



BIRD

Melithreptus lunatus lunatus

White-naped Honeyeater (MLR)

AUS	SA	AMLR	Endemism	Residency
-	-	U	-	Resident



Photo: © Nigel Willoughby

Conservation Significance

The AMLR distribution is part of a limited extant distribution in adjacent regions within SA.³ The species has been described as 'probably declining' within the AMLR.² Geographically isolated in the AMLR.¹

Description

Small, sexually dimorphic honeyeater. Most closely resembles the Black-chinned Honeyeater but adults of both subspecies of White-naped Honeyeater are smaller, the white nape does not extend all the way to the eye and eye wattle is red (bare skin). Eye wattle of Black-chinned Honeyeater is blue (Higgins et al. 2001). Call consists of several distinctive calls, the most common being described as 'tserp' or 'sherp' (Higgins et al. 2001; Slater et al. 1989).²

Distribution and Population

Occurs in eastern, southeast and southwest Australia (Keast 1968). This subspecies also occurs throughout eastern Australia (Schodde and Mason 1999).²

Occurs throughout the AMLR but predominantly in the higher elevations.²

Has probably been no change in its overall distribution in the MLR. Probably only ever locally common in the MLR due to the distribution of its preferred habitat. However, vegetation clearance has probably reduced its absolute abundance in the region (Attwood and Cale 2002).²

Post-1983 AMLR filtered records widely distributed.³

Limited pre-1983 AMLR filtered records, most in the central MLR.³

Habitat

In their comparative study of honeyeaters in the MLR, Ford and Paton (1977) found it is most abundant at forest sites. A response to floristics, and potentially to soil nutrients, rather than structure may explain abundance as well as why numbers do not correspond to the large areas of *Eucalyptus obliqua* forest remaining in the MLR (Willoughby 2005).²

Large home range in which it spends most of its time foraging, suggesting a reliance on poor quality resources. Core areas were generally near areas of *Eucalyptus viminalis*, which tend to correspond to areas of higher soil nutrients (Willoughby 2005).²

Within the AMLR the preferred broad vegetation groups are Heathy and Grassy Woodland.^{3,4}

Biology and Ecology

Most commonly seen in small groups of two or three individuals, but also sometimes in larger groups. Use a large home range which is larger in the non-breeding season (~12 ha) than in the breeding season (~6 ha). Based on the same group of birds, there are areas of more intense use, or core areas of activity, within the home range. Spend approximately 90% of their time in areas totalling about 0.4 hectares in the breeding season and 2.5 hectares in the non-breeding season. Males aggressively defended breeding sites, but generally not aggressive at other times (Willoughby 2005).²

Breeding season from July to August or to January (Simpson and Day 1999; Higgins et al. 2001). Nests usually built in the drooping, outer foliage of, primarily Eucalypts, but also mistletoes and occasionally other species. Fur from live animals, apparently with a preference for white fur, is used in the nest (Higgins et al. 2001). Clutch size usually two to three, and incubation is approximately 14 days (Higgins et al. 2001).² The incidence of communal breeding has not been established, although it does occur (Higgins et al. 2001; Willoughby 2005).²

Feed on nectar resources, and in the absence or lack of nectar, spends much of its foraging time gleaning leaves or bark and probing under bark for arthropods. Mainly uses tree species with the highest levels of

Further information:

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

© Department for Environment and Heritage FIS 90346 May 2008

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



Government
of South Australia



ADELAIDE AND MOUNT LOFTY RANGES SOUTH AUSTRALIA Threatened Species Profile

Department
for Environment
and Heritage

foliage nutrients, generally where soil fertility was highest (Recher et al. 1996).²

Seasonal fluctuations of honeyeater numbers (based on reporting rates) in the AMLR has been recorded. An increase occurs in April and May, and a decrease in September and October (Ford 1977; Ford and Paton 1977).²

Aboriginal Significance

Post-1983 records indicate the AMLR distribution occurs in Kaurna, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk Nations. Also occurs close to the border of Nganguraku Nation.³

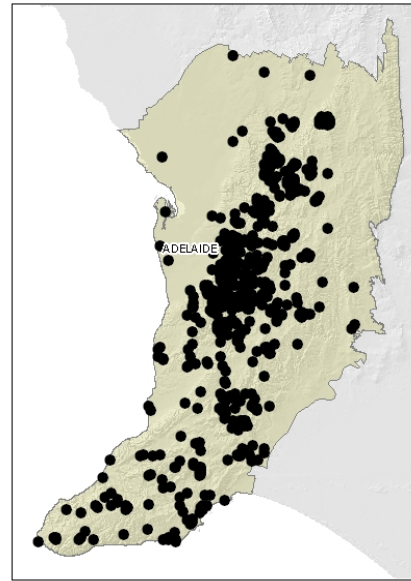
Threats

Reasons for population decline and continuing threats include:

- habitat loss or degradation and fragmentation: the loss of extensive areas of woodland and forest on better soil types which is regarded as 'good' habitat for this species (especially areas with *Eucalyptus viminalis*) (Long 1998; Paton et al. 1999; Armstrong et al. 2003; Paton et al. 2004)²
- interspecific competition: especially with New Holland Honeyeaters, a widespread and abundant species (accounts for 56% of observed aggressive interactions (Willoughby 2005)); as woodlands continue to degrade throughout the MLR, with many small clearances creating more edges, aggressive species, such as Noisy Miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) and Red Wattlebird (*Anthochaera carunculata*), may encroach more on White-naped Honeyeater habitat (Willoughby 2005)²
- habitat modification: especially invasion of woody weeds which decrease the habitat value (but increase it for New Holland Honeyeaters)²
- competition for food: the growing populations of Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) in the AMLR is now damaging certain preferred Eucalypt species, specifically *Eucalyptus viminalis* and *E. leucoxylon* (Possingham et al. 1996, Armstrong et al. 2003).²

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.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 Armstrong, D. M., Croft, S. N. and Foulkes, J. N. (2003). *A Biological Survey of the Southern Mount Lofty Ranges, South Australia, 2000-2001*. Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia.
- 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.

Further information:

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

© Department for Environment and Heritage FIS 90346 May 2008

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



Government
of South Australia