Eyre Yorke Block

Photo ©SATC/Adam Bruzzone

Yorke Peninsula

The Eyre Yorke Block bioregion extends throughout the Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas in the mid-southern part of South Australia.

It has a temperate climate with warm summers and cool winters. The average yearly rainfall in the south of the bioregion is quite different to that in the northern area. Some areas in the south receive up to 600mm of rain, while areas in the north of Eyre Peninsula receive about 350mm. Most of the rainfall occurs in winter.

Much of the land in this bioregion has been cleared and is now used for agriculture.

Biodiversity and habitat

This bioregion is made up of hilly plains, rocky outcrops and sands and includes a variety of geological features which have been formed over millions of years. There are also scattered salt lakes which sometimes dry out completely.

The vegetation of the bioregion is mostly mallee woodlands and shrublands. There are also areas of eucalypt woodlands and chenopod and samphire shrublands, *Callitris* woodlands, *Melaleuca* shrublands and tussock grasslands.

The differences in rainfall between the north and south and the different land formations mean that there are a variety of environments in the region. Some species of birds and mammals have become extinct in the bioregion. The Western Barred Bandicoot and Burrowing Bettong are no longer found in the bioregion.

Photo ©SATC/Caroline Fisher

Yorke Peninsula

Rare and threatened bird species include the White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Plains-wanderer and Red-lored Whistler. Threatened plants include the Coast Spider-orchid, Disjunct Bitter-pea and Jumping-jack Wattle

Threats

Threats to the Eyre Yorke Block bioregion and its dependent species include:

- habitat loss through vegetation clearance
- drainage of wetlands
- overgrazing by cattle, sheep, rabbits and goats
- invasion by weeds such as the Bridal Creeper, African Boxthorn, Wild Oats and Veldt Grass.

Conservation

There are several reserves within this bioregion. These include Coffin Bay National Park, Venus Bay Conservation Park and Innes National Park.

You can help conserve the Eyre Yorke Block bioregion and its dependent species by:

- spreading the word - tell other people about the plight of the unique animals in this bioregion
- participating in weed eradication programs in your local area.

The Tammar Wallaby has been introduced to southern Yorke Peninsula as part of a habitat restoration program.

For further information

Public enquiries

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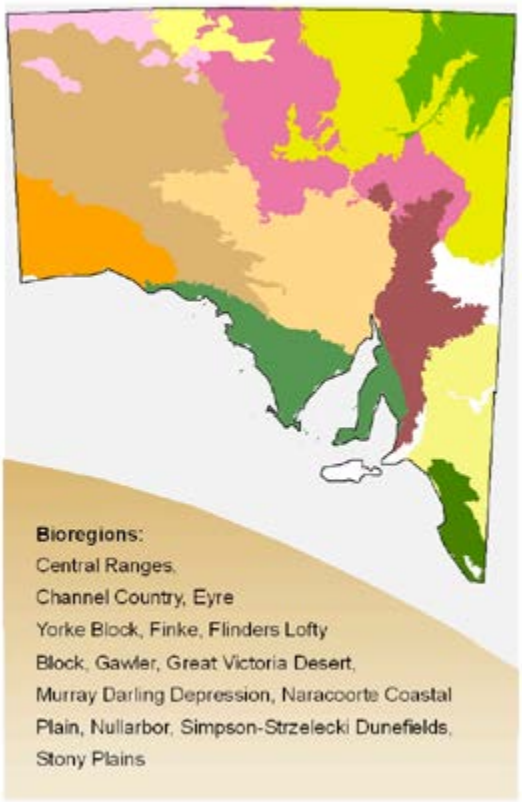
FIS: 92288

Australian Bustard

Ardeotis australis



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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

One of Australia's largest birds, the Australian Bustard is up to one metre tall with a wingspan of up to 2.3 metres! Heavy bodied, ground-dwelling birds, males (5-10 kilograms) are up to three times heavier than females (2-3 kilograms). An upright posture, long legs and a black cap of feathers on their heads make them easy to recognise. This bird has the distinction of being Australia's heaviest flying bird. When disturbed these birds walk away slowly (looking quite superior with their heads in the air!). They are strong in flight and sometimes move from one area to another.

Diet

The Australian Bustard is omnivorous, foraging on insects, young birds, lizards, mice, leaves, seeds and fruit. In the arid parts of their range, Australian Bustards are primarily nomadic, tracking rainfall and food sources opportunistically across the landscape.

Breeding

Australian Bustards breed once a year using what is called a 'lek' mating system. This means that when mating, each male uses a 'display site' to try and attract a female. Males put on a show by inflating a large throat sac and strutting around with their tails up making a loud, deep, roaring noise. Females then choose which male to mate with on the basis of their size and display. In the drier arid areas of SA they may not use the lek system, some being more solitary and even monogamous.

From September to November, eggs are laid in a hollow on the ground where the female has a good view of approaching threats while being well camouflaged. Females incubate one to two, rarely three, eggs for around 24 days. After mating males play no further part in raising the chicks.

Habitat

The Australian Bustard lives on dry plains, grasslands and open woodlands, and they favour tussock and hummock grasslands. Occasionally they are seen in modified habitat areas such as farmlands and golf courses.

Fire followers! Groups of Australian Bustards have been seen flocking to fires to eat animals flushed out or killed by them.

Threats

Past hunting reduced their populations and illegal hunting continues. Predation by cats and foxes, habitat degradation from overgrazing rabbits and stock, and habitat clearance and alteration are other major threats to the Australian Bustard. Secondary poisoning from rabbit baiting can also pose a threat to them. These threats have seen a large scale decline in their population in south-east Australia. They are largely now found in northern Australia and southern New Guinea.

Conservation

You can help the Australian Bustard by:

- keeping our wildlife wild! Bustards could become more vulnerable to illegal hunters if they are fed or tamed and if disturbed their nests could fail
- being a responsible pet owner – desex your pets, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks.

Photo by Mark Ziembicki — Australian Bustard

Photo by Bruce Doran — Australian Bustard

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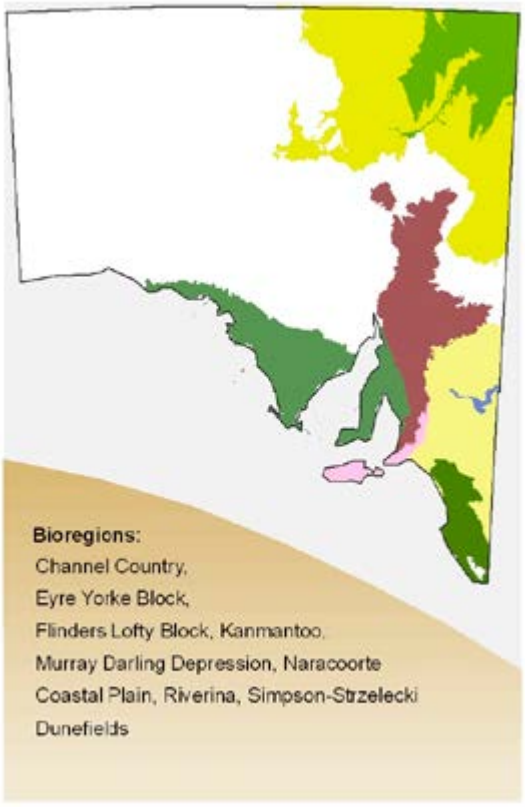
Bush Stone-curlew

Burhinus grallarius



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Bush Stone-curlews are ground-dwelling birds; this means that they roost, feed and nest on the ground. Their big yellow eyes and long legs with knobbly knees allow them to be easily distinguished from other birds. They can live more than 20 years and grow to 50-60 cm tall.

Bush Stone-curlew are nocturnal, and are famous for the wailing sound they make at night. They are such secretive birds that sometimes this call is the only way to know that they are around.

During the day they rest crouching down, head outstretched. When disturbed they tend to freeze instead of flying away, which can make them especially vulnerable to predators. Historically they travelled in groups of 50–100 but it is now rare to see more than four birds together.

Diet

These birds eat insects, small frogs, lizards and snakes.

Breeding

Bush Stone-curlews nest from August to February and usually lay two eggs in a scrape (small bare patch) on the ground. These eggs are mottled brown and grey for camouflage and are incubated by both parents. Unfortunately, only 15 per cent of nesting attempts in the South East of SA are successful.

Habitat

Bush Stone-curlew prefer 'untidy' landscapes covered in fallen timber and debris. The mottled grey-brown colour of their feathers makes them well camouflaged amongst the woody debris of their habitat. These unique birds have disappeared from around 90 per cent of their former habitat on the South Australian mainland.

Threats

Foxes and cats are the Bush Stone-curlew's main predators. The clearance of open woodlands has led to the fragmentation and destruction of suitable habitat. The removal of timber makes them vulnerable to predation from feral animals. Other threats include eggs being trampled by stock and nest disturbance from pets and people.

Aboriginal People associated the curlews with ghosts because of the wailing cries they make at night!

Conservation

You can help protect the Bush Stone-curlew by:

- avoiding taking firewood from woodland environments; these are an important part of the curlew's habitat
- keeping pets inside at night and walk dogs on a lead in woody areas – cats and dogs can kill native birds like the curlew
- trying not to disturb Bush Stone-curlews if you come across them.

Photo by Dan Harley

Bush Stone-curlew

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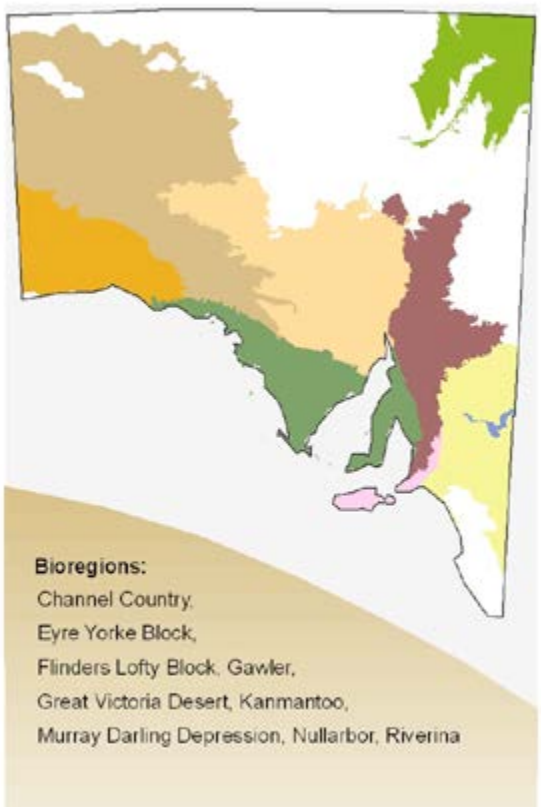
Carpet Python

Morelia spilota



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Biodiversity

Carpet Pythons are semi-arboreal snakes (sometimes spending time in trees) which are non-venomous and popular as pets around the world. They are nocturnal, grow up to three metres long and can weigh up to 5kg. They are very strong and are often the largest predator in their ecological community. The skins of different individuals show many colour variations ranging from black with dark brown spots to a golden colour. Their patterns often help them to remain camouflaged in their habitat. Carpet Pythons feature in many creation stories from different groups of Aboriginal People.

Diet

Carpet Pythons are constrictors, meaning they kill their prey by suffocation. Their diet consists mainly of small mammals, bats, birds and lizards.

Breeding

Carpet Pythons are usually solitary snakes and only group together to breed. Females are oviparous (egg-laying) and lay 10–40 eggs at a time either in a tree hollow or a burrow deserted by another animal. They then coil around them and use muscular contractions to increase their body temperature and keep the eggs warm. Young are around 30 cm long at birth. They can live for up to 20 years and reach maturity at around three years of age.

Habitat

They are found in areas of Australia, Indonesia and New Guinea. Once widespread in south-east Australia, they have steadily declined in number. In the wild they are often associated with River Red Gum habitat, but can also be found in rocky areas and other habitats.

Carpet Pythons sometimes shelter in roof spaces and pump houses and provide a natural vermin control service as they eat rats and mice.

Threats

Carpet Pythons are taken from the wild for the pet trade and if not looked after properly many die in captivity. In the wild they are preyed upon by foxes and dogs. They are also threatened by habitat loss (e.g. loss of River Red Gums along the River Murray) and also by a reduction in their prey.

They have a highly sensitive heat-detecting organ on the scales of the lower jaw (Jacobsons or Vomeronasal organ). This gives them a thermal image of warm-blooded creatures in the dark.

Conservation

You can help the Carpet Python by:

- not disturbing them – if you see a Carpet Python in the wild, just look from a distance
- not killing snakes unnecessarily if you come across one in or around home – call someone to take it away for you
- visiting Cleland Wildlife Park to see and find out more about Carpet Pythons and other native animals.

Photo by Tony Robinson

Carpet Python

Photo by Tony Robinson

Carpet Python

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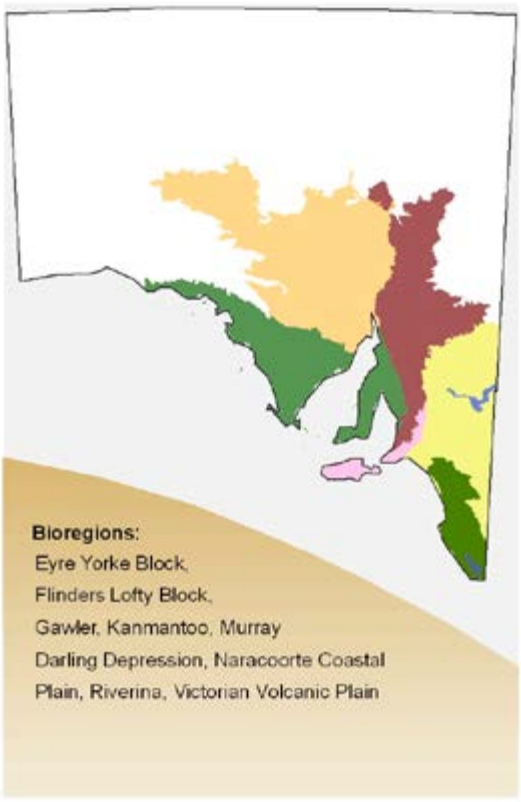
Common Brushtail Possum

Trichosurus vulpecula



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Common Brushtail Possums are nocturnal marsupials. Silver grey in colour, Common Brushtail Possums have pale undersides and dark brown/black brushy tails. They are about the size of a cat and males are bigger than females. These animals live for 10-12 years in the wild. Usually solitary, they communicate with each other with hissing and growling/cough-like sounds, especially when mating or warning off intruders.

While rare and threatened in some parts of their native habitat in Australia, these possums are bothering our neighbours. Common Brushtail Possums were introduced to New Zealand in 1837 to establish a fur trade. They are now one of the most signficant feral pests in the country, as they damage the environment and the farming industry.

Diet

They are predominantly herbivorous and much of their diet consists of leaves, flowers and fruit, however they will occasionally eat insects, eggs and meat.

Breeding

Mature at one year of age, Common Brushtail Possums usually have one baby (a joey) at a time in autumn. There is also a smaller breeding season in spring. After birth, joeys spend around 120 days suckling in their mother's pouch. After this, they can be seen travelling on their mother's back and getting in and out of the pouch until they are fully weaned and independent.

Habitat

Common Brushtail Possums are found in Eucalyptus and Sheoak woodlands. As arboreal animals, they make their nests (also known as dens) in tree hollows or other dark confined spaces such as hollow logs, dense vegetation or cork crevices. Some have adapted to life in the suburbs and enjoy eating planted gardens. Some also make their dens in roof spaces. They are territorial animals and mark their home ranges with scent glands located under their chins, on their chests and at the base of their tails.

Threats

In South Australia, Common Brushtail Possums are becoming less common, especially in arid areas where drought conditions have reduced their food sources. They are only common in the Adelaide region and on Kangaroo Island. Habitat fragmentation and loss of tree hollows for nesting are also threats. Changed fire patterns and predation by foxes, dogs and cats are other problems as they are increasingly living in the same areas as these animals. Competition for food and relocation by humans are other problems they face.

Pruning services! When feeding on Mistletoe, the Brushtail Possums break off parts of the plant, having a similar effect to pruning. Mistletoe is a native parasite that can kill gum trees, and possums help keep it under control.

Conservation

You can help the Common Brushtail Possum by:

- conserving native vegetation on your property
- not relocating possums without advice and approval as they are very territorial and many of them die when relocated
- keeping trees with hollows in them even if they are dead
- putting up nest boxes on your property.

Photo by SATC, Richard Smyth

Common Brushtail Possum

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Greater Bilby

Macrotis lagotis

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Greater Bilbies are culturally important marsupials about the size of small cats. They are the largest member of the bandicoot family – adult females weigh about 1 kg and males are twice that weight. They have long, highly sensitive ears that are important for keeping them cool and hearing predators. This, and their long, silky fur and white tipped tails, make it easy to tell them apart from other bandicoots. Greater Bilbies have strong front limbs like a kangaroo. They also have poor vision but good senses of hearing and smell. Greater Bilbies were presumed extinct in South Australia in the 1930s. Indigenous names for the Greater Bilby include *Ninu (*Pitjantjatjara*), Walpajirri (*Warlpiri*), Ahert (*Arrente) and *Mankarr* (Manjilyjarra).

Diet

Greater Bilbies forage at night, travelling up to five km to find food. They are omnivorous and feed on invertebrates (e.g. termites, witchetty grubs and spiders) fungi, seeds, bulbs and occasionally, small vertebrates they dig up.

Breeding

Most of the time, Greater Bilbies live alone, but they may live in family groups of two to four when they have young. Breeding is possible all year round but usually depends on rainfall and the availability of food. Female bilbies give birth to one to three young, which stay in the pouch for about 2.5 months (a Bilby's pouch contains eight teats).

Habitat

Greater Bilbies were once common across 70 per cent of the Australian mainland but now their distribution has been greatly reduced. They live in sandy deserts, inside burrows that spiral down to around two metres deep. Each burrow has only one entrance hidden by vegetation or a mound, and each animal can use up to 12 burrows within its extended home range.

Threats

The introduction of new predators (foxes and cats) as well as competitors for food and habitat (such as rabbits) by Europeans has greatly reduced the numbers of Greater Bilbies. Habitat clearance has been another threat along with accidental death from rabbit traps and poison baits and, past hunting practices. An increased number of fires and droughts has also led to a lack of food.

Greater Bilbies have long pointed snouts and long narrow tongues which they use for licking food up from the ground.

Conservation

Captive breeding programs have been established as a basis for restoring some populations of this species and several have been very successful. The trial release of bilbies on an offshore island in the Spencer Gulf was the beginning of attempts to reintroduce the animal to South Australia and they are now doing well there and, also at the Arid Recovery site near Roxby Downs.

You can help the Greater Bilby by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- always observing fire warnings
- finding out more about recovery programs and supporting them
- finding out the names that other Aboriginal language groups had for bilbies.

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Greater Stick-nest Rat

Leporillus conditor

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Greater Stick-nest Rats are mainly nocturnal rodents about the size of small rabbits. They have blunt noses, large ears and sleek body fur which is grey-brown on their upper and pale grey on their underparts. They are approximately 30cm long including the tail. They are group orientated, gentle and passive creatures that rarely attempt to bite humans. The Indigenous names for this species include 'Wopilkara'.

Diet

Greater Stick-nest Rats are herbivores – their diet consists mainly of fresh plant material, fruits and seeds.

Breeding

Greater Stick-nest Rats breed mostly in autumn and winter and one to four young are born after six weeks gestation. Young become independent after one month of suckling.

Habitat

Formerly widespread in arid SA, their populations were drastically reduced in the late 1800's so that they eventually became extinct on the mainland by the 1930's and only remained on the Franklin Islands off the west coast of SA where there were no foxes or feral cats.

Greater Stick-nest Rats usually live in areas with limestone caves or outcrops of granite and dense low shrub cover. They build communal nests up to one metre high and three metres wide from plant material. Some old nests can still be found on the mainland. These are constructed with sticks, grasses and leaves and sometimes these are glued together with a mixture of faeces and urine that forms a resin-like material when it dries. Nests like these can only survive when made under shelter, as the resin is soluble in water. Nests are often built around a bush or in a hollow tree stump and provide protection from predators and extreme temperatures. An area of grass or other soft vegetation is made in the centre of the more complex nests, and tunnels lead to the outside. The construction is added to or modified by successive generations and larger nests may house communities of 10–20 rats.

Threats

Greater Stick-nest Rats are preyed upon by foxes and feral cats. Their habitat is destroyed by grazing animals such as rabbits, goats and stock. Competition with rabbits and stock for food and habitat areas is another problem these animals face. Native predators include barn owls, tiger snakes and eagles.

The resin these rats create to bind their nests together is so strong and durable when not exposed to water that the nests can last for thousands of years and are studied as fossils!

Conservation

Captive breeding programs in the 1980s have led to the establishment of new populations in fenced enclosures on the mainland and on other small islands where there are no introduced predators. These programs have been successful and led to the change in their listing from endangered to vulnerable.

You can help the Greater Stick-nest Rat by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- learning more about these and other native rodents and telling others why they are important
- supporting the Arid Recovery Program at www.aridrecovery.org.au

Photo by Tony Robinson

Greater Stick-nest Rat

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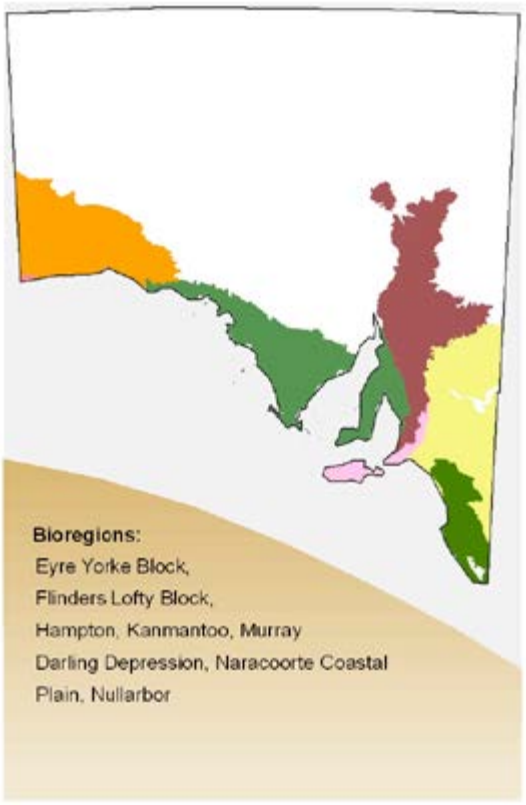
Heath Goanna

Varanus rosenbergi



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Also known as Rosenberg's Goannas, Heath Goannas are powerful reptiles with strong limbs, sharp curved claws and long muscular tails. They reach up to 1.5 metres in length. Large curved teeth make it easier for them to hang onto their prey. Like all reptiles, Heath Goannas have limited ability to control their own body temperatures via their own metabolism and need to bask in the sun for at least half an hour each day before being active.

Diet

Their diet includes carrion, insects, birds, eggs, reptiles and small mammals. They sense prey by flicking their forked tongues and transferring the scent to sensory organs (Jacobson's organ). This organ is a common feature of many reptiles.

Breeding

Heath Goannas lay their eggs in active termite mounds. In mid to late summer the pregnant female will dig a tunnel into their chosen mound and lay 10–17 eggs. They then seal the nest and both the male and female guard the mound to ward of potential predators. Decaying material within the mound and the activity of the termites creates a warm, humid atmosphere, perfect for incubation. The eggs hatch in eight months after which the young slowly dig an escape tunnel. This can take them weeks, and they continue to use the mound as shelter for several months as they grow.

Habitat

Heath Goannas live in a variety of habitats from coastal and desert heaths to humid woodlands and sclerophyll forests. Kangaroo Island is an important refuge for Heath Goanna as they have become quite rare on the mainland. They are the largest land predator on the island. They find shelter in burrows, hollow logs and rock crevices at night. Several goannas might use the same burrow; they usually have connected tunnels and several exits.

Threats

Habitat loss and fragmentation is a major problem for these goannas. The removal of woody debris necessary for termite nesting can impact of their ability to nest. The juveniles especially are threatened by predation by cats, dogs and native predators. Fast moving vehicles, illegal hunting and collection, poisoning/ toxic pesticides, lack of recruitment, and fire are other problems.

Natural Pest Control! Rabbits were introduced to Kangaroo Island early last century and Heath Goannas are credited with eating them all. They are happy to burrow to find prey, and considering the damage rabbits have done to the mainland, KI is fortunate to have these reptiles.

Conservation

You can help the Heath Goanna by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- not collecting fallen timber or destroying termite mounds if you live in the Heath Goanna's neighbourhood, as they need these to survive
- driving slowly if you are visiting Kangaroo Island as goannas may not be able to avoid fast cars.

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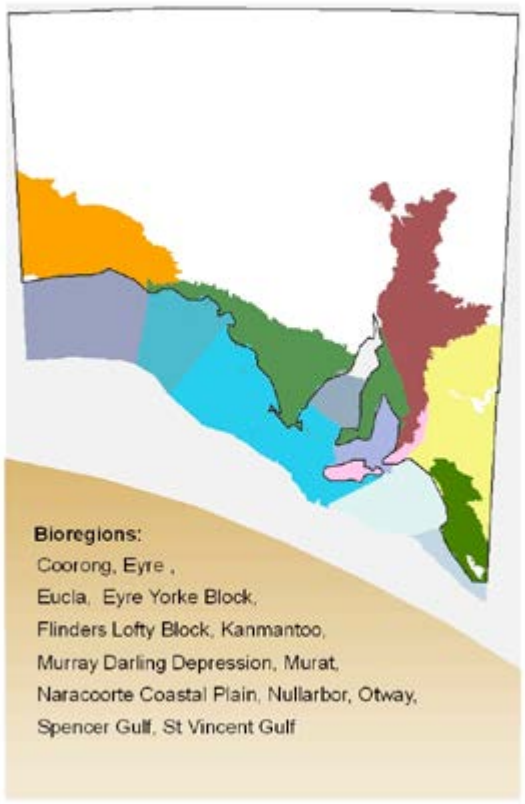
Hooded Plover

Thinornis rubricollis



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Hooded Plovers are small-to-medium sized coastal shorebirds. They can be active during the day and night time, and are non-migratory. Also known as the Hooded Dotterels, these plovers bob their heads continually when alert and standing still. A distinctive black hood and throat give them their name; they also have a red ring around their eyes, a black-tipped orange bill and orange legs.

Pairs of Hooded Plovers establish territories to live and breed in, that they defend from other plovers. When approached by humans they run or fly away and are quite vocal as they do so! They will only leave these areas if they are persistently disturbed.

Diet

They forage on the beach and can usually be seen in pairs or small groups finding food at the waters edge as the waves recede. Some Hooded Plovers also forage around salt water lagoons, saltpans and coastal lakes. They feed on insects, small bivalves, crustaceans, marine worms, water plants and seeds.

Breeding

Hooded Plovers breed from August to March in eastern Australia on wide, sandy, seaweed strewn beaches. They make their nests in small scrapes on the beach between the high tide line and the sand dunes during spring and summer. They line these nests with pebbles, seaweed or other materials they find on the beach. An average clutch size is one to three eggs, and these are incubated by both parents for around 28 days. There is a very low success rate for chicks hatching and making it to maturity.

Habitat

These birds are found along the southern sandy coasts of Australia.

Threats

Coastal development and increased human activity on the coasts is a major threat to the Hooded Plovers, especially as they nest in summer when people like to visit the beach. Vehicles on the beach destroy nests, eggs and chicks. Dogs kill chicks and destroy nests as well as chasing adults away from their nests. This often leads to the death of the chicks. Disturbance and trampling by humans and stock, and predation by foxes are other threats these birds face. Unfortunately, only 700–800 of these birds remain in SA. Nationally, it has been estimated that a population of around 7,000 Hooded Plovers are alive today.

Although they move around during the non-breeding season and sometimes flock with other birds, Hooded Plovers usually return to the same breeding area with the same partner to lay their eggs each year.

Conservation

You can help the Hooded Plover by:

- preferably keeping your dog on a leash (at least) when at the beach - especially during spring and summer
- only walking within the intertidal zone during the nesting season
- refraining from driving on the beach or dune areas
- moving away quietly when you see Hooded Plovers – parents will abandon their nests if they feel threatened.

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

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Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176
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Photo by Paul Wainwright Hooded Plover

Photo by Paul Wainwright Hooded Plover

FIS: 92288

Mallee

Eucalyptus spp.

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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

Mallee comes from an Aboriginal name for a group of eucalypts that grow two to nine metres high. They are multi-stemmed and grow from underground woody bases called lignotubers. Mallee is also the name for the vegetation communities in which Mallee eucalypts grow. These communities usually include several layers of vegetation from large shrubs to small grasses and ephemerals. Mallee support a wide range of biodiversity, including the Malleefowl.

Leaf litter is slow to decompose in Mallee areas because of the dry conditions, so there is often plenty of fuel for a fire. Mallee eucalypts have adapted to cope well with fire. They grow vigorously from dormant shoots under the bark of the branches, the trunks, or the lignotuber. This is called epicormic growth.

Lignotubers store water and nutrients so new branches can grow if they have been damaged or cut to the ground. This has been very annoying for farmers trying to cut them down. They are also very difficult to remove from the ground and used to break a lot of ploughs as they are solid and rock-like. Large-scale clearance started in SA around 1900 when the stump-jump plough was invented. Farmers then conquered the Mallee, but when the trees were gone there were problems with the soil becoming too salty and eroding away. It was realised too late that plant cover is very important for keeping the soil stable and stopping salt water from rising to the surface.

Habitat

Mallee eucalypts grow in the semi-arid parts of southern Australia, and have many adaptations that help them survive the hot, dry conditions. Like most eucalypts, they close the pores of their leaves (stomates) during the heat of the day so they lose less moisture through evaporation.

Threats

Being cleared for agriculture is the biggest threat to Mallees both historically and today. Drought caused by climatic change and too frequent and intense bushfires put pressure on populations of these trees. Their understorey is often grazed on by sheep, cattle and goats. Rabbits also graze on new shoots which can make it more difficult for them to grow. Salinity and habitat fragmentation are other problems Mallee plants face.

Musical Mallees! Didgeridoos are made from the stems of Mallee eucalypts that have been hollowed out by termites.

Conservation

You can help Mallee eucalypts by:

- preserving these trees on your property
- being waterwise at home and helping ease the strain on our limited water sources
- getting involved with revegetation projects like the Million Trees Project.

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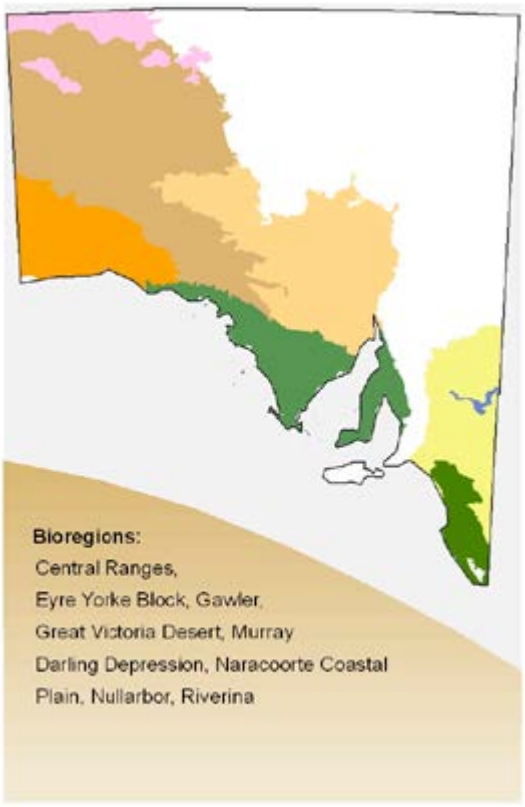
Malleefowl

Leipoa ocellata



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Malleefowl are shy, ground-dwelling birds about the size of a domestic chicken. Malleefowl are Australia's largest megapodes and are also known as mound builders.

Diet

They feed on a variety of seeds, flowers, fruits, tubers, fungi, herbs and invertebrates.

Breeding

Malleefowl usually mate with the same partner for life, and pairs spend most of their time together. Nest building and maintenance take about 11 months of the year so they are usually found in the vicinity of the nest. Malleefowl mounds are approximately four metres across and 75cm high, made of leaves and sandy earth. They incubate their eggs inside these mounds, and warmth is produced by the heating of the sand by the sun and the decomposition of vegetation (like compost). They control the temperature of the nest by adding or removing vegetation to the mound. They begin laying their eggs when the nest temperature reaches around 33°C; the female then lays an egg every five to seven days until the end of summer. They can lay up to 30 eggs in one season. Males stay near the mounds, repeatedly checking the temperature with their tongues. Many eggs hatch but few chicks survive as the camouflage of their mottled feathers is their only defence and they are easy prey for foxes.

Habitat

Once common over most of the southern half of Australia, they are now only sparsely distributed from southern Western Australia to central New South Wales. They occupy semi-arid to arid shrublands and woodlands but are found mainly in mallee woodland habitat that has not recently been burnt.

Threats

Malleefowl are threatened by the fact that their population is small and isolated. Habitat destruction is another threat. Being ground-dwelling birds they are preyed upon by foxes and feral cats. Rabbit, goat, deer and stock grazing impacts on their habitat and stock, feral goats and deer can trample their nests. Increased incidences of bushfire destroy leaf litter they need for nest building as well as habitat.

Digging up out of the mound (nest) can take newly hatched chicks up to 15 hours, and they can fly within hours of hatching!

Conservation

Current management strategies for Malleefowl include the fencing of areas of habitat to keep out stock and feral deer, controlling rabbits and foxes, undertaking monitoring surveys and captive breeding programs.

You can help the Malleefowl by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- avoiding taking firewood from Malleefowl habitat areas
- joining a conservation group to help look after Malleefowl habitat.

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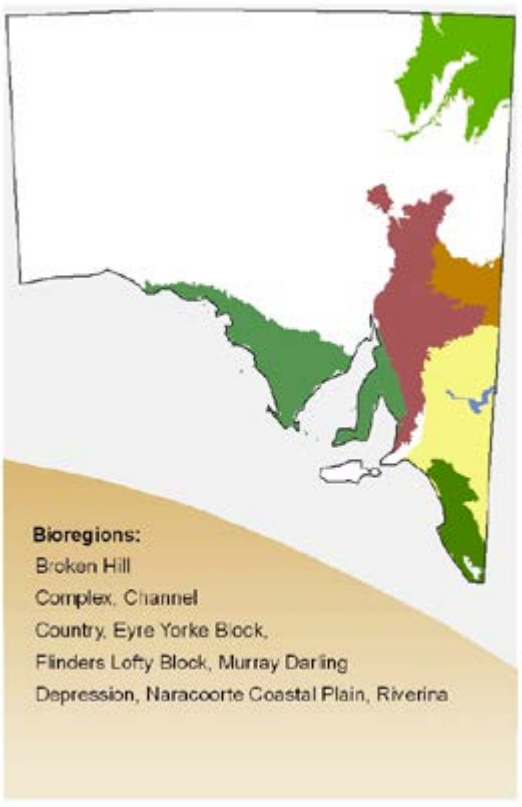
Plains-wanderer

Pedionomus torquatus



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Plains-wanderers are small, long-legged birds. They have an upright alert posture and are about 18cm tall. Females are larger and more brightly coloured than the males. While they look similar to some quail species, Plains-wanderers can be distinguished by the distinctive patterns on their wings, as well as their slimmer necks and longer legs. They are the sole member of a genus of birds found only in eastern Australia.

When disturbed, Plains-wanderers usually run and, if they do fly, they leave their long yellow legs dangling. There are now possibly fewer than 8,000 Plains-wanderers left in the wild.

Diet

These birds are omnivorous and feed on a wide range of seeds, insects and spiders.

Breeding

Plains-wanderers nest in depressions known as scrapes that the female scratches out under bushes or grass tufts and are then lined with grass. They have three to four spotty eggs at one time, and chicks are usually independent after two months. Females lay their first clutch from late August to early November and may lay another in January if summer rain occurs (and ample food is available). The male Plains-wanderer does most of the work incubating the eggs and rearing the chicks, so the female is free to mate with another male.

Habitat

These birds are found in eastern Australia. As ground-dwelling birds, Plains-wanderers live on open plains with sparse lowland native grasses. They prefer areas of around half bare ground and half low, widely spaced plants, and do not require regular access to water as they obtain water from their food, dew and rain.

Threats

Loss and fragmentation of habitat is a major threat to the Plains-wanderer. Much of the lowland native grasslands in which they live have been cleared and used for growing crops or as pasture for stock.

Being ground-dwelling birds they are vulnerable to predation by cats, foxes and birds of prey. In drought years, when overgrazing of their habitat occurs, the population of Plains-wanderers may become more than halved.

The Plains-wanderer is thought to be an ancient bird, present in Australia for more than 60 million years. It may have been in Australia when it was a part of the Gondwanan supercontinent!

Conservation

Nation-wide surveys of the Plains-wanderers have been done and management actions, like reducing stock grazing in their habitat areas, are being developed.

You can help the Plains-wanderer by:

- being a responsible pet owner – desex your cats and dogs, keep them inside at night and don't take them into national parks
- protecting remnant areas of native bush in your area or on your land for native species like the Plains-wanderer
- being careful when bushwalking in spring – don't trample or disturb nests.

For further information

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Red-necked Stint

Calidris ruficollis

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Red-necked Stints are migratory wading birds. When migrating, they travel by the East Asian-Australasian flyway and flocks of thousands of these birds travel together. Their breeding plumage gives the Red-necked Stints their name. After breeding they moult, and throughout the rest of the year their plumage provides good camouflage for their habitat in Australia, with a grey back and white underneath.

The smallest of Australia's migratory birds, the Red-necked Stint weighs just 30 grams and is small enough to fit inside a wine glass. Red-necked Stints are sandpipers; they have short straight bills, short legs and are quite plump in shape. Because of their short legs they can only walk in shallow water, and prefer to forage without getting their legs wet.

Diet

These birds are omnivorous – they eat seeds, worms, insects, small vertebrates, plants in salt marshes, molluscs, and crustaceans. Once they arrive in South Australia these birds start fattening themselves up for the long journey north, and a healthy bird can increase its weight by 50 per cent in the months it spends here. Unlike humans they can instantly convert this fat to energy. Their favourite food at the Coorong is midge (chironomid) larvae, and they find these on the surface of saturated mudflats.

Breeding

Despite their small size they still manage to make the annual journey north to breed, which is a distance of approximately 15,000 km one way. They breed in eastern Siberia and western Alaska and visit Australia only in summer.

Habitat

When in South Australia they choose mudflats within estuarine wetlands, sand flats and inland salt lakes as their habitats.

Threats

The destruction and degradation of their wetland habitats is the greatest threat to Red-necked Stints. This can be caused by coastal development, changed water regimes, drought and pollution. Flocks of migrating birds rely on a series of three to four stopovers so they can rest and find food on the journey from their breeding sites to their 'wintering' sites. If any one of these places becomes unsafe or degraded, it can be disastrous for them. These birds are also sometimes the victims of hunting.

In its lifetime (approximately 20 years) the Red-necked Stint flies further than the distance between the Earth and the Moon!

Conservation

Australia has signed the migratory bird agreements with China and Japan to protect birds crossing international boundaries, and more international agreements are being developed.

you can help the Red-necked Stint by:

- being waterwise at home and helping save our Coorong
- Not polluting – anything washed down a stormwater drain goes straight out to sea
- checking out the book (and link) *Rusty Loses His Loop* and understanding the Murray Darling System and how vital it is for creatures like the Red-necked Stint.

Photo © SATC, Craig Ingramz

Red-necked Stint

Photo by Daniel Rogerts

Red-necked Stint

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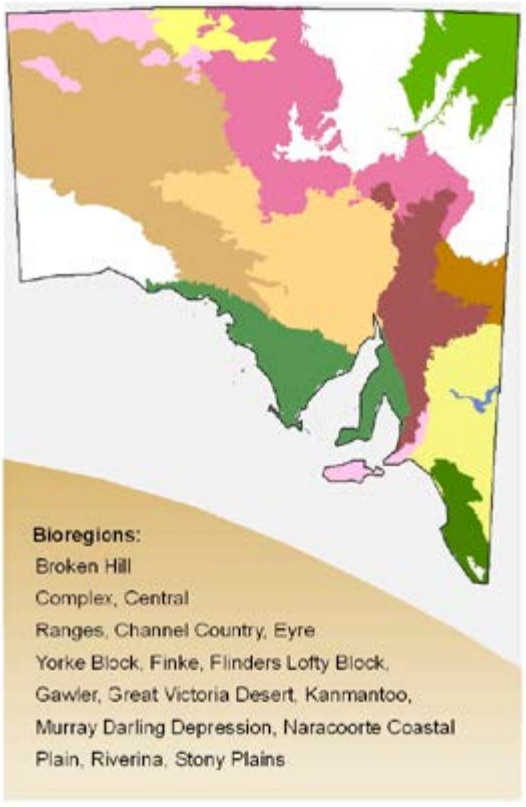
River Red Gum

Eucalyptus camaldulensis



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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River Red Gums are large, single stemmed eucalypt trees. They can grow up to 45m tall but usually grow to 20–30m and they can live for 500–1000 years. There are two subspecies; a northern and a southern. The durability of River Red Gum wood and its natural resistance to termites meant it was used heavily by European settlers for railway sleepers, mine shafts and wharves. Today, they are the most commonly planted tree in arid and semi-arid areas of the world (mostly in timber plantations).

Like all eucalypts, River Red Gums have survival mechanisms that can help them through tough times. Seedlings can drop their leaves to save water, and grow new ones when water arrives. If damaged, they can grow a new shoot from the base of the stem.

Red Gum forests and wetlands provide valuable habitat for biodiversity. These trees are important breeding, nesting and feeding grounds for a range of bird species. Native mammals, such as echidnas and kangaroos, make their homes in the shelter of these trees. They also provide homes for rare and threatened species like Sugar Gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) and Carpet Pythons (*Morelia spilota*).

Reproduction

A forest of River Red Gums can produce 250 million seeds per hectare per year. Ants, and other insects, take most of these, and the ones that are left need to be there at just the right time to germinate. If seeds fall too early, before the floods, they become submerged and die. Fall too late and they don't have enough time to grow before the dry heat of summer arrives.

Habitat

River Red Gums grow near wetlands, and particularly along river plains. Along low flood plains they are often the only tree species present, forming open forests. Their name originates from this habitat as well as the red colour of their timber.

Threats

Changed flood and flow patterns in the River Murray due to irrigation and storage lead to drought or permanent flooding, both of which can kill River Red Gums. Historical and current logging, grazing animals eating seedlings, and changed fire regimes are other threats. Feral pigs disturb large habitat areas by digging and wallowing.

Scarred for life! Aboriginal people used the bark of River Red Gums to make shelters, canoes and shields. They did all this without killing the tree, but the evidence can still be seen today.

Conservation

You can help the River Red Gums by:

- finding out more about the River Murray system and how important it is to life in Australia
- being careful with your water use at home. Check out the SA Water website
- getting involved with revegetation projects like the Million Trees Project.

For further information

Public enquiries

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Photo by Brian Walters — River Red Gum

Photo by Brian Walters — River Red Gum

FIS: 92288

Slender-billed Thornbill (Western)

Acanthiza iredalei iredalei

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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The western subspecies of the Slender-billed Thornbill is a small bird, about 10cm in length with a wingspan of 14-15 centimetres. They only weigh 5-6 grams. Olive-grey/brown in colour, they have a black patch with white edges on their forehead. While they are usually seen in pairs or in small groups of up to 10 birds, they occasionally form flocks of up to 60 birds.

There are two other subspecies of Slender-billed Thornbills, but the western one is the most widespread. Both the eastern and the St Vincent Gulf subspecies also occur in South Australia. A reduction of grazing in the Nullarbor and other western areas of the state is allowing some of this bird's habitat to recover. It is estimated that around 100,000 individuals remain in the wild

Diet

They feed on insects, spiders, occasionally centipedes and the stems and leaves of some plants. Slender-billed Thornbills forage throughout the day, usually in shrubs and sometimes on the ground or by catching insects midair.

Breeding

Breeding occurs from July to October, usually following rainfall. Thornbills make dome-shaped nests in shrubs out of strips of bark and grass stuck together with cobwebs. They line them with other soft materials and they have an entrance in the side. The female lays a clutch of two to four eggs. When they hatch the chicks are fed by both parents, but more so by the female.

Habitat

Slender-billed Thornbills live in arid and semi-arid areas of southern Western Australia and south-western South Australia. Their preferred habitat includes shrublands, sometimes near mangroves, salt lakes, or salt flats. They usually choose chenopod shrublands dominated by Samphire (*Sarcocornia spp.*), Bluebush (*Maireana spp.*) or Saltbush (*Atriplex spp.*). Sometimes they have been seen in low heath on sand plains as well.

Threats

The impact of overgrazing by stock and rabbits on their habitat is the biggest threat to Slender-billed Thornbills. Changes to fire regimes that threaten their shrubland habitats are another problem for this bird. Mining and development activities may also be a threat to some of their habitat areas.

Puzzling extinction up north! The Slender-billed Thornbill is thought to be the only bird species to have become extinct in the Northern Territory since European settlement. No-one is quite sure why, as there is plenty of suitable habitat remaining!

Conservation

You can help the Slender-billed Thornbill (western) by:

- encouraging land managers to fence lower productivity land for conservation and land management purposes
- spreading the word – tell other people about the Slender-billed Thornbill.

For further information

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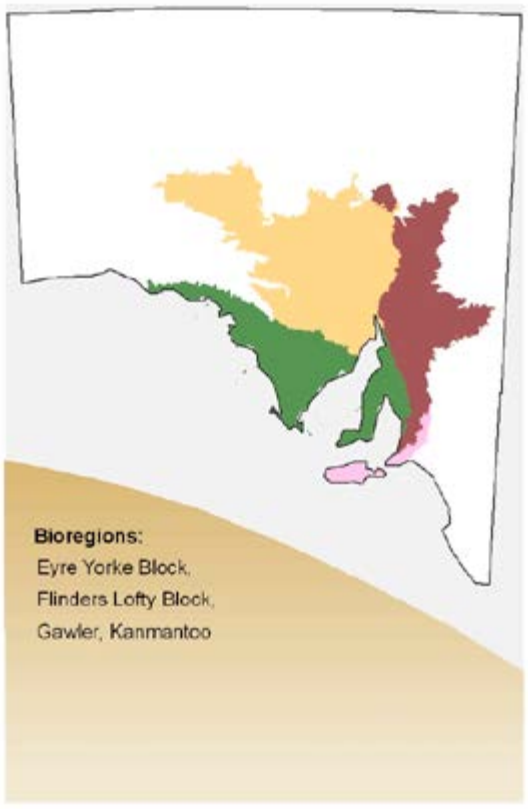
Waterhouse's Hairstreak

Jalmenus lithochroa



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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Waterhouse's Hairstreak belongs to a family of Australian butterflies that all have a special relationship with ants. Caterpillars are very vulnerable to predation from a range of birds, insects and other animals. As a defence they secrete a sweet substance that is attractive to certain ant species. The ants feed on this substance and protect the caterpillar from other predators. This is done either by attacking potential predators, or simply by crawling on the larvae (the ants do not taste good and make the caterpillar less appetising). These are called attendant ants, and northern populations of Waterhouse's Hairstreak larvae are attended by large meat ant species (*Iridomyrmex purpureus* and *I. viridiaeneus*).

Diet

Bramble Wattle *(Acacia victoriae)* is the most important larval food plant for the largest, northern population of Waterhouse's Hairstreak; while those in southern regions prefer Golden Wattle *(A. pycnantha).* The caterpillars are herbivores and eat the leaves and flower buds of the host plant and then complete their lifecycle on the same plant.

Breeding

Waterhouse's Hairstreak spends the winter months as eggs and hatch in spring. The butterflies emerge during the warmer months of the year from late September to April. In warm weather, they take around eight weeks to complete their lifecycle.

Habitat

Waterhouse's Hairstreaks are believed to be South Australia's only endemic butterfly. As a plains butterfly, this species lives in small colonies in areas of open shrub and woodland with a grassy understorey. Waterhouse's Hairstreak was once found in the Adelaide plains, but is now believed to be extinct in this area due to urban expansion since the 1960's. Bramble Wattle is still common in the north of the state, so the largest Waterhouse's Hairstreak populations are found in that area.

Threats

Urbanisation and land clearance for agriculture have greatly reduced the habitat of this butterfly. They are now restricted to small populations which makes them vulnerable to other threats. The loss of food and habitat plants through more frequent fires and drought is another problem, as well as poisoning from insecticides and pesticides.

Calming caterpillars? The substance that the larvae secrete is thought to contain a calming ingredient that stops the attendant ants from eating them!

Conservation

You can help the Waterhouse's Hairstreak by:

- finding out more about the lifecycle of butterflies and the amazing ways they change form
- planting their favourite acacias depending on where you are.
- find out more about them and participating in Butterfly Watch SA (http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/whatson/exhibitions/butterfly)

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White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Haliaeetus leucogaster

Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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White-bellied Sea-Eagles are large birds of prey. They are graceful in flight and spend their time soaring over the surface of the sea, or perching on rocks or branches beside the water. They live for up to 30 years in the wild.

Diet

These birds hunt fish, tortoises, sea-snakes, waterfowl, reptiles, nestling birds, rabbits and also eat carrion. They are aggressive and skilled hunters both at sea and on the land. Their large talons and powerful curved beaks help them to grab and kill their prey. Thick scales on their legs protect them like armour. Excellent eyesight makes it easy for them to target their next meal. Occasionally, they harass other birds such as ospreys and terns until they drop their prey which the eagles then collect.

Breeding

These eagles mate for life and share the same hunting range. In the morning and evening they roost and sometimes sing together. When breeding begins, sometime from May to October, White-bellied Sea-Eagles put on great aerial displays. They soar and call, loop-the-loop, drop fish from a height and then dive to catch it in midair. Nests are built on cliffs or in trees, and sometimes on the ground on treeless islands. Both sexes help with the construction and repair of a nest. Nests are made of sticks, and are huge structures up to four metres deep and 2.5m wide. Nests are lined with stems and green leaves and females lay a clutch of two eggs. Eggs are incubated for around six weeks, mostly by the female. One egg is laid several days before the other, and it is usually only the chick with the head start that survives because the parents feed the noisiest, most active chick first. If the first egg is infertile, or the chick is weak and dies, the second chick has a better chance of survival.

Habitat

White-bellied Sea-Eagles are found throughout Australia along coasts and beside lowland rivers and lakes. They also occur in south-east Asia and India.

Threats

The loss of nesting sites due to development is a major threat to the White-bellied Sea-Eagles. Disturbance of nesting pairs by human activity can cause them to abandon their nests. Deterioration of inland water sources and over-fishing in the ocean makes it harder for them to find food. Competition for food and nesting sites with Wedge-tailed Eagles *(Aquila audax)* is a potential problem.

Big birds! White-bellied Sea-Eagles have a wingspan of up to 2.2 metres. Their home ranges can be up to 100 square kilometres.

Conservation

You can help the White-bellied Sea-Eagle by:

- always keeping your distance from eagles and their nests as they are easily disturbed by human activity
- protecting areas of native vegetation in your local area
- reporting anyone you see interfering with nests or disturbing sea eagles.

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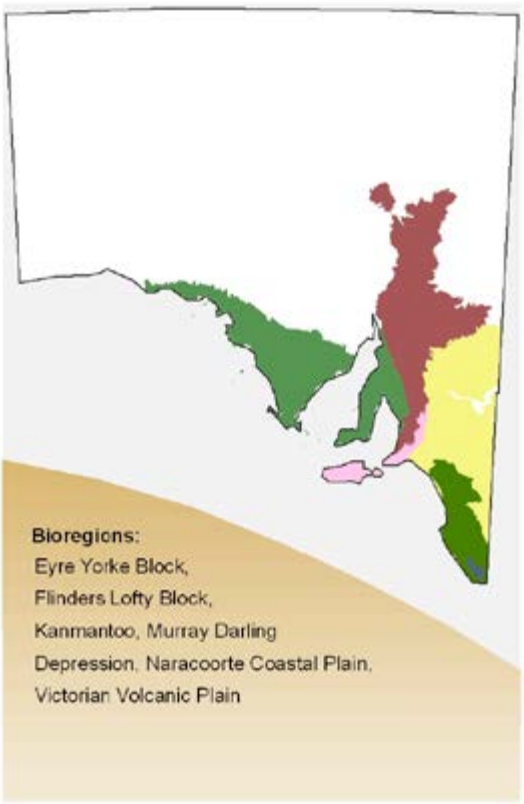
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus funereus



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commerical Services.

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

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos are easy to identify due to their large size and distinctive markings. They are the largest Australian cockatoo and are 55-65cm long. They are black with yellow patches and yellow panels in their tail feathers. These birds have a distinctive call that can be heard as they fly over the tree tops. They are known to gather in large flocks of up to one hundred.

Diet

Their diet is varied but consists mainly of seeds of native trees, particularly the native sheoaks (*Allocasuarina spp.*) but also *Eucalyptus, Acacia, Banksia, Xanthorrhea* and *Hakea* species. They also strip the bark from the trees to find tree-boring beetles and moth larvae. Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos have large, powerful bills for biting into the cones of pines and banksias. The upper part of the beak pierces the cone and hooks in while the lower part cuts through.

They have also adapted to feed on seeds of introduced Radiata (*Pinus radiata*) or Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*) often in commercial plantations because many of their native food sources have been cleared.

Breeding

Nests are made in large hollows in old trees. Females incubate the egg(s) and it takes four weeks for the hatchling to emerge. Males provide food while the females are incubating and rearing the chicks. Females usually lay two eggs, but almost always only feed one chick, so that only one chick survives. The nestling fledges in about three months but does not become independent until just before the next breeding season (around six months).

Habitat

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos are found throughout south-eastern Australia, and are not listed as nationally threatened. The population on Eyre Peninsula, is considered critically endangered. This is because it is isolated from other mainland and island populations and has undergone dramatic decline since European settlement.

Threats

Loss of habitat (clearance of food and nesting trees), competition for nesting hollows with bees and other birds and animals and, predation (e.g. by Wedge-tailed Eagles) due to lack of cover, are the major threats to the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Predation of eggs by Common Brushtail Possums *(Trichosurus vulpecula)* can also be a problem.

A distinctive local! Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos can be sighted in many Adelaide Hills conservation parks and visit the city parklands.

Conservation

Conservation of the wild population and its habitats, replanting of native food sources and habitat trees in this area, and a captive breeding program, are some of the positive actions being taken to help this population recover.

You can help the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo by:

- keeping an eye and ear out if you go walking in the Adelaide Hills – you might see or hear a group of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos flying around
- finding out about revegetation or other conservation programs in your local area
- helping out on community revegetation activities and projects
- making sure you save food and habitat trees for the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, and other threatened species, if you live on a property.

Photo by Jason Van Weenen

Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo

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

FIS: 92288