the gardens and adjacent reserves, except perhaps the dense riparian vegetation along the major creeks

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: The Variegated Fairy-wren feeds on insects and a small amount of seeds. The birds feed around the base of small shrubs, and seldom stray into the open. Some food may be found among the bark and foliage of short trees and grasses.

Nesting: The male Variegated Fairy-wren is often mistakenly believed to have a harem of females. The small groups actually consist of an adult female with younger or non-breeding birds. As they have a wide range, Variegated Fairy-wrens have been recorded breeding in almost every month of the year. The nest is an oval-shaped dome, constructed of grasses, and placed in a low shrub. The female alone constructs the nest and incubates the eggs, but is assisted by other group members in feeding the chicks.

Similar Species in the gardens: Red-backed Fairy-wrens are occasionally seen in the gardens. In their non-breeding plumage they look quite similar but a little smaller. Red-backed Fairy-wren males in breeding plumage are glossy black with a striking red patch on the back and rump.