

Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

Painted Honeyeater

Grantiella picta

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Northern Territory: Vulnerable

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

Description

The Painted Honeyeater is a small to medium-sized honeyeater that is mostly black above and white below. The wing and sides of the tail have bright yellow patches. Short dark streaks are scattered across the breast and flanks, and there is a small white spot on the side of the neck. The relatively robust bill is bright pink with a brown tip.

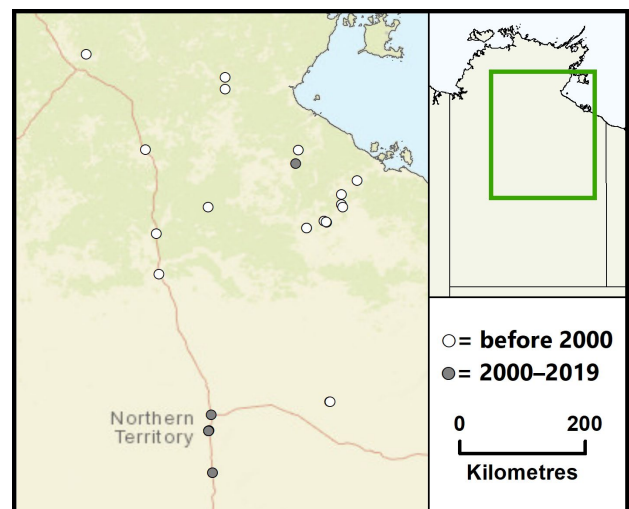
Distribution

The Painted Honeyeater is widely but sparsely distributed in eastern Australia, but is nowhere very numerous. Breeding mostly occurs in the inland slopes of south-eastern Australia, and non-breeding birds disperse widely out into semi-arid and northern regions.

The species is infrequently recorded in the Northern Territory (NT), with most records collected from the Barkly Tablelands. The Painted Honeyeater is probably an irregular visitor to the NT from south-eastern Australia; though it is possibly a regular visitor in small numbers. There has been no recorded evidence of breeding in the NT.



NT conservation reserves where reported: Caranbirini Conservation Reserve, Limmen National Park and Nitmiluk National Park.



Known localities of the Painted Honeyeater in the NT
(nrmaps.nt.gov.au)

Ecology and life-history

Painted Honeyeaters inhabit woodlands dominated by *Acacia* and/or *Eucalyptus* species and open forests, but prefer habitats with abundant mature trees that host mistletoes.

The Painted Honeyeater has the most specialised diet of any honeyeater: it is almost wholly dependent on mistletoe fruits, but they also feed on nectar and insects.

The timing of breeding and north-south seasonal movements are thought to be governed by the fruiting of mistletoe. The Painted Honeyeater has been recorded between the months of May and November in the NT, but most commonly in August.

Generation length is estimated to be 5.8 years¹.

Threatening processes

The most significant threat to the Painted Honeyeater is habitat loss and degradation in eastern and south-eastern Australia. Extensive historical clearing of Brigalow *Acacia harpophylla* woodlands in Queensland and forests and woodlands in New South Wales is thought to be responsible for considerable declines in the Painted Honeyeater. Habitat degradation resulting from overgrazing by livestock, native macropods and rabbits, and ongoing clearing continues to threaten the species. The areas of the NT visited by the Painted Honeyeater are generally free of such disturbances.

Conservation objectives and management

In the NT, the primary conservation objective is to maintain healthy acacia and/or eucalypt woodlands with mature trees that can sustain healthy mistletoe growth.

The primary management objectives for the Painted Honeyeater in the NT are to estimate the numbers visiting the NT, clarify the distribution of the species, and identify preferred habitats. A monitoring program should also be developed and implemented.

References

¹ Garnett, S.T., Szabo, J.K., Dutson, G., 2011. The action plan for Australian Birds 2010. CSIRO Publishing/Birds Australia, Melbourne.