

# The Curator And The Recycler

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The bowerbirds of the family Ptilonorhynchida are famous for their elaborate structure which are an important tool in their courtship rituals. The structure is constructed to be a bower (gazebo-like) from twigs. Outside the spacious cavern the bowerbird decorates its lawn with individual clusters of brightly coloured fruits and flowers, iridescent beetles' wings, shells, and other items that it deems attractive. The whole purpose of this huge effort is to have a space to show off his song and dance in wooing the females. Thus the female bowerbird becomes the judge of his curatorial and courtship skills. The female bowerbird later builds a nest for laying eggs on the trees.

The bowerbirds are considered to be the most humanistic of birds as they engage in such a complex courtship behaviour. For example, they would kill the beetles just to get the iridescent wings for their display. This points to a higher sense of aesthetics compared to other animals. This attention to detail is demonstrated by the bowerbird ensuring the perfection of its arrangement i.e. by rearranging the display of the beetles' wings to reflect the sunlight so that the display is seen in its best light.

The bowerbird has also moved with the times in that it now gathers colourful drinking straws, and mineral bottle caps to include in its choice of clusters. This is where the habitat is very much linked to the lives of animals. Without realising it, the bowerbird has become a natural recycler. The campaign for the 3R (REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE) is gathering momentum and the bowerbird can be a powerful icon in this initiative.



