

= Blue @-@ faced honeyeater =

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater (*Entomyzon cyanotis*) , also colloquially known as the bananabird , is a passerine bird of the honeyeater family , Meliphagidae .

It is the only member of its genus , and it is most closely related to honeyeaters of the genus *Melithreptus* . Three subspecies are recognised . At around 29 @.@ 5 cm (11 @.@ 6 in) in length , the blue @-@ faced species is large for a honeyeater . Its plumage is distinctive , with olive upperparts , white underparts , and a black head and throat with white nape and cheeks . Males and females are similar in external appearance . Adults have a blue area of bare skin on each side of the face readily distinguishing them from juveniles , which have yellow or green patches of bare skin .

Found in open woodland , parks and gardens , the blue @-@ faced honeyeater is common in northern and eastern Australia and southern New Guinea . It appears to be sedentary in parts of its range and locally nomadic in other parts ; however , the species has been little studied . Its diet is mostly composed of invertebrates , supplemented with nectar and fruit . They often take over and renovate old babbler nests , in which the female lays and incubates two or rarely three eggs .

= = Taxonomy and naming = =

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater was first described by ornithologist John Latham in his 1801 work *Supplementum Indicis Ornithologici* , sive *Systematis Ornithologiae* . However , he described it as three separate species , seemingly not knowing it was the same bird in each case : The blue @-@ eared grackle (*Gracula cyanotis*) , the blue @-@ cheeked bee @-@ eater (*Merops cyanops*) , and as the blue @-@ cheeked thrush (*Turdus cyanous*) . It was as the blue @-@ cheeked bee @-@ eater that it was painted between 1788 and 1797 by Thomas Watling , one of a group known collectively as the Port Jackson Painter .

It was reclassified in the genus *Entomyzon* , which was erected by William Swainson in 1825 , who observed the " Blue @-@ faced Grakle " as the only insectivorous member of the genus and posited it was a link between the smaller honeyeaters and the riflebirds of the genus *Ptiloris* . The generic name is derived from the Ancient Greek *ento-* / ?????- (" inside ") and *myzein* / ??????? " to drink " or " suck " . The specific epithet , *cyanotis* , means " blue @-@ eared " and combines *cyano-* / ??????- " blue " with *otis* , a Latinised form of ????? , the Greek genitive of *ous* / ??? " ear " . Swainson spelt it *Entomiza* in an 1837 publication , and George Gray wrote *Entomyza* in 1840 .

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater is generally held to be the only member of the genus , although its plumage suggests an affinity with honeyeaters of the genus *Melithreptus* . It has been classified in that genus by Glen Storr , although others felt it more closely related to wattlebirds (*Anthochaera*) or miners (*Manorina*) . A 2004 molecular study has resolved it as close to *Melithreptus* after all . Molecular clock estimates indicate the blue @-@ faced honeyeater diverged from the *Melithreptus* honeyeaters somewhere between 12 @.@ 8 and 6 @.@ 4 million years ago , in the Miocene epoch . It differs from them in its much larger size , brighter plumage , more gregarious nature and larger patch of bare facial skin .

Molecular analysis has shown honeyeaters to be related to the Pardalotidae (pardalotes) , Acanthizidae (Australian warblers , scrubwrens , thornbills , etc .) , and the Maluridae (Australian fairy @-@ wrens) in a large Meliphagoidea superfamily .

Early naturalist George Shaw had called it the blue @-@ faced honey @-@ sucker in 1826 . Other common names include white @-@ quilled honeyeater , and blue @-@ eye . Its propensity for feeding on the flowers and fruit of bananas in north Queensland has given it the common name of banana @-@ bird . A local name from Mackay in central Queensland is pandanus @-@ bird , as it is always found around Pandanus palms there . It is called morning @-@ bird from its dawn calls before other birds of the bush . Gympie is a Queensland bushman 's term . Thomas Watling noted a local indigenous name was der @-@ ro @-@ gang . John Hunter recorded the term gugurruk (pron . " co @-@ gurrock ") , but the term was also applied to the black @-@ shouldered kite (*Elanus axillaris*) . It is called (minha) yeewi , where minha is a qualifier meaning ' meat ' or ' animal ' , in Pakanh and (inh-) ewelmb in Uw Oygangand and Uw Olkola , where inh- is a qualifier meaning '

meat ' or ' animal ' , in three aboriginal languages of central Cape York Peninsula .

Three subspecies are recognised :

E. c. albipennis was described by John Gould in 1841 and found in north Queensland , west though the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory and across into the top of Western Australia . It has white on the wings and a discontinuous stripe on the nape . The wing patch is pure white in the western part of its range and is more cream towards the east . It has a longer bill and shorter tail than the nominate race . Birds also decrease in size with decreasing latitude , consistent with Bergmann 's rule . Molecular work supports the current classification of this subspecies as distinct from the nominate subspecies *cyanotis* .

E. c. cyanotis , the nominate form , is found from Cape York Peninsula south through Queensland and New South Wales , into the Riverina region , Victoria , and southeastern South Australia .

E. c. griseigularis is found in southwestern New Guinea and Cape York , and was described in 1909 by Dutch naturalist Eduard van Oort . It is much smaller than the other subspecies . The original name for this subspecies was *harteri* , but the type specimen , collected in Cooktown , was found to be an intergrade form . The new type was collected from Merauke . This subspecies intergrades with *cyanotis* at the base of the Cape York Peninsula , and the zone of intermediate forms is narrow . The white wing patch is larger than that of *cyanotis* and smaller than that of *albipennis* . Only one bird (from Cape York) of this subspecies was sampled in a molecular study , and it was shown to be genetically close to *cyanotis* .

= = Description = =

A large honeyeater ranging from 26 to 32 cm (10 to 12 @. @ 5 in) and averaging 29 @. @ 5 cm (11 @. @ 6 in) in length , the adult blue @-@ faced honeyeater has a wingspan of 44 cm (17 @. @ 5 in) and weighs around 105 g (3 @. @ 7 oz) . In general shape , it has broad wings with rounded tips and a medium squarish tail . The sturdy slightly downcurved bill is shorter than the skull , and measures 3 to 3 @. @ 5 cm (1 @. @ 2 to 1 @. @ 4 in) in length . It is easily recognised by the bare blue skin around its eyes . The head and throat are otherwise predominantly blackish with a white stripe around the nape and another from the cheek . The upperparts , including mantle , back and wings , are a golden @-@ olive colour , and the margins of the primary and secondary coverts a darker olive @-@ brown , while the underparts are white . Juveniles that have just fledged have grey head , chin and central parts of their breasts , and brown upperparts , and otherwise white underparts . After their next moult , they more closely resemble adults and have similar plumage , but are distinguished by their facial patches . The bare facial skin of birds just fledged is yellow , sometimes with a small patch of blue in front of the eyes , while the skin of birds six months and older has usually become more greenish , and turn darker blue beneath the eye , before assuming the adult blue facial patch by around 16 months of age . The blue @-@ faced honeyeater begins its moult in October or November , starting with its primary flight feathers , replacing them by February . It replaces its body feathers anywhere from December to June , and tail feathers between December and July . 422 blue @-@ faced honeyeaters have been banded between 1953 and 1997 to monitor movements and longevity . Of these , 109 were eventually recovered , 107 of which were within 10 km (6 @. @ 2 mi) of their point of banding . The record for longevity was a bird banded in May 1990 in Kingaroy in central Queensland which was found dead on a road after 8 years and 3 @. @ 5 months in September 1998 , around 2 km (1 @. @ 2 mi) away .

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater produces a variety of calls , including a piping call around half an hour before dawn , variously described as ki @-@ owt , woik , queet , peet , or weet . Through the day , it makes squeaking noises while flying , and harsh squawks when mobbing . Its calls have been likened to those of the yellow @-@ throated miner (*Manorina flavigula*) , but are deeper . Blue @-@ faced honeyeaters make a soft chirping around nestlings and family members .

A distinctive bird , the blue @-@ faced honeyeater differs in coloration from the duller @-@ plumaged friarbirds , miners and wattlebirds , and it is much larger than the similarly coloured *Melithreptus* honeyeaters . Subspecies *albipennis* with its white wing patch has been likened to a khaki @-@ backed butcherbird in flight .

= = Distribution and habitat = =

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater is found from the Kimberleys in northwestern Australia eastwards across the Top End and into Queensland , where it is found from Cape York south across the eastern and central parts of the state , roughly east of a line connecting Karumba , Blackall , Cunnamulla and Currawinya National Park . It has a patchy distribution in New South Wales , occurring in the Northern Rivers and Northern Tablelands regions , and along the coast south to Nambucca Heads . To the south it is generally absent from the Central and South Coast , and is instead found west of the Great Divide across South West Slopes and Riverina and to the Murray River . It is common in northern Victoria and reaches Bordertown in southeastern South Australia , its range continuing along the Murray . It is also found in the Grampians region , particularly in the vicinity of Stawell , Ararat and St Arnaud , with rare reports from southwestern Victoria . The species occasionally reaches Adelaide , and there is a single record from the Eyre Peninsula . The altitude ranges from sea level to around 850 m (2 @, @ 790 ft) , or rarely 1 @, @ 000 m (3 @, @ 300 ft) .

In New Guinea , it is found from Merauke in the far southeast of Indonesia 's Papua province and east across the Trans @-@ Fly region of southwestern Papua New Guinea . It has also been recorded from the Aru Islands .

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater appears to be generally sedentary within its range , especially in much of the Northern Territory , Queensland and New South Wales . However , in many places (generally south of the Tropic of Capricorn) , populations may be present or absent at different times of the year , although this appears to result from nomadic rather than seasonal migratory movements . Around Wellington in central New South Wales , birds were recorded over winter months , and were more common in autumn around the Talbragar River . Birds were present all year round near Inverell in northern New South Wales , but noted to be flying eastwards from January to May , and westwards in June and July . In Jandowae in southeastern Queensland , birds were regularly recorded flying north and east from March to June , and returning south and west in July and August , and were absent from the area in spring and summer .

They live throughout rainforest , dry sclerophyll (Eucalyptus) forest , open woodland , Pandanus thickets , paperbarks , mangroves , watercourses , and wetter areas of semi @-@ arid regions , as well as parks , gardens , and golf courses in urban areas . The understory in eucalypt @-@ dominated woodland where the blue @-@ faced honeyeater is found is most commonly composed of grasses such as Triodia , but sometimes it is made up of shrubs or small trees such as grevilleas , paperbarks , wattles , Cooktown ironwood (Erythrophleum chlorostachys) or billygoat plum (Terminalia ferdinandiana) . One study in Kakadu National Park found that blue @-@ faced honeyeaters inhabited mixed stands of eucalypts and Pandanus but were missing from pure stands of either plant .

= = Behaviour = =

The social organisation of the blue @-@ faced honeyeater has been little studied to date . Encountered in pairs , family groups or small flocks , blue @-@ faced honeyeaters sometimes associate with groups of yellow @-@ throated miners (Manorina flavigula) . They mob potential threats such as goshawks (Accipiter spp .) , rufous owls (Ninox rufa) , and Pacific koels (Eudynamis orientalis) . There is some evidence of cooperative breeding , with some breeding pairs recorded with one or more helper birds . Parents will dive at and harass intruders to drive them away from nest sites , including dogs , owls , goannas , and even a nankeen night heron (Nycticorax caledonicus) . A study published in 2004 of remnant patches of forest in central Queensland , an area largely cleared for agriculture , showed a reduced avian species diversity in areas frequented by blue @-@ faced honeyeaters or noisy miners .

This effect was more marked in smaller patches . The study concluded that conserved patches of woodland containing the two aggressive species should be larger than 20 ha (44 acres) to preserve diversity .

Social birds , blue @-@ faced honeyeaters can be noisy when they congregate . When feeding in groups , birds seem to keep in contact with each other by soft chirping calls . In Mackay , a bird would fly up 10 or 12 metres (33 or 39 ft) above the treetops calling excitedly to its flock , who would follow and fly around in what was likened to an aerial corroboree , seemingly at play . A single bird was recorded aping and playing with an immature Australian magpie (*Cracticus tibicen*) in Proserpine , Queensland . The blue @-@ faced honeyeater has been reported to be fond of bathing ; a flock of 15 ? 20 birds were observed diving into pools one bird at a time , while others were perched in surrounding treetops preening .

The parasite *Anoncotaenia globata* (a worldwide species not otherwise recorded from Australia) was isolated from a blue @-@ faced honeyeater collected in North Queensland in 1916 . The habroneme nematode *Cyrnea* (*Procyrnea*) *spiralis* has also been isolated from this among other honeyeater species . The nasal mite *Ptilonyssus philemoni* has been isolated from the noisy friarbird (*Philemon corniculatus*) and blue @-@ faced honeyeater .

= = = Feeding = = =

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater generally forages in the branches and foliage of trees , in small groups of up to seven birds . Occasionally larger flocks of up to 30 individuals have been reported , and the species has been encountered in a mixed @-@ species foraging flock with the little friarbird (*Philemon citreogularis*) . The bulk of their diet consists of insects , including cockroaches , termites , grasshoppers , bugs such as lerps , scale (*Coccidae*) and shield bugs (*Pentatomidae*) , beetles such as bark beetles , chafers (subfamily *Melolonthinae*) , click beetles (genus *Xanthophaea*) , darkling beetles (genera *Chalcopteroides* and *Homotrysis*) , leaf beetles (genus *Paropsis*) , ladybirds of the genus *Scymnus* , weevils such as the pinhole borer (*Platypus australis*) , and members of the genera *Mandalotus* , *Polyphrades* and *Prypnus* , as well as flies , moths , bees , ants and spiders . Birds have been reported preying on small lizards . Prey are caught mostly by sallying , although birds also probe and glean . In Kakadu National Park , birds prefer to hunt prey between the leaf bases of the screw palm *Pandanus spiralis* .

The remainder of their diet is made up of plant material such as pollen , berries , nectar , from such species as grasstrees (*Xanthorrhoea*) and scarlet gum (*Eucalyptus phoenicea*) , and cultivated crops such as bananas or particularly grapes . In general , birds prefer feeding at cup @-@ shaped sources such as flowers of the Darwin woollybutt (*Eucalyptus miniata*) , Darwin stringybark (*E. tetradonta*) and long @-@ fruited bloodwood (*Corymbia polycarpa*) , followed by brush @-@ shaped inflorescences , such as banksias or melaleucas , gullet @-@ shaped inflorescences such as grevilleas , with others less often picked .

Usually very inquisitive and friendly birds , they will often invade a campsite , searching for edible items , including fruit , insects , and remnants from containers of jam or honey , and milk is particularly favoured . Parent birds feed the young on insects , fruit and nectar , and have been recorded regurgitating milk to them as well .

= = = Breeding = = =

The blue @-@ faced honeyeater probably breeds throughout its range . The breeding season is from June to January , with one or two broods raised during this time . The nest is an untidy deep bowl of sticks and bits of bark in the fork of a tree , Staghorn or bird 's nest ferns , or grasstree . *Pandanus* palms are a popular nest site in Mackay . They often renovate and use the old nests of other species , most commonly the grey @-@ crowned babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*) , but also the chestnut @-@ crowned babbler (*P. ruficeps*) , other honeyeaters including noisy (*Philemon corniculatus*) , little and silver @-@ crowned friarbirds (*P. argenticeps*) , the noisy miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) and the red wattlebird (*Anthochaera carunculata*) , and artamids such as the Australian magpie and butcherbird species , and even the magpie @-@ lark . In Coen , an old babbler nest in a paperbark (*Melaleuca*) which had been lined with messmate bark had been occupied by blue @-@ faced honeyeaters and re @-@ lined with strips of paperbark . Two or rarely

three eggs are laid , 22 × 32 mm (1 × 1 ? in) and buff @-@ pink splotched with red @-@ brown or purplish colours . The female alone incubates the eggs , over a period of 16 or 17 days .

Like those of all passerines , the chicks are altricial ; they are born blind and covered only by sparse tufts of brown down on their backs , shoulders and parts of wings . By four days they open their eyes , and pin feathers emerge from their wings on day six , and the rest of the body on days seven and eight . Both parents feed the young , and are sometimes assisted by helper birds . The Pacific koel and pallid cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) have been recorded as brood parasites of the blue @-@ faced honeyeater , and the laughing kookaburra recorded as preying on broods .

= = Aviculture = =

Keeping blue @-@ faced honeyeaters in an aviary in New South Wales requires a Class 2 Licence . Applicants must show they have appropriate housing , and at least two years ' experience of keeping birds . Blue @-@ faced honeyeaters are exhibited at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago , Philadelphia Zoo , and Birmingham Zoo (Alabama) in the United States , Chessington Zoo in England , Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland and Taronga Zoo in Sydney , Australia .