

**W**e are happy to present a new book written by a member of our Zoom group here in Melbourne:

**Birds in my Tree: The Magic of Birds and the Joy of Singing** by Vanessa I. R. Craven. Available in Hard and Soft covers and in E-Book formats. Available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. A copy is available for loan from our Melbourne Library. The catchy song which accompanies the book is available on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVMNggnhpiA>  
Reviewed by Amanda F. Rooke.

The COVID-19 lockdowns created a 'stay-at home' world in which Vanessa Craven began to interact with the birds in her garden and in the bush around her. Several photographs of these wonderful feathered friends and a new song that she was moved to write, combined together to provide material for her children's book.

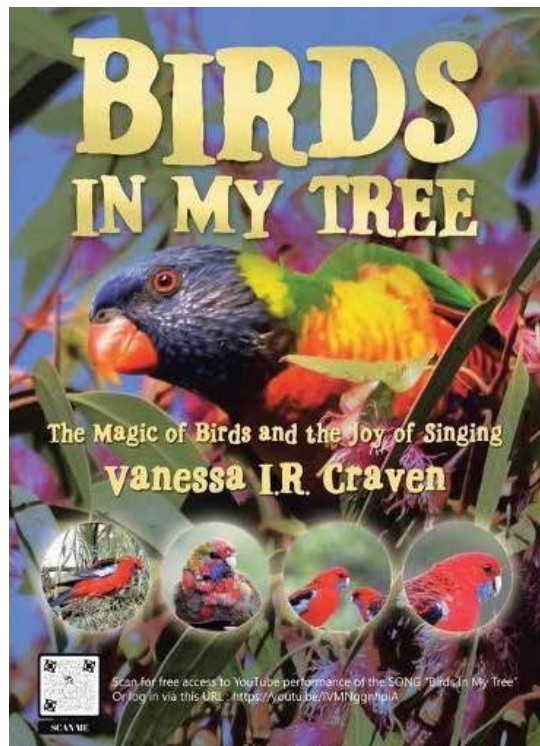
*Birds in my Tree: The Magic of Birds and the Joy of Singing* (published by Xlibris AU) is a colourful picture songbook on birds.

Their antics and their individual characteristics play an important part in the lyrics of the song. Each birdcall is a live recording at the end of each verse pertaining to the bird. This book is an interactive tool for teaching kids about the different bird varieties and their birdcalls, and inviting kids to recognize and have fun with mimicking. A QR Code and a YouTube link give free access to the live performance of the song, "Birds in My Tree." This picture, music book and teaching tool is filled with colourful bird photographs, lyrics, guitar chords and music notation at the back of the book. It provides children, parents and teachers with an audio-visual experience and an opportunity to learn about different birds, their birdcalls and learn a new song as well. It allows for creativity and experimentation with creating bird sounds

flapping wings, strutting about and having fun singing together. The author says of the book: “The book invites the reader to let their hair down and be part of a bird’s life and enjoy interacting with them and embrace their quirkiness. It invites the reader to sing or recite the lyrics in the book” ... “I hope the book brings much joy and appreciation of our flighty feathered friends. May their quirky personalities, bird sounds, photographs and the song enlighten and enliven the imaginations of ‘little folk’ 4 to 7 years of age. I hope it gives them a love for nature, leading them to a sense and desire to treasure, nurture and protect wildlife; to grow up and be advocates for protecting our ever-diminishing wildlife and their habitats; to spend more time in the fresh air and not lose the art of connectedness to earth, and nature.”

Amanda Rooke gives her impressions after reading the book and listening to the song:

It is with great joy that I present my thoughts on Vanessa’s wonderful new book, which is a colour, sound, and aesthetic experience rather than just a book! The beautiful cover picture gives a taste of what is to come in the photographs of local birds from Vanessa’s Australian bushland home that fill the subsequent pages. The colour-experience continues! Loads of primary colours, both pigment-primaries and light-primaries, black and white with pastel-coloured backgrounds. I’ve noticed the emphasis on bountifully bright colour in other books written during the Covid



Pandemic as we all tried to see the ‘bright and the beautiful’ aspects of the world during a tough time for most people. The text and the song are mainly ‘a continuo’, with the various native birds shown on a pale-green page with yellow wattle below, linked by grey tree trunks to their green-grey foliage to an eagle image flying above the word “Verse”. This continuo pattern continues throughout following Vanessa’s catchy original song about what each bird is doing in her tree that attracted her literary and musical attention.

This makes the series jog along in a patter because the same two lines, “Birds in my Tree, what can it be...”, shows the typical activities/character of each bird in the facing page and on through the book and song.

This is really good for those reading to the intended audience of little children. Kids can remember the repetitive information and the addendum tagged onto it, even if read in segments of a few verses – so they remember all the details pertaining to the different types of birds.

The bird-calls invite phonetic mimicry and encourage kids to write down these calls and memorise them. The jiggling rhythm of the song invites dancing around pretending to be the bird, huge laughter and joy coming along and fun to be had by all.

Poetry, singing and chanting are great ways for little people to learn, either at bedtime story-telling time at home or in an early childhood education setting. This continues for most of the book, for diurnal birds, pivoting to night birds for the last few pages. Then, there is the inclusion of a transcription

of the musical notation of the 'Birds in My Tree' song and the book invites you to scan a QR code for a You Tube performance of the song by the author and musical friends.

The photography is fabulous both artistically and for the information it conveys to young readers. The different "birds in my tree" are shown mostly in profile – head to beak, to body, length of legs and feet, etc., as well as its preferred foodstuffs and habitat, both as young and adult birds. The litany ends with the moon rising in the night sky when the birds all go to sleep, except for the owls who keep the party going all through the night! Thoroughly recommended for parents and schools that wish to convey a sensitivity to Nature's wonders to the next generation.

– Amanda F. Rooke,  
Melbourne, Australia.