Be a buddy to the Pied Currawong

Try to:

• Keep large, old trees for Pied Currawongs to nest and roost in. Tree hollows can take up to 100 years to develop and animals love to live in them.
• Make your garden safe for small birds by planting local native strappy or spiny ground covers, such as Spiny Headed Mat Rush or a Dianella. These create refuges and habitat, while keeping bigger birds out.
• Plant local native berries in your garden that Currawongs and other animals can eat.
• Mulch your garden to attract bugs and lizards for Pied Currawongs to feed on.

Avoid:

• Using chemicals to deter insects or rodents, as these chemicals can make birds sick if they eat poisoned creatures.
• Planting weeds such as Asparagus Fern, Hawthorn, Lantana and Privet. Currawongs eat the berries and then fly off and poop the seeds somewhere where they could sprout and become a real environmental problem.

Don’t be surprised if Pied Currawongs:

• Store up some of their food for later on a ‘larder’ - a hook or a tree fork. They leave larger prey there, such as a small possum or carrion, and come back to feed on it over time.
• Cough up half-digested food into water, and then eat it again. Pied Currawongs do this with olives and White Cedar seeds to soften them up first.

Find out more about your buddies

VISIT:  www.backyardbuddies.net.au
www.facebook.com/backyardbuddies

CALL:  1800 283 343 to purchase a Backyard Buddy toy. The proceeds go to threatened species conservation programs.

READ:  Each month you can receive an email about animals you’re likely to see in your backyard with tips on how to make your backyard friendly for them. It’s called B-mail & it’s free. All you have to do is sign up.

SIGN UP:  www.backyardbuddies.net.au/Bmail.php
Have you been waking up to a new song in the early morning hours? If the notes go something like a repeated ‘curra-wong’ or ‘caddow caddang’, you’re being treated to the musical talent of the melodious Pied Currawong.

Pied Currawongs are common in suburban parks and garden on the east coast of Australia. They are often spotted carefully searching for any hidden snacks like a bird detective. When the scrutinising gaze of their bright yellow eyes lands on you, you’ll be relieved you’re too big to fit inside their belly!

Pied Currawongs don’t look as formidable and serious when they fly though. Their wings beat downwards very quickly in a rowing motion. This makes them appear to be falling from branch to branch. Compared to the smooth flight of Magpies and other black and white birds, this can look quite comical.

You can make your garden friendlier for Pied Currawongs

Currawongs are great helpers to have around. They eat up carrion and clean up the streets. Pied Currawongs also eat two particular species of stick insect that can defoliate patches of eucalyptus forests if there are too many of them around.

You can help Pied Currawongs by letting insects flourish in your garden. Pied Currawongs original diet consisted of bull ants, stinkbugs and native berries. These birds love to forage for insects. Avoid using pesticides so that Pied Currawongs can enjoy a tasty meal and control your garden bug numbers.

If we do a few simple things locally, our gardens and parks can be a safe place for Pied Currawongs and will provide them with the food they need. That’s why the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife started Backyard Buddies.

What is a backyard buddy?

Backyard buddies are the native animals that share our built-up areas, our beaches and waterways, our backyards and our parks. The Pied Currawong is a backyard buddy.

Backyard buddies are also the local people who value the living things around them, like the Pied Currawong, and are willing to protect and encourage them by doing a few simple things around their own homes. So you can be a backyard buddy.

Be a backyard buddy

It’s easy. All you have to do is care... and take a few simple steps. Step one is to find out what Pied Currawongs do and do not like.

Pied Currawongs love:

- Singing – in their distinctive and melodious call.
- All day snacking – On anything they can rustle up in the leaf litter or high up in tree branches, such as small lizards, insects, rodents, caterpillars, chicks, berries, seeds and nuts.
- Parties in winter – which bring out their chatty and social side. Outside of breeding season, Pied Currawongs enjoy letting their feathers down in flocks of up to 100 birds.

But they don’t like:

- Rat poison – If a Currawong eats a rodent contaminated by rat poison, it could become sick and die.
- Channel-billed Cuckoos – which lay their eggs in the nest of the Pied Currawong and leave their chicks for the currawongs to take care of.

Please turn over for some of the simple, practical things you can do to help encourage Pied Currawongs in your backyard or neighbourhood.

Pied Currawong Profile

Growing up to 51 cm, Pied Currawongs are impossible to miss. Their jet black feathers are a striking contrast to their bright yellow eyes.

Pied Currawongs also have splotches of white on their tail, undertail and wing tips, which are revealed when they fly.

These birds have a cheeky streak that dates back to the 1960s. Sydney Pied Currawongs all got a taste for milk, after learning how to pierce the foil tops of milk bottles with their beaks.

These days, your milk might be safe but your fresh laundry might not be, as Pied Currawongs have a new prank of regurgiating food as they fly!