

= Dusky woodswallow =

The dusky woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*) , is a bird species of forests and woodlands in temperate and subtropical regions , extending into tropical areas around the Atherton Tableland , in eastern and southern Australia . The global population of the species has as yet not been formally confirmed , but it has been officially rated in the range of ' Least Concern ' , according to the BirdLife International in 2004 . As such , the bird could be described as common in its local habitat .

The name " woodswallow " is a misnomer as they are not closely related to true swallows . Instead , they belong to the family Artamidae , which also includes butcherbirds , currawongs and the Australian magpie .

= = Taxonomy = =

The dusky woodswallow was first described by the English ornithologist John Latham in 1801 with the binomial name *Loxia cyanoptera* . Its specific epithet is derived from the Ancient Greek words *cyanos* ' blue ' and *pteron* ' wing ' .

= = Description = =

The dusky woodswallow is medium @-@ sized and swallow @-@ like , with a dark brown hue , but there have been instances where the bird has appeared grey . The birds have a black patch in front of the eyes , and grey (sometimes also black) wings with white streaks on them . The dusky woodswallow has a black , white @-@ tipped tail with a silver underwing . The birds have a blue @-@ grey bill capped with black . Dusky woodswallows are known to spontaneously ' wag ' or swivel their tails fervently , a trait which is common among many other species of woodswallow .

= = = Relations to other woodswallows = = =

In a significant difference from other woodswallows , dusky woodswallows have a distinctive white patch on the outer wing . Dusky woodswallows also seem to typically be more smoky brown than other species of woodswallow . The little woodswallow , a smaller , darker woodswallow is also slightly more smoky brown than other woodswallows , but that is the only similarity that the latter has with the dusky woodswallow ; the little woodswallow does not share a white patch on the outer wing .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The birds live primarily in open eucalyptus forests and woodlands . They range mostly from Atherton Tableland , Queensland , down to Tasmania and west to Eyre Peninsula , in South Australia . They roost communally , usually nocturnally . During the breeding season , they nest in large flocks to make sure to keep predators away from young . These flocks can be 20 @-@ 30 dusky woodswallows in size .

Dusky woodswallows adhere to seasonal migration and movements . The birds are a nomadic species , and tend to move quite spontaneously . However , one certain change of habitat occurs for the south @-@ eastern birds , who migrate northward for Autumn .

Communally roosting birds , the dusky woodswallow has a variety of chattering calls which are used in certain situations . The most distinctive of these calls is perhaps the one which is used when a predator or intruder approaches , which consists of a harsh mobbing call to warn others .

= = Feeding and diet = =

The diet of the bird can be varied . They eat various forms of foliage and other grassy material that they find on the ground or in trees and shrubs . Dusky woodswallows have been seen eating

termites , butterflies and other insects . They also eat nectar from flowers . One notable aspect of their feeding habits is the way they hunt flying insects , which is done by picking them up on their wing . They do , however , also eat their prey from the ground , and they often find inconspicuous places to perch while waiting for prey , such as utility lines and the like . They have also been observed engaging in kleptoparasitism , working as a group to rob a restless flycatcher of its prey . Kleptoparasitism is extremely unusual in passerine birds , as is cooperative kleptoparasitism in general .

= = Breeding = =

The nest of the dusky woodswallow consists of twigs , roots and other similar foliage matted together to form a bowl shape , which is lined with grass . It is positioned safely , behind bark , and / or high in a tree branch , and sometimes in a hollowed out tree stump . The nest is made during the period from August to January , and with the help of several birds . The mated pair will then guard the nest , while others will help them take care of the babies . The female lays white eggs , of which there are usually no more than three or four . While the incubation period lasts for sixteen days , the amount of time taken for fledgling can be this long to around twenty days . The typical clutch is three to four in size , but this may vary .

= = Conservation status = =

The dusky woodswallow has a very large range . The population size of this bird has not yet been quantified or estimated . It is , however , expected to be as populous as other birds within its densest range labeled ' common ' . Because of this , the dusky woodswallow is evaluated to be of Least Concern (LC) . This classification may change with new evidence , so is not to be taken with complete accuracy .