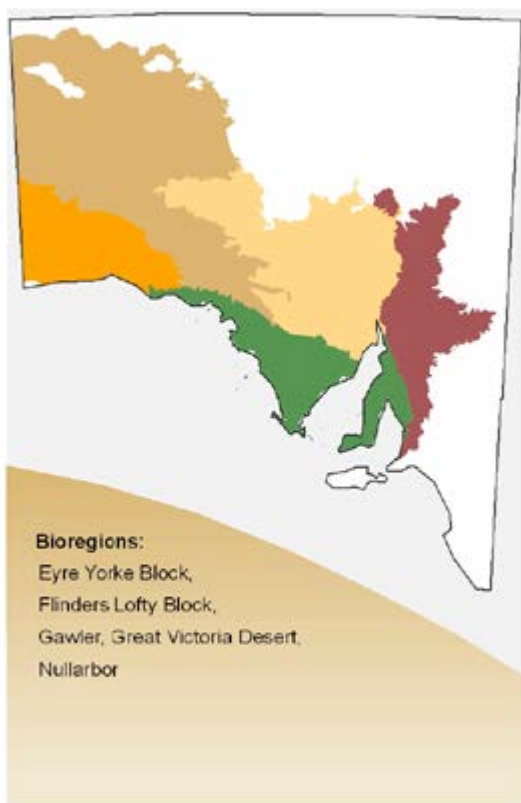


Slender-billed Thornbill (Western)

Acanthiza iredalei iredalei



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.

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

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

