



BIRD

Melanodryas cucullata cucullata

Hooded Robin (south-eastern)

AUS	SA	AMLR	Endemism	Residency
-	R	V	-	Resident



Photo: © Tom & Marie Tarrant (www.aviceda.org)

Conservation Significance

The subspecies has been described as 'probably declining' within the AMLR.¹ Within the AMLR the species' relative area of occupancy is classified as 'Very Restricted'.²

The status of the Hooded Robin in south-eastern Australia is Near Threatened.³

Description

Medium-large robin. Male has black hood and black upper body with white underparts, while female is mostly grey with a white belly. Quiet birds which typically sit on a perch and pounce to the ground for food. Often the male is more visible than the cryptic female. Males have an early morning song, and both sexes use a piping call throughout the year.¹

Distribution and Population

Occurs throughout mainland Australia, except north-east QLD. Four subspecies are recognised by Schodde and Mason (1999). *Melanodryas cucullata cucullata* occurs across south-eastern Australia, most of NSW, VIC and south-eastern SA, including the AMLR.¹

Nationally, the estimated extent of occurrence is 1,000,000 km². The estimated area of occupancy is 100,000 km² and decreasing. The number of breeding birds is estimated at 500,000 and decreasing.³

This subspecies is still relatively widespread and numerous but declines are continuing in the eastern sheep-wheat belt.³

Disappearance from several sites in the New England district, NSW, is well documented (Fitri and Ford 1997). Almost disappeared from many parts of central NSW, VIC and SA, and only about 40 pairs are thought to occur in the ACT (P. Ormay *pers. comm.*; Robinson 1993; Paton et al. 1994; Traill et al. 1996; Traill and Duncan 2000).³

In many regions described as being sparsely distributed in open woodlands. Found predominately on the eastern and northern slopes of the MLR and the Adelaide plains north to Nuriootpa with a widespread, but patchy, distribution. Distribution has declined between the atlas surveys of 1974-75 and 1984-85 particularly in the Southern MLR and the Fleurieu Peninsula.¹

Recorded resident at Aldinga-Sellicks Beach scrub, with eight to ten breeding pairs observed between 1976 and 1983 (site approx. 200 ha in size) (Ashton 1985). At Sandy Creek CP Rix (1976) recorded a resident population of three to five pairs between 1963 and 1972. Three breeding pairs were located at Sandy Creek CP in 2004, suggesting that the population has persisted relatively unchanged for the last 40 years in that location (B. Cale *pers. obs.*). Occasional records at Stonyfell between 1880 and 1915.¹

Post-1983 AMLR filtered records show sub-populations are concentrated in several clusters throughout the region, with most records from the Barossa, Monarto, Onkaparinga River, Ashbourne, Port Willunga areas, with isolated records in the Adelaide Hills, northern plains and eastern Fleurieu.²

Pre-1983 AMLR filtered records are similarly located although limited with additional records near Myponga.²

Habitat

South-eastern subspecies found in Eucalypt woodland and mallee and Acacia shrubland (Blakers et al. 1984; Cale 1994; Fitri and Ford 1997;).^{1,3} A remnant size of >50 ha is required (G. Carpenter *pers. comm.*).

Studies suggest that there are three key components to their habitat; (1) the presence of relatively open

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areas, (2) patches of young Eucalypts or shrubs for nest-sites and (3) the presence of suitable perches for foraging. They are often found near clearings or more open areas, such as paddocks.¹

Level of grazing in some landscapes may affect abundance. More commonly sighted on lightly grazed areas than heavily grazed areas in the semi-arid woodlands of eastern Australia (James 2003).¹

Within the AMLR the preferred broad vegetation groups are Grassy Woodland, Heathy Woodland and Mallee.²

Biology and Ecology

Territorial, occupying the same area over a year or several years (Paton and Paton 1980, Fitri and Ford 1997, ABBBS 1998). In addition to the resident population, some birds move through an area, primarily during autumn and winter. Extent and nature of these movements is unclear.¹

Breed in spring from mid-August to December (Sutton 1927, 1928; Attiwill 1972, Higgins and Peter 2002). Females build the cup-shaped nest, typically placed in a horizontal or vertical fork of a tree or shrub, sometimes in the hollow top of a stump, showing a preference for low nest sites (Bell 1984; Beruldsen 2003; Boehm 1957; Fitri and Ford 2003a; Leach 1928; Sullivan 1993; Sutton 1927, 1928). Recorded nesting in Eucalypt saplings, Banksias, dead Hakea, Teatree and Hawthorn (Sutton 1928, SA Museum, B. Cale pers. obs.). Breeding also recorded in the revegetated Monarto woodlands with an estimated home range of 5.5 ha (Paton and Rogers 2004).¹

Most commonly lay a clutch of two eggs with an incubation period of 14-18 days and nesting 12-14 days. Exhibit facultative cooperative breeding.

Principally ground foragers feeding on insects and occasionally small skinks and seeds (Barker and Vestjens 1990, Higgins and Peter 2002).¹

Aboriginal Significance

Post-1983 records indicate the AMLR distribution occurs in all Aboriginal Nations - Kurna, Ngadjuri, Nganguraku, Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk.²

Threats

Much critical habitat has been cleared and a large part of that remaining is fragmented. Even large fragments appear unable to sustain Hooded Robins over the long term (Traill and Duncan 2000).³

Specific reasons for the decline of Hooded Robins

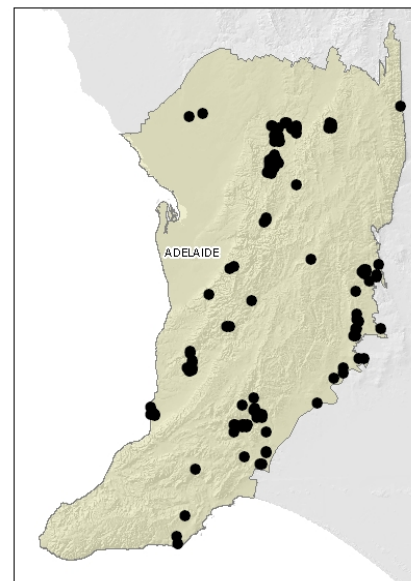
are unclear but appears to be chiefly related to the loss and fragmentation of their habitat and changes to habitat quality (Paton et al. 1994). Fragmentation may lead to local extinctions due to the reduced ability of birds to locate and recolonise suitable areas (Ford et al. 2001).¹

Modification, as a result of grazing, fire, weed invasion or removal of woody debris, has the potential to decrease the quality of habitat. Severe degradation leads effectively to habitat loss.¹

Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*), a species which has benefited from habitat degradation, may aggressively exclude other birds, including this species, from woodland areas (Clarke 1984, Ford et al. 2001).¹

Additional current direct threats have been identified and rated for this species. Refer to the main plan accompanying these profiles.

Regional Distribution



Map based on filtered post-1983 records.² Note, this map does not necessarily represent the actual species' distribution within the AMLR.

References

Note: In some cases original reference sources are not included in this list, however they can be obtained from the reference from which the information has been sourced (the reference cited in superscript).

1 Cale, B. (2005). *Towards a Recovery Plan for the Declining Birds of the Mount Lofty Ranges*. Scientific Resource Document for Birds for Biodiversity. Unpublished Report.

2 Department for Environment and Heritage (2007). *Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Regional Recovery Pilot Project*

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Database. Unpublished data extracted and edited from BDBSA, SA Herbarium (July 2007) and other sources.

3 Garnett, S. T. and Crowley, G. M. (2000). *The Action Plan for Australian Birds*. Environment Australia, Commonwealth of Australia.

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