

FLAME AND SCARLET ROBINS - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? ... Kaye Traynor

There are five Australasian robins belonging to the *Petroica* genus, so named for their red and pink markings. These small birds with their striking colours and charming, inquisitive natures are popular inhabitants of our forests and woodlands.

Two common species are featured below.

Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*

Male Flame Robins are so-named because of the bright orange-red throat and underparts. Their head and upperparts are slate-grey. The females and immature robins are greyish-brown, with light brown underparts though occasionally the female has an orange flush on the breast.

Flame Robins are birds of the open eucalypt woodlands and forests from coastal to alpine habitats. During winter months, the birds descend from the highlands into more open habitats such as pastures, golf courses, parks and woodlands.



Male Flame Robin

The nesting season extends from August to January. The nest is a bulky rough cup, decorated with bark and lichens and lined with fine warm material. The nest can be in a tree fork, in the roots of a fallen tree, or even a post cavity. Three or four eggs are laid.

Their diet consists of insects and other invertebrates taken mainly from the ground.



Female Flame Robin

Scarlet Robin, *Petroica multicolour*

This species is similar to the Flame Robin but slightly smaller. The male is black above which extends to the throat so that the bird is completely hooded. The white fore-crown patch is larger. The breast is a rich scarlet colour and the belly is a dullwhite. The females are grey-brown with a smaller white fore-crown patch, and a reddish wash on the breast.

Scarlet Robins breed in drier highland forests and woodlands from August to January. The nest is a neat cup made from bark strips, lichen and spider web, placed in a fork or cavity. Usually three eggs are laid.

The male gives the female building material and feeds her while she is incubating. They feed on insects and other small arthropods.



Female Scarlet Robin



Male Scarlet Robin

Ref: *The Robins and Flycatchers of Australia* by Walter E. Boles – *The National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife*.