

THE YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL

Acanthiza chrysorrhoa



FRONTAL VIEW
Photo: Stephen Elliott

The Yellow-rumped Thornbill is a passerine bird of the genus *Acanthiza*. They were once placed in the family Pardalotidae but that family was split and they are now in the family Acanthizidae. It is a small, brownish-fawn bird with a conspicuous yellow rump and thin dark beak. It inhabits savannah, scrub and forests across most of Australia and is insectivorous. They may engage in cooperative breeding.

This Thornbill species was described as *Saxicola chrysorrhoa* by the French naturalists Jean René Constant Quoy and Joseph Paul Gaimard in 1830, the type specimen being collected at King George Sound on the south coast of Western Australia. Its specific epithet is derived from the Ancient Greek *chryso-* "golden", and *orrhos* "rump". There are four recognised subspecies; the nominate *chrysorrhoa* of Western Australia, *leachi* of Tasmania, *leighi* of eastern Australia, and *normantoni* of central and northern Australia.

The Yellow-rumped Thornbill is the largest of the thornbill species, 9.5-12 cm (4-5") long and weighing 9g (0.32oz). It has a long slender bill and a short tail. There is a distinctive yellow rump, black white spotted forehead, grey neck and head, a white line above the eye and a white throat. The abdomen is white and below the wings is light buff. The wings are grey and the tail is black. The plumage varies somewhat between the subspecies. Ringing studies have found that the Yellow-rumped Thornbill can live for up to nine years.



REAR VIEW
Photo: Deane P. Lewis
(www.dl.id.au)



NOISY MINER
Photo: Lip Kee Yap

Their song has been described as a "musical, sweet, high-pitched twittering". They are reported to be an accomplished mimic of other birds, in particular the alarm calls of the Noisy Miner, *Manorina melanocephala*.

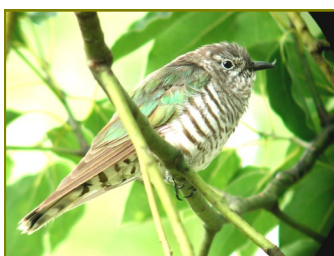
They have a wide distribution across western, southern and eastern Australia including Tasmania. They are absent from the north coast of Western Australia, parts of central Australia, northern Queensland and central and northern Northern Territory. They frequent a wide range of habitats, including open forest, woodland, grasslands, savannah and scrubland.

The Yellow-rumped Thornbill is mainly insectivorous, the major prey items being ants, beetles, bugs and lerps. Spiders, flies and some seeds are also consumed. They usually forage in small groups of between 3-12 individuals, and may join mixed species-flocks of other small insectivores, such as the Speckled Warbler (*Chthonicola sagittatus*), Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*), and other Thornbill species.



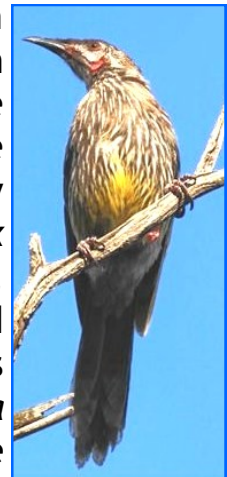
WEEBILL
Smicrornis brevirostris
Photo: "Aviceda"

Breeding occurs from July to December, with one, two or sometimes three broods a year. Nesting usually occurs as a pair, but, as mentioned above, they sometimes engage in cooperative breeding with one to three "helpers" assisting the breeding pair. The nest is a rough dome-shaped structure of dried grass and other vegetation hidden low down in dense foliage, shrubs, vines or mistletoe. On top of the dome is a cup-shaped false nest, the real nest inside the dome has a concealed entrance. The three to four white oval-shaped eggs that may be marked with pale red-brown measure 18x13mm. Only the female sits, with



SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO
Photo: "Aviceda"

incubation taking about 16-18 days. On hatching both parents feed the brood. The nestlings fledge at around 19 days. The Yellow-rumped Thornbill is parasitised by the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx lucidus*, and the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, *Cacomantis flabelliformis*. Many bird species will take both eggs and chicks



RED WATTLEBIRD
Photo: "Peripitus"

from the nest, including the Red Wattlebird, *Anthochaera carunculata*, the Currawong, *Strepera graculina*, the Australian Magpie, *Cracticus tibicen*, and the Australian Raven, *Corvus coronoides*. While many honeyeaters will destroy Thornbill nests in order to steal nesting material.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia

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