

Birds of the MIA Woodland Remnants



Background

Birds have been identified as indicators of biodiversity because they are relatively easy to observe, they are at or near the top of the food chain, and they are well known and appreciated by many people. Woodland birds are representative of other native fauna and flora species, and of the health of native woodland ecosystems. For these reasons, bird surveys are a widely used tool for monitoring the effects of land management on biodiversity. Birds are being used as an indicator of biodiversity in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and Districts (MIA) Biodiversity Monitoring Program.

Objectives

The objectives of conducting bird surveys in woodland remnants in the MIA include:

- Establish baseline information on bird diversity & abundance
- Determine changes to bird populations that may be occurring over time
- Improve understanding of the relationship between bird populations & the characteristics of remnants of native vegetation including size, condition & isolation
- Improve management practices for better biodiversity outcomes

Methods

Bird surveys have been conducted in 44 woodland remnants (biodiversity monitoring sites) in the MIA in 2001/2002. Four surveys were conducted at each site, one each in the spring, summer, autumn and winter using the standard 20 minute /2ha method. Each site has been marked so sites can be revisited over time.



The Red-capped Robin is a small insect-feeding bird which is now uncommon in remnants lacking understorey species.

Results

A total of 3,419 individual birds, comprising 103 different species were recorded on the sites over the 4 survey periods. Twelve species were waterbirds and ninety-one species were bush birds (including birds of prey).

Five threatened species were recorded including the Superb Parrot, Painted Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Diamond Firetail, & Hooded Robin. Many of these occurred on private land and this reflects positively on the management of these sites.



The Double-barred Finch is a seedeater and relies on native grasses as a food source.

Three introduced species were recorded and these were the Common Starling, House Sparrow and European Blackbird. The Common Starling accounted for 24% of all individual birds recorded and was mostly found in small remnants or those dominated by old trees and exotic ground cover species. Starlings utilise valuable tree hollows, and they are a major pest of seed & fruit crops.

Other species commonly recorded were large birds such as the Crested Pigeon, Galah, Red-rumped Parrot, and Yellow-throated Miner. These are known as generalist species and thrive in the simplified agricultural landscape.

