

THE HOODED ROBIN

AN OVERVIEW



The Hooded Robin, *Melanodryas cucullata*, is a small passerine bird endemic to Australia. Like many brightly coloured robins of the *Petroicidae* it is sexually dimorphic; the male being a distinctive black and white, while the female is a dullish grey-brown. They are not listed as threatened under the Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. However, their conservation status varies from state to state within Australia.

Like all the Australian Robins, it is not closely related to either the American or European Robin, but belongs to a group comprising many tropical and Australian passerines including the Pardalotes, Fairy-wrens, Honeyeaters and even Crows. It was initially thought to be related to the Flycatchers, and as such was described as *Muscicapa cucullata* by the ornithologist John Latham in 1802. Nicholas Aylward Vigors and Thomas Horsfield later described it as *Grallina bicolor*, then later still it was placed in the genus *Petroica* for many years before finally being transferred to *Melanodryas*. The only other species in this genus is the Dusky Robin, *M. vittata*, which is confined to Tasmania and closely resembles the female Hooded Robin.

The Hooded Robin is about 16cm (6") in length. The male has a distinctive pied coloration; with a black head and neck ("hood"), white chest and underparts and black wings with white wing-bars. Black is also the colour of the eyes, bill and feet. The female is an undistinguished grey-brown above with a pale grey throat and is paler underneath with dark brown wings and white wing bars. Juveniles are similar to females.

It is found throughout Australia, but is absent on Cape York and Tasmania. The preferred habitat is lightly timbered woodland, mainly consisting of acacia and/or eucalypts.

The breeding season is from July to November. One or two broods being raised each year. The nest is a neat cup-shape consisting of soft dry grass and bark. Spider webs, feathers and fur are used for binding and filling. Nests are generally situated in a tree crevice, hollow or fork. The clutch consists of two pale olive, or bluish-green, eggs measuring 2mm x 16mm, speckled with darker spots and blotches.

A feeding Hooded Robin sits on an exposed branch or stump and pounces on insects. They also forage on or near the ground.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia