

# Easter Spinebill Extract from *Birds in Backyards*

**Scientific Name:** *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*

The Eastern Spinebill sometimes hovers like a hummingbird when feeding on the nectar from flowers. Most Australian honeyeaters feed on flowers from a perched position.

**Calls:** Short, repeated, high-pitched piping.

## Facts and Figures

Minimum Size: 15cm Maximum Size: 16cm Average weight: 11g  
Breeding season: August to January : Clutch Size: 2

**Description:** The Eastern Spinebill is most easily recognised by its very long, fine, down-curved beak and energetic flight, during which its white outer tail feathers are prominent. Males have a grey-black crown which extends in a black line on either side of the breast. The breast and throat are white, with a rufous patch in the centre of the throat. The wings and lower back are dark grey and the underparts and upper back are buff. Females are similar to males but have less distinct markings.

**Similar species:** Crescent Honeyeater, Tawny-crowned Honeyeater, Western Spinebill (in Western Australia)

**Distribution:** The Eastern Spinebill's range is generally east of the Great Dividing Range from Cooktown in Queensland to the Flinders Ranges in South Australia

**Habitat:** The Eastern Spinebill prefers heath, forest and woodland.  
Seasonal movements: Largely sedentary, but undergoes some local movements, especially away from higher elevations in autumn/winter.

**Feeding:** The Eastern Spinebill feeds on insects and nectar while perched or while hovering. Nectar is obtained from a wide array of flowers, including grevilleas, but its beak is particularly well-suited to extracting nectar from tubular flowers such as epacrids.

**Breeding:**

The Eastern Spinebill's nest is a small cup of twigs, grass and bark, combined with hair and spider's web, built in a tree fork, generally between 1 and 5 metres from the ground. Only the female builds the nest and incubates the eggs, but both parents feed the young when they hatch.

**Living with us:** The Eastern Spinebill sometimes visits urban gardens that are well-vegetated, and will feed from both native and exotic flowers, including fuchsias.

## References:

[Field guide to Australian Birds.](#)

[Field guide to the birds of Australia, 6th Edition](#)

[Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Volume 4\)](#)



