

Black-eared Miner (*Manorina melanotis*)



Above: Black-eared Miner. Photo: Chris Tzaros.

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This fact sheet summarises background information about the Black-eared Miner (*Manorina melanotis*).

Description

The Black-eared Miner is one of four species of medium-sized, colonial honeyeaters in this genus. Aside from the black face 'mask', the main characteristics that distinguish this species from other members of the genus are its dark rump and tail and shorter wings, tail and legs.

Habitat

Historically, the Black-eared Miner was distributed in the Murray Mallee of

Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. However, the current distribution is much reduced in all three states. In Victoria, only six widely-dispersed colonies of hybrid birds are now known to occur.

Populations occur in extensive mallee eucalypt shrublands, particularly in areas unburnt for more than 40 years. Specifically, the species inhabits Shallow-sand and Chenopod Mallee respectively.

Ecology

The Black-eared Miner is a colonial bird, with each colony typically containing several breeding pairs.



At a glance

- The Black-eared Miner is listed as Endangered under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*;
- It is a medium sized (about 20cm long) colonial honeyeater that is distinguished from other members of the genus by its extensive black face 'mask' and an absence of pale tail tips;
- The Black-eared Miner inhabits long-unburnt (>40 years) mallee, usually with an understorey of small bushes, shrubs or Porcupine Grass (*Triodia scariosa* ssp. *scariosa*).



Above: Black-eared Miner habitat at Bronzewing Flora and Fauna Reserve. Photo: Ashley Herrod, Birds Australia.

Above: Yellow throated Miner. Photo: Chris Tzaros.

The species is a co-operative breeder with up to 12 juvenile and non-breeding adult individuals assisting at the nest. Animals are monogamous and only re-pair upon the loss of a mate. Breeding occurs opportunistically when conditions are suitable, with nests having been found in all months. Specifically, breeding appears to be linked to rainfall events during mild to warm seasons. The latter promote elevated insect activity, increased lerp abundance and flowering events. Nests are usually built in mallee eucalypts, either in upright forks or amongst small twigs and foliage located 1.5 - 4.5m above the ground. Animals mainly eat invertebrates and lerp, but also drink nectar from *Eucalyptus* spp., *Eremophila* spp. and Comb Grevillea (*Grevillea huegelii*).

A matter of survival

The Black-eared Miner is listed as Endangered under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. A number of threats

to the Black-eared Miner have been identified, including:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation caused by land clearance and extensive wildfires;
- Habitat degradation by grazing herbivores, including domestic stock, over abundant native species and feral animals;
- Hybridisation with Yellow-throated Miners. The increasing overlap in range has enabled the more common Yellow-throated Miner to invade and interbreed with formerly 'pure' Black-eared Miner colonies, leading to genetic introgression.

How can you help?

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) encourages the community to assist the recovery of the Black-eared Miner by:

- Retaining and enhancing native vegetation, particularly old-growth, hollow-producing trees;

- Removing grazing pressure from native vegetation by excluding stock;
- Refraining from large-scale intentional burning of leasehold land in areas close to mallee habitat;
- Keeping a distance from nest trees during the breeding season;
- Controlling feral predators such as foxes and cats;
- Adhering to existing tracks and roads while travelling through National Parks and Reserves.

Find out more

The Mallee CMA has undertaken a number of studies to increase knowledge of the specific habitat requirements of, and threats to, the Black-eared Miner.

For further information on these surveys, please contact the Mallee CMA on 03 5051 4377 or refer to the Technical Bulletins available on the Mallee CMA website at: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au

Project Partners



Published November 2011

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