

FLYCATCHERS IN OUR AREA – DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

... **Mike & Kaye Traynor** Drawings by Kaye Traynor

Restless and Satin Flycatchers can both be found locally. They are not uncommon, but tend to be more conspicuous at particular times of the year. A third species, called the Leaden Flycatcher, has also been reported here, but generally occurs in northern and eastern coastal areas, and doesn't often extend this far.

Restless Flycatcher *Myiagra inquieta* 190 – 215 mm

Other names: Scissors grinder, Grinder, Dishlick, Crested Wagtail

At first glance, it is easy to mistake the Restless Flycatcher for the Willy Wagtail. It is similar in appearance, except for a white throat, whereas the Willy Wagtail has a black head and throat, and white brows. Very active, noisy and conspicuous, the Restless Flycatcher has a swooping, graceful flight, with deep wing beats. It hovers



over grasses, branches and foliage with its bill open, making grinding, churring sounds, which appear to disturb insects. It perches on stumps, and takes spiders, centipedes, worms, and insects.

Description: The sexes similar. The upper parts are glossy blue-black, with the sides of the face duller; the chin, throat and underparts are white, and the breast has a light rufous-buff wash; the tail is black.

Voice: the song is clear whistling; calls include harsh rattles and rasps, whistles, and distinctive 'scissor grinding' chirring.

Breeding: July-January, with one to three broods per season. The Restless Flycatcher builds a cup nest of bark strips and grass, bound with spider web, and decorated with lichen and bark flakes; it is lined with fur & grasses, and placed in a tree fork, at least 10 m above ground.

Habitat: Open eucalypt and riverine woodlands, clearings in forests, paperbark swamps, and coastal regions. The Restless Flycatcher disperses into the arid interior during non-breeding months.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca* 155–170 mm

Other names: Satin or Shining Sparrow

The Satin Flycatcher is migratory, departing for Queensland after the breeding season, and winters in islands of the Torres Strait and New Guinea. It is strictly arboreal, and forages, mainly, by hawking for insects on the wing.

Description: Male – Head, breast and upper parts are glossy blue-black; the remainder of underparts are white; the wing and tail are black.

Female – Crown, sides of face and upper parts are dusky blue-grey; chin, throat and upper breast are orange-rufous, and the remainder of the underparts are white; the tail is grey-brown.

Voice: is loud and strident, either clear or guttural. Calls include rattles, buzzes, whistles and creaks.

Breeding: September-February, with one brood per season. The cup-shaped nest is very similar to that of Restless Flycatcher. It is built in a horizontal fork up to 25 m above the ground.

Habitat: mainly tall, dense eucalypt forest when breeding. At other times, the Restless Flycatcher prefers wooded environments, including parks and gardens.

Reference: Boles, Walter E. 1988, *The Robins and Flycatchers of Australia*, Angus & Robertson, and Sydney.

