

# Chesnut-breasted Whiteface

*Aphelocephala pectoralis*



Chestnut-breasted Whitefaces are just 10cm long with a rounded, robust shape. These tiny birds are easy to identify thanks to the broad chestnut band across their breast that gives them their name. They have dark grey flight and tail feathers and white underparts.

Usually seen in pairs or small groups, they are sometimes mixed in with flocks of other small birds such as Banded (*A. nigricincta*) or Southern (*A. leucopsis*) Whitefaces, Wrens or Cinnamon Quail-thrushes (*Cinclosoma cinnamomeum*). When disturbed they fly close to the ground to habitat such as low bushes or stony ground where they can use camouflage to escape predators.

The first Chestnut-breasted Whiteface was described in 1871 but the species was only rarely recorded in the following years. Relatively quiet birds, Chestnut-breasted Whitefaces have a soft, twittering call. Their numbers are thought to be generally stable. A survey undertaken in 1990 found around 6000 birds and another done in 1999 found a similar number. However, they are no longer found in some areas in which they were historically recorded and this is due to habitat degradation.

## Diet

Chestnut-breasted Whitefaces eat seeds and insects on the ground.

## Breeding

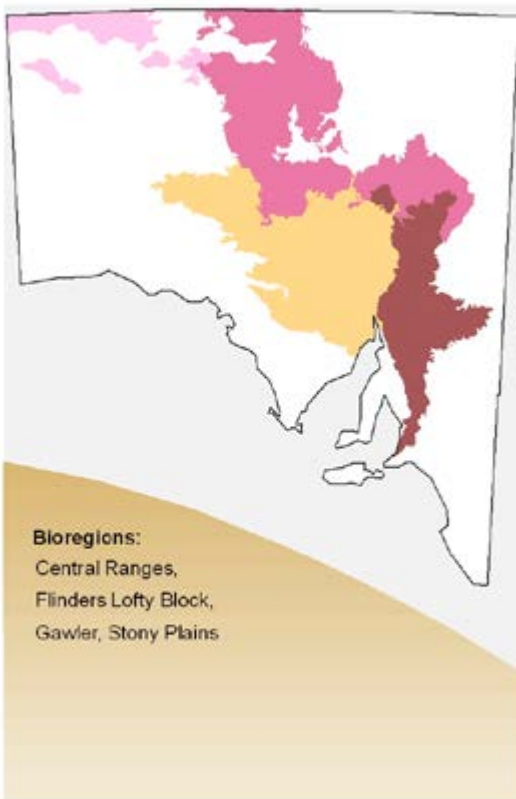
It wasn't until 1968 that ornithologists managed to find this secretive bird's nests and eggs. They build bulky, dome-shaped nests out of twigs in bushes (usually Low Bluebush). These nests have a side entrance and are lined with feathers. Clutches of two eggs are laid at a time.

## Habitat

They live on elevated stony plains in the arid central regions of Australia. Scattered perennial shrubs such as Low Bluebush (*Maireana astrotricha*) provide essential cover.

## Threats

Rabbits and stock grazing on shrubs, such as the Low Bluebush, on which this species depends, is a threat to the Chestnut-breasted Whitefaces' survival. Opal mining and exploration activities can also destroy or degrade habitat. Changed fire patterns can lead to less food and habitat areas being available to them.



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.



A true local! The Chestnut-breasted Whiteface is one of only two bird species endemic to SA.

### Conservation

You can help protect the Chestnut-breasted Whiteface by:

- grabbing a pair of binoculars, doing some birdwatching in your local area and finding out more about different species and why some are threatened
- joining a conservation group in your local area
- getting involved with revegetation projects.

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

