

Helmeted Honeyeater

Lichenostomus melanops cassidix

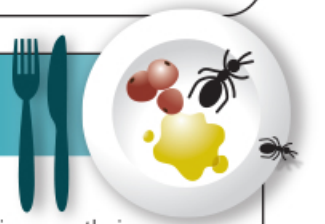


Habitat



Helmeted Honeyeaters are selective and only live in swampy forests alongside streams and rivers. They build their cup-shaped nests in dense shrubs under a canopy of eucalypts. There are only a few small patches of their precious habitat left in Victoria, which is why Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve is so important.

Diet



Helmeted Honeyeaters are omnivorous; their diet contains both plants and animals. They have a curved, pointy beak and a special brush-tipped tongue to collect nectar, honeydew and sap. For protein, they feed on small insects (like moths and caterpillars) and spiders. They also eat sap-sucking insects, which live on eucalypt leaves.

Life stages



Pairs of Helmeted Honeyeaters live in neighbourhoods. Females raise up to four clutches of chicks between August and March. Usually, two eggs are laid at a time and incubated for two weeks. It takes 40 days for a young bird to be able to care for itself. The average lifespan of a Helmeted Honeyeater is around four years.

Threats

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Land clearing for farms and houses has left Helmeted Honeyeaters with only a few small patches of healthy habitat. Changed water and land use on surrounding farms has altered the flood cycle, meaning swampy forests either don't get enough water or receive too much water. This leads to loss of the birds' habitat and shelter.

Conservation



About 240 Helmeted Honeyeaters still live in the wild. Improving habitat quality, removing weeds and pests, and keeping waterways healthy is very important. Rangers, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater and volunteers plant native trees and provide extra food for the birds when food is scarce in their habitat. Although this helps in the short term, we need to protect and improve their swampy and streamside habitat.

Features and adaptations

- 1 Bright yellow helmet of feathers on their head
- 2 Black cheeks and bright yellow ear tufts
- 3 Long tongue like a paintbrush for drinking nectar
- 4 Dark grey back feathers and yellow underside for camouflage
- 5 Sing and display to find a mate and identify territory

