



Hooded robin

Suzanne Medway

The hooded robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*) is a small passerine (perching) bird native to Australia

The hooded robin gets its name from the male of the species, whose neat black-and-white plumage includes a dark 'hood' which covers the bird's head, extending down onto the upper breast and back. The female, by contrast, is drab, having largely brownish-grey plumage. The hooded robin is around 16 cm in length.

Being a shy and unobtrusive species, hooded robins are often rather quiet during the day, especially in the afternoon, but are one of the first birds to call in the morning, when they vigorously add their far-carrying song to the dawn chorus.

The hooded robin is a medium-large robin with a rather short slender bill and a moderately long tail which is square-tipped. They are usually seen in pairs or small groups and are rather shy

and quiet. Their flight is short, swift and undulating (curving up and down) with the white in the wings and tail being obvious.

Hooded robins are found all over mainland Australia, except Cape York and the eastern Gulf of Carpentaria and inland around the Simpson Desert, on the Nullarbor Plain and south of the Kimberley Ranges. They are more commonly found in south-eastern Australia from Adelaide to Brisbane.

Hooded robins are found in lightly timbered woodland, mainly dominated by acacia and/or eucalypts.

The hooded robin sits on exposed perches, such as dead branches and stumps, and pounces on arthropods (mainly insects). It forages on or near the ground.

The hooded robin breeds in monogamous pairs. They construct a

cup-shaped nest of leaves and bark, bound with spiders' web, placed in a crevice, hollow or hole in a tree or stump. The female incubates the eggs.

Breeding season is July to November with one or two broods raised. The nest is a neat cup made of soft dry grass and bark. Spider webs, feathers, and fur are used for binding/filling, generally in a tree crevice, hollow or fork. The clutch generally consists of two pale olive-green or bluish-green eggs with darker spots and blotches measuring 21 mm x 16 mm.

Clearing of woodlands in south-eastern Australia has caused a decline in populations of the hooded robin. Young birds are taken by foxes.

Hooded robins are not listed as threatened; however, their conservation status varies from state to state within Australia. For example, they are listed as Threatened in Victoria.



Hooded robin Para Wirra Conservation Park, South Australia. They are rare in this region. Photo: Danny McCreadie



A young hooded robin at Brookfield Conservation Park, South Australia. Photo: Danny McCreadie

The South Australian State Government has changed legislation to allow dogs and mountain bikes into Conservation Parks. A risk assessment is being done on a park by park basis but there is concern for rare and endangered wildlife in areas such as this. Para Wirra is close to suburbia so is under pressure. The hooded robin is hard to find in Para Wirra as it is and any degradation can only be seen as a threat.