



SAVING OUR SPECIES

Red-lored whistler

Pachycephala rufogularis

Critically Endangered

The red-lored whistler is a small cryptic songbird belonging to the whistler family Pachycephalidae that is endemic to Australia. They weigh between 30 and 38 grams and have a body length of 19–22 centimetres.

The male is brownish-grey with a rusty orange face and throat. The breast is grey with buff orange under parts. Some males are reported as having a buff rear collar. The female appears much paler. The eyes in both sexes are red and the bill and legs are dark in colour. Immature birds are brownish-grey with a rufous eyebrow, pale throat and a brown eye.

The presence of the red-lored whistler is often revealed by its calls, which are sweet and varied. The loudest is used as a territorial song sounding like a 'foit...foit...foit'.

Red-lored whistlers forage mostly on the ground, eating invertebrates (airborne and ground-dwelling, including caterpillars, weevils, grasshoppers, beetles and larvae), and some berries and seeds.

The red-lored whistler constructs a substantial cup nest made of coarse bark and Mallee leaves, neatly woven around the rim and located within low shrubs.

This species is found in Mallee woodland with a shrub layer, usually of broombush and native pine such as Mallee pine (*Callitris verrucosa*), with occasional patches of spinifex and emergent Mallee, forming a relatively dispersed canopy.

Red-lored whistlers occupy vegetation with a post-fire age of 4-40 years and are most abundant in areas with a post-fire age of 21-40 years.

They are found in and around Round Hill and Nombinnie Nature Reserves in central New South Wales. There is a small number of relatively old records from the Scotia Mallee and Tarawi Nature Reserve in the far southwest corner of the State. A third population at Pulletop Nature Reserve is now considered extinct at that locality.

Support local action and help save the red-lored whistler



Red-lored whistler (*Pachycephala rufogularis*)
Photo: Michael Todd/DPIE

The red-lored whistler is now critically endangered in New South Wales with the primary threats to the species being inappropriate fire regimes and competition by goats.

Fire may cause the direct loss of individuals, and inappropriate fire regimes may cause long-term changes to physical features such as floristic structure or leaf litter, which are unfavourable to sustaining a viable population of the species and their prey.

Goats change understorey structure via browsing, reducing habitat suitability.

Other threats to the species are thought to include:

- population fragmentation, resulting in reduced genetic variability and reproductive opportunities and increased genetic isolation
- predation by foxes and cats
- catastrophic events such as drought or extensive wildfire
- anthropogenic climate change
- interspecific competition, which is the displacement of one species by another usually as a result of a change in habitat features.

Saving our Species (SoS) is working in partnership with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and National Parks and Wildlife Service to save the red-lored whistler. Current efforts are focusing on key habitat areas in the Round Hill and Nombinnie Nature Reserves in central New South Wales.

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Red-lored whistler (*Pachycephala rufogularis*)
Photo: Michael Todd/DPIE

The recovery effort aims to:

- gain a better understanding of the species ecology, distribution and habitat requirements.
- control vertebrate pest populations, particularly goats
- implement appropriate fire regimes, including strip burning to create low fuel buffers within large mallee blocks.

In habitat areas on private land, conservation efforts can be assisted by:

- reducing or excluding grazing in some areas to allow regeneration of vegetation for habitat, food sources or nest sites
- restricting cultivation around suitable ground habitat
- retaining stick, leaf litter and understorey shrubs for food and shelter
- retaining fallen logs and other ground debris as food sources and shelter
- maintaining *Triodia* (spinifex or porcupine grass) in the area
- preventing clearing of habitat such as nesting sites and food sources.

SoS is a NSW Government flagship program targeting on-ground action to secure threatened plants and animals from extinction. The program aims to increase the number of species that can survive securely in the wild.

SoS can only succeed if we work together. We need your support to ensure that today's actions help to secure the future of NSW's threatened species.

Find out more about threatened species in New South Wales and the SoS program at: environment.nsw.gov.au/SOS.