

## Brown Honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*)



(Photo copyright A. G. Wells)

A small modestly plumaged bird, the Brown Honeyeater is a familiar sight in many street trees and gardens in Perth's better-wooded suburbs.

The Brown Honeyeater is found all over the state, coastal and inland, in open woodlands and scrub. In the thicker Jarrah forest belt of the the south-west, the bird tends to frequent the more open areas such as where settlement has been established, and in the more arid parts of the country, it is restricted to the dense shrubbery around granite outcrops and to towns where there are street trees and gardens.

The adult birds vary in length between 110-160mm. They breed between June and January, laying up to three matt white eggs in small cup-shaped nests made of bark strips, grasses and sometimes spiderwebs, lined with softer material such as down or hair.

The Brown Honeyeater has a loud spirited song which, in the nesting season, has been likened to that of the Reed-warbler. The Reed-warbler's song is, however, more melodious and uttered with greater vigour.

As its name implies, the Brown Honeyeater feeds mainly on the nectar of flowers for which purpose its beak and tongue are adapted. The beak is lengthened and curved for probing into flowers and the tip of the tongue is frayed out into a brush, while the sides of the tongue curl upwards to form a more or less closed tube. During their visits to flowers, the birds also capture insects which form a substantial part of their diet.