

Western Silvereye (*Zosterops gouldi*)



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This distinctively coloured little bird is, perhaps, the commonest small bird in the Perth area and over much of the South-west. The role it plays in the city and suburbs has been compared to the Sparrow in the eastern States, visiting gardens and shrubberies in noisy foraging flocks, particularly in early summer after the nesting season.

Silvereyes feed low down in trees and bushes, on insects, nectar, seeds and fruit. Their liking for the latter often makes them unpopular in orchards and vineyards although they do provide a useful service by eating grubs and aphids.

The adult bird is easy to recognise as its entire upper parts are a bright olive-green. The throat and under-tail coverts are yellow-green and the rest of the under parts are grey. Its common name relates to the distinctive circlet of white feathers around its eye.

It breeds from August to January, laying an average of 2-3 pale-blue eggs in a suspended cup-shaped nest of grasses and cobwebs lined with finer grasses, wool or hair. A breeding pair of Silvereyes frequently has up to three broods in a season.

Studies on the bird have revealed that they sometimes live to remarkable ages. At least one Silvereye banded in the eastern States has been recaptured after 10 years. Some ornithologists combine the Western Silvereye with its eastern Australian ally *lateralis*, however, the eastern birds are characterised by having a grey back and a pre-nuptial moult.

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