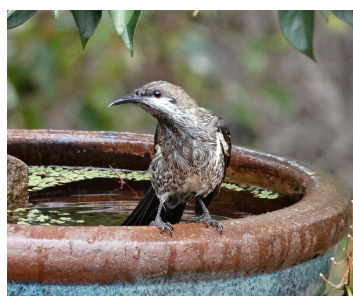


## Boyd Wykes & Karen Majer

*“Margaret River gardens are providing genuine, significant habitat for a wide range of forest bird species”*

**For lifelong conservationists, Boyd Wykes and Karen Majer, turning their garden into an impressive urban sanctuary for native wildlife was a “no brainer”.**



Boyd's passion for conservation started with the propagation of native plants in outer Melbourne and culminated in a PhD focused on conserving Victoria's bird emblem, the Helmeted Honeyeater. He also completed a post-doctorate on regenerating Jarrah forests and had an illustrious career in the field including managing environmental issues for the Department of Defence. Karen's career also followed a conservation path, which started with a Zoology degree from UWA and included environmental and conservation-related roles at places like England's Imperial College, WA's Environmental Protection Authority, the Maritime Museum and Rottnest Island Authority.

Now retired and settled in the South West, the duo has created a haven for native wildlife on their 2700sqm block in Margaret River. A lot of time, energy and love have been poured into the property, which boasts an old Marri tree with hollows for brushtail possums; nesting boxes for birds, bats and possums; beehives to help with pollination; water for many species; ponds with aquatic vegetation and frog species; and birds – plenty of birds.

Anyone who's met Boyd soon learns birds are a particular area of focus for him. In fact, he counts the results of regular bird monitoring since 2013 among his biggest accomplishments at the property. Three times a month, all birds in the garden and three designated 2ha patches of nearby forest are counted. Results have shown that while some species have a high turn-over, others indicate a resident population of long-lived and successful breeders.



*“Good planning can combine quality amenity with safety from fire, low water consumption and sustained, healthy wildlife habitat”*



“This data set confirms our observation that Margaret River gardens are providing genuine, significant habitat for a wide range of forest bird species,” Boyd said. “This study is being continued with the intent of monitoring how we are faring over time in the face of likely change and challenge for our region’s environment.”

Some of the bird species living in Boyd and Karen’s garden and surrounding areas include the red-eared firetail, splendid and red-winged fairy-wren, grey shrikethrush, golden whistler, varied sittella and white-breasted robin. Boyd said a wide range of native birds were moving freely between bushland and garden, demonstrating gardens represented a significant conservation habitat by providing corridors for dispersal and seasonal movement, and refuge in peak summer and winter.



“This contribution of gardens to conservation is likely to be of increasing importance as our population increases and as climate change affects our region’s weather patterns,” he said. “This is already the case for the endangered western ringtail and perhaps for our endangered Baudin’s white-tailed black cockatoo.”



The couple agree the region’s extraordinary garden bird communities should not be taken for granted and things like preserving garden trees from threats would go a long way towards protecting them. Boyd said good planning was also essential and would allow housing to be part of a wider landscape of recreational parkland and reserves of natural bushland, waterways and wildlife corridors.