



PLANTING A SAFE HAVEN FOR SMALL BIRDS

by **CHRIS NOON**

Around 10,000 plant and animal species are disappearing around the world each year. Insect biomass in Germany has declined 76% since 1989. Farmland birds in Britain are down 58% since 1970. **In Sydney small birds have reduced** due to habitat loss and predators like cats and competition from larger birds.

Can we do something to help the small birds?

Yes, by planting an area carefully with native species that will feed, protect and permit nests. The area can be as big as your land can manage, and can be any shape along a fence or in a corner. For example, a circle of 7m diameter can be planted as follows with 100 plants in this order.

In the centre: tall soft shrubs 1-2 metres high for a safe haven from bigger birds; such as Grevillea, Ozthalmus, Leptospermum

Then a protective circle: 1-2 metre high spiky plants planted closely; such as Hakea,

Acacia ulicifolia, Banksia, Lambertia. Then some **diverse small shrubs** to attract creatures with food and shelter; such as Dianella, Indigofera, Prostanthera

Finally, **on the outside:** mixed native grasses and ground covers offering seeds and insects as food; such as Microlaena, Entolasia, Pratia, native violet

These can be located under trees or with more room, trees can be planted. On the ground put dead logs, rocks, pipes etc as homes for insects, reptiles and others.

Information sourced from www.habitatnetwork.org/resources.htm

Need help selecting plants and getting advice to suit your soil conditions and needs? We have free local native plants available.

If you would like help or further information, contact Nick on 9653 2056, via email StillCreekLandcare@iinet.net.au or visit Still Creek Landcare at www.stillcreeklandcare.com.au and on Facebook.

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**WARRAH
BIODYNAMIC
FARM**

AT WARRAH BIODYNAMIC FARM THIS MONTH, we have done our final preparations for spring and summer, and we are now putting the warm season crops in. These include capsicum, tomato, eggplant, zucchini, cucumber, silver beet, pumpkin, squash, kale, beetroot, salad mix, strawberries, basil and parsley. We have had some much-needed rain, although the forecast is for a dry spring. We have also tussled with the recent heavy winds, and thankfully escaped any crop damage.

We are seeing the clear signs of spring now, with flowers starting to bloom, the strawberry patch about to explode and baby birds wandering with mum and dad and being taught all their new skills for survival. The Australian wood duck chicks do not bring our farmers as much pleasure as you might expect! They are actually one of the biggest pests on an organic farm. We mitigate the harm they cause by placing netting over the tender leaves the ducks love to graze on.

Another important strategy in organic and biodynamic farming is planting flower crops to attract beneficial pollinators. Pollinators – those precious creatures that transfer genetic material between plants to enable reproduction – are under threat global. It is probably obvious that organic farms are better for beneficial insects because of the absence of artificial pesticides from our processes. However, there is an additional element incorporated into the organic farming model. That is, the planting of sufficient and stable flower crops. Studies show that organic farming has a consistent and stabilising effect on the diversity of pollinator populations. So next time you enjoy the colourful display when you make the drive up to the Farm Shop at Warrah, consider that the flowers are much more than simply ornamental.