

October 2025

Plant of the Month:
Mother Shield Fern

Helmeted Honeyeater: A fight for survival

**Fungi of the
month:**
Rainbow
bracket



A word from the Next-gen Hills Naturalists



Welcome! This is the first of many great newsletters to come from the Next-gen Hills Naturalists, and we are so excited to cover the Helmeted Honeyeaters in this October edition.

It was a joy to see the Helmeted Honeyeaters, take photos, and just be in nature. They are such majestic birds.

We speak with Sue Bendel, the President of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. Make sure to check out the podcast interview with her, as she is a wealth of knowledge. Thanks so much Sue, and everyone who is giving up their time to save the Helmeted Honeyeaters.

Plus, It was a joy to photograph and research the Plant and Fungi of the month.

We hope you enjoy our first edition and look forward to November, where we cover the Brush-tailed Possum. Happy reading!

Thanks to



Contents

Pages 4-7

Helmeted
Honeyeater iD
Guide

Pages 8-9

Plant of the
Month:
Mother Shield
Fern

Pages 10-17

Helmeted
Honeyeater: A
fight for
survival

Pages 18-19

Gallery

Pages 20-21

Fungi of the
Month
Rainbow
Bracket Fungi



Rough Bush Pea

Helmeted Honeyeater iD guide



Helmeted Honeyeater

Lichenostomus melanops cassidix

- **Location:** Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area, Victoria, and a few small patches in other areas.
- **Diet:** Nectar, lerps and insects
- **Population:** Around 200
- **Habitat:** Stream side swamp forests
- **Status:** Critically Endangered
- **Breeding:** August to March

Helmeted Honeyeater iD Guide

Appearance

The Helmeted Honeyeaters have swampy yellow on their neck and belly, an olive green on their cheeks and a vibrant yellow on parts of their neck and head, they have a dark vertical chin stripe. They weigh approximately 30 to 35 grams.

You can't tell the difference from the male and the female as they are very similar in terms of size, weight and colour. The juvenile Helmeted Honeyeaters look like a pom pom of black and yellow on the chest and tips of their wings.

Although it is difficult to weigh a juvenile helmeted honeyeater, they should fit into the palm of your hand. When the Helmeted honeyeaters are in their early stages they have a pinky yellow beak whereas an adult Helmeted Honeyeater will have a black one.

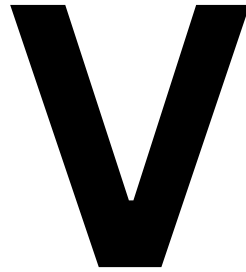


Helmeted Honeyeater iD Guide

Did you know that the Helmeted Honeyeater is actually a **subspecies** of the Yellow-Tufted Honeyeater?



**Yellow-tufted
Honeyeater**



**Helmeted
Honeyeater**

Telling the difference between Yellow-tufted honeyeaters and the Helmeted honeyeater comes down to a few things. First, you have to ask yourself, 'Where am I seeing this bird?' The Helmeted Honeyeater is only in a small patch of swampy forests in Yellingbo. The Yellow-tufted Honeyeater is found in dry woodland and all over southeastern Australia.

Secondly, look for the black vertical stripe on the Helmeted Honeyeaters throat, compared to the plain yellow of the Yellow-Tufted Honeyeater.

If worst comes down to worst, the Helmeted honeyeater is slightly bigger than the Yellow-Tufted Honeyeater. Black chinstrap, habitat and size.

Helmeted Honeyeater iD Guide

Fun Facts

- Helmeted honeyeaters mate for life although they may switch partners for a bit or for long term
- Female Helmeted Honeyeaters live for approximately 4 years whereas males live for 5 years. Scientists are still figuring out why males live longer.



Helmeted Honeyeater

Plant of the Month

Mother Shield Fern

Polystichum proliferum



- **Story:** Ground
- **Habitat:** Temperate rainforest, swamps around creeks and wet forest
- **Likely locations near the Hills:** Sherbrooke Forest, Gardens
- **Fun Fact:** The mother shield fern is called the a mother shield because it grows small baby ferns on the ends of fronds called pups. The frond then droops low, and effectively plants the baby fern in soil next to it. This is why you will see massive patches of this plant all close together. 8

Plant of the Month



- **Appearance:** The mother shield fern is a forest green fern with medium sized fronds. The stalk is a very light brown and the older fronds are a darker green. The tips of mature fronds generally carry small fern pups.



Helmeted Honeyeater: A fight for survival



For our cover story, we take a look at the threats the Helmeted Honeyeaters face and what is being done protect them.

Thanks to:



A fight for survival.

Why are the Helmeted Honeyeaters critically endangered?

The Helmeted Honeyeaters are critically endangered mostly because when farmers came in as they needed area for their cattle to graze. So, they drained the swamp and redirected the creek and then destroyed the habitat of the Helmeted Honeyeater.

Another reason their populations have declined is because of the Noisy Miners, who are often seen competing with the Helmeted Honeyeaters and bullying them.

Their current population is around 200 wild birds from about 50 in the 1980s thanks to the work from the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, Zoos Vic and DEECA (a government department that manages the banding program), they are on the rise.



A fight for survival.

Banding Program

Because there is so few Helmeted Honeyeaters, DEECA (a department in the state government of Victoria for Energy, Conservation and Climate Action) manages a banding program. Basically, the Helmeted Honeyeaters are caught in a trap (see image below) and a band with three colored stripes is placed onto the bird's leg. It is then released back into the wild. After they are released, they require frequent monitoring. Volunteers are able to assist with the field work, which is organised by DEECA.



Bands



Traps used to catch
the Helmeted
Honeyeaters

A fight for survival.

Captive Release Program

Some Helmeted Honeyeaters are actually captive bred at Healesville Sanctuary and released into the wild. Zoos Victoria breed the Helmeted Honeyeaters and those birds are either released in the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area, a small patch of forest in Cardina and at O'Shannassy to boost the population.

Unfortunately, of the twenty-one birds released at Cardina, many were killed by a feral cat.

Once, they even swapped and captive bred egg for a egg in a nest in Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area! The easiest ways to see the Helmeted Honeyeaters is to visit them when they are on display at Healesville Sanctuary.

This is another great program to protect the Helmeted Honeyeaters, all the while raising awarness.



A fight for survival

What can you do to help?

To help protect the Helmeted Honeyeaters we must spread the news about them. Many people have never even heard of a Helmeted Honeyeater! If we can spread awareness about this beautiful bird more people will want to save them. People need to do more of the simple things too, such as, not littering, not over farming and not harming our native animals here in Victoria. The Helmeted Honeyeater is increasing in numbers thanks to people raising awareness and joining groups to help save them.



A fight for survival

What can you do to help?

Also, join the Friends of the Helmetd Honeyeater and come to a citizen science day, where volunteers record the birds, frogs and animals they see in the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. They also have revegetation days and weeding working bees. They also collect seeds! You can also help out at the Indigenous Nursery.

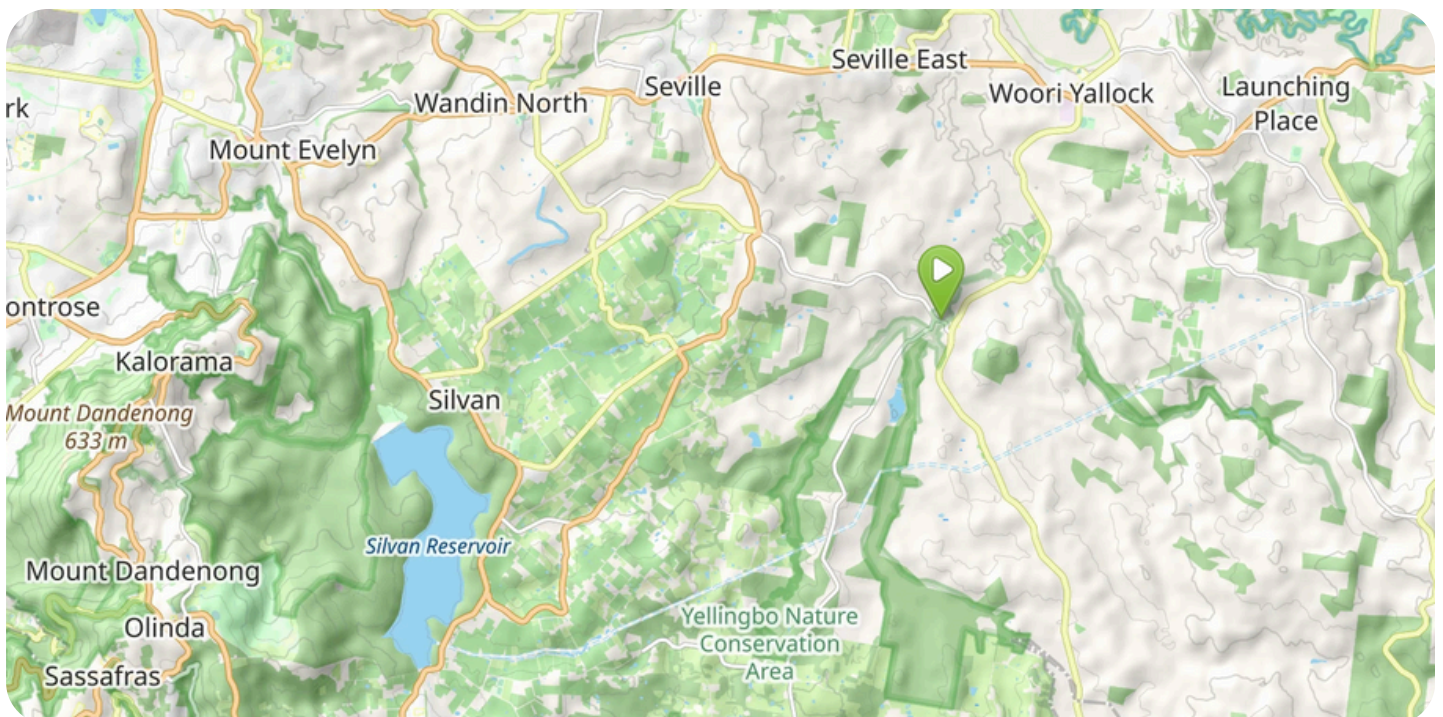


A fight for survival

How can I see the Helmeted Honeyeaters?

Since the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area is a locked reserve, you can not enter unless you are with the Friends Group. But, you can wait patiently at Parslows Bridge (see map below) or come to a Birds and Breakfast day, hosted by the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. This walk is lead by a senior ornithologist from DEECA.

Also they are often at display at Healesville Sanctuary, opposite the dingos.



Listen to the podcast to hear a interview with the president of the Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater inc, Sue Bendel



**“The bird and the possum is the reason I
get out of bed every morning”**

Sue Bendel

[Click the link to listen to the
Podcast](#)

Gallery

Photos from the Next-gen Hills Naturalists



Olive-Backed Oriole



Grey Fantail



Crimson Rosella



Fungi

Gallery



Common Maidenhair Fern



Austral Lady Fern



Common Ground Fern



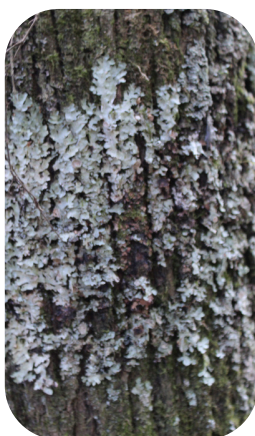
Swamp Wallaby Poo



Coolamon
carving on a
Messmate
Stringybark



Bull Ant



Lichen



Prickly Currant
Bush

Fungi of the month

Rainbow Bracket Fungi

trametes versicolor

- **Story:** on various surfaces
- **Likely Locations near the hills:** often found in gardens and all around the hills
- **Fun Fact:** They are common world wide. They have medicinal properties for immune health.



Funguy jokes

✂ 1. Why did the Mother Shield Fern start a daycare in the forest?

Because she already had experience raising spores!

2.What did the baby fern say to the Mother Shield Fern?

"I'm frond of you, Mumma!"

3.What did the Rainbow Bracket Fungus say to the gum tree?

“No worries, I’ll stick around ‘til you're rooted!”



In the next issue..

In the November issue we will be focusing on the Brush tail possum, we will be going to wildlife shelters and getting information from people who have worked with them for years. We will be staying up late at night to spot a Brush tail Possum and trying to make all our information as accurate as possible.

Thank you for reading our first ever newsletter! We hope you enjoyed all the information and we look forward to making the November newsletter soon!

