



BIRD

Taeniopygia guttata

Zebra Finch

AUS	SA	AMLR	Endemism	Residency
-	-	U	-	Resident



Photo: © Brian Furby

Conservation Significance

The species has been described as 'probably declining' within the AMLR.² Within the AMLR the species' relative area of occupancy is classified as 'Extremely Restricted'.³

Description

Small, mainly grey bird, with characteristic black 'tear drop' eye stripes and 'zebra like' black and white barring on rump and upper tail. Throat and upper breast pale grey with fine black barring, broad black band on upper chest. Sides of belly chestnut with many white spots. Remainder of the belly and undertail white. Male is distinguished from female by its chestnut cheek patches, a character that gave the species the alternative name of Chestnut-eared Finch. Both sexes have red eyes and bill, and orange yellow legs and feet. Most common calls are a loud nasal 'tiah', often given in flight, and a soft 'tet tet' when in close contact.¹

Distribution and Population

Most common and widespread of Australia's grassfinches, found across the Australian mainland, with the exception of Cape York Peninsula and some coastal areas. Also occur in Timor and the Lesser Sunda Islands. The introduction of artificial dams and water tanks has actually increased the Zebra Finch's natural range, as they need to drink on a regular basis.¹

Uncommon in the AMLR.⁴

Post-1983 AMLR filtered records patchy: around Mount Crawford, Rowland Flat and Kaiserstuhl CP; south of Onkaparinga River CP; around Currency Creek; near Strathalbyn, Monarto, McLaren Vale, Onkaparinga River, Tepko, Montacute, Adelaide and scattered records in the northern Adelaide Plains.³

Pre-1983 AMLR filtered records scattered around suburban Adelaide, and single records at St Kilda, Port Gawler, Sandy Creek, Woodchester and Port Elliot areas.³

Habitat

Often found in the drier areas of Australia, living year round in social flocks of up to 100 or more. Found in a variety of habitats, mainly dry wooded grasslands, bordering watercourses.¹

Within the AMLR the preferred broad vegetation groups are Grassy Woodland, Shrubland and Wetland.³

Biology and Ecology

Feed in large flocks on fallen or ripening grass seeds. Insects may be taken at any time of the year, but are particularly favoured when feeding young. Feeding takes place on the ground and, unlike some other grassfinches, they never pull seed heads down with their feet.¹

Pair for life. Female selects nest site, but both birds care for eggs and young. Male gathers almost all nesting material, but female constructs the loose dome-shaped nest in a low, dense shrub or tree. Have also been reported to nest in hollows in the ground or a tree hollow, although this behaviour is uncommon. Breeding season from October to April but varies depending on rainfall. Incubation 14 days and time in nest 21 days.¹

Aboriginal Significance

Post-1983 records indicate the AMLR distribution occurs in all Aboriginal Nations - Kurna, Ngadjuri, Nganguraku, Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk).³

Threats

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

Further information:

Biodiversity Conservation Unit, Adelaide Region
Phone: (61 8) 8336 0901 Fax: (61 8) 8336 0999
<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/>

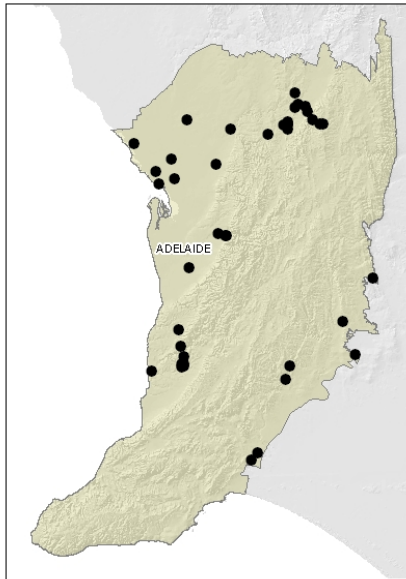
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Prepared as part of the Regional Recovery Plan for Threatened Species and Ecological Communities of Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australia 2009 - 2014





Regional Distribution



Map based on filtered post-1983 records.³ 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 Australian Museum (2005). *Birds in Backyards: Bird Finder*. Available from <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net> (accessed November 2007).

2 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.

3 Department for Environment and Heritage (2007). *Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Regional Recovery Pilot Project Database*. Unpublished data extracted and edited from BDBSA, SA Herbarium (July 2007) and other sources.

4 Turner, M. S. (2001). *Conserving Adelaide's Biodiversity: Resources*. Urban Forest Biodiversity Program, Adelaide.

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