Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

HONEYEATERS – TRUE BLUE AUSSIES

**A large diet of sweets won't leave you with a slender figure . . .
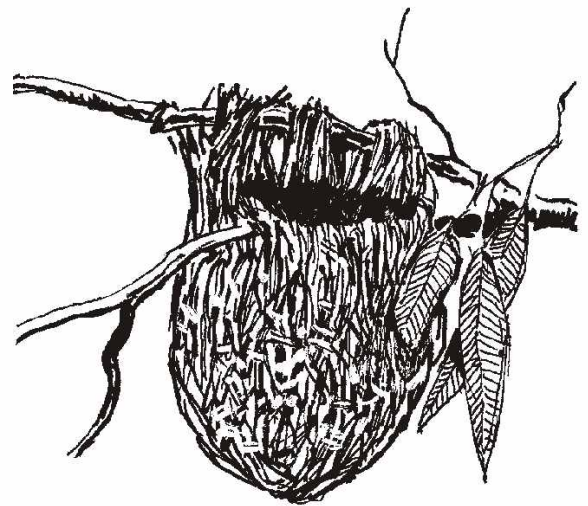unless you are a bird.**

Honeyeaters are as typically Australian as gum trees. Everywhere you go across the country you will find these dinki-di Australians. They are often loud, bold and aggressive, and you will often see them bullying other birds as big as eagles.

They have feet that would be the envy of any ballet dancer. Their sharp claws allow them to balance in awkward positions as they stretch to reach blossoms. Their long, sharp beak is ideal for poking into the bottom of flowers. And the tip of their tongue is like a paintbrush that can empty a flower of nectar in less than a second.

Honeyeaters build cup-shaped nests from bark and grass, held together with cobwebs. Look for them suspended from the branches of gum trees.
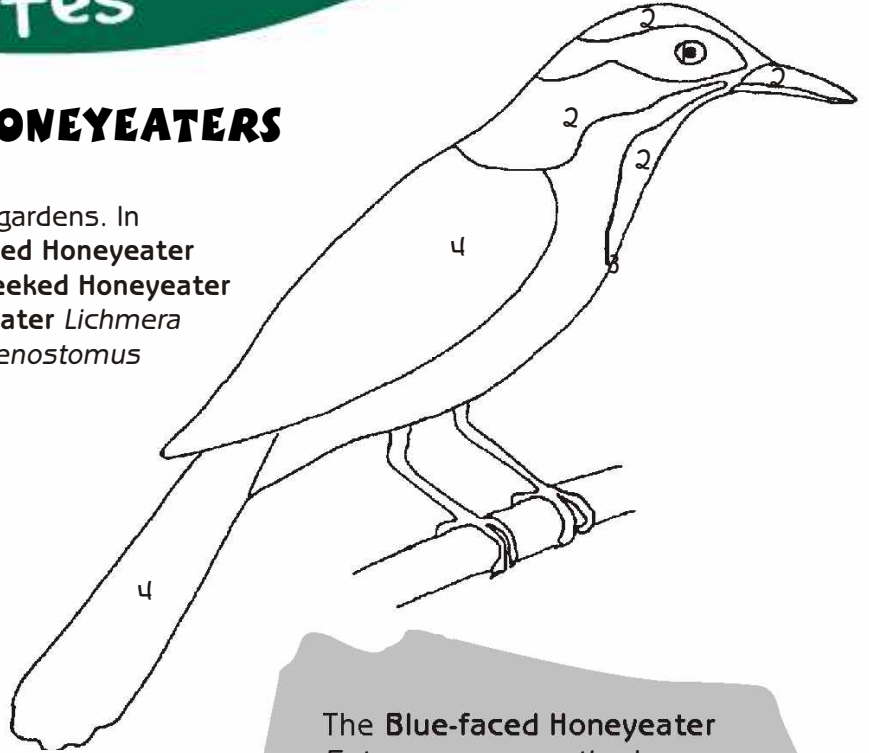
The **Yellow-throated Miner** *Manorina flavigula* is an aggressive honeyeater that is common in Territory towns.

Northern Territory Government

BACKYARD HONEYEATERS

Honeyeaters are common birds in Australian gardens. In Central Australia look, out for the **White-plumed Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus penicillatus* and the **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** *Acanthagenys rufogularis*. The **Brown Honeyeater** *Lichmera indistincta* and **White-gaped Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus unicolor* are common in the Top End.

The Honeyeater's sugary diet of nectar is high in energy but low in nutrients. So it also eats insects for protein, especially when raising young. You may spot a cheeky individual on your window or under you veranda looking for hiding insects.

Honeyeaters are good birds to have in your garden because they help control insect pests. Use the following letter code to reveal another helpful thing they do.

The **Blue-faced Honeyeater** *Entomyzon cyanotis* also visits Darwin gardens.

Use the number code to colour this bird.

1 = blue   2 = black
3 = white   4 = green

Code: A = Z   B = Y C = X D = W etc

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N	M	L	K	J	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A

G S V B

H K I V Z W

K L O O V M

Z H

G S V B

N L E V

U I L N

K O Z M G

G L

K O Z M G .

Want to learn more about Honeyeaters?

*Check out the affordable field guides **Field Guide to the Birds of Australia** by either **Simpson & Day** or the one by **Pizzey & Knight**.*