

# Threatened Fauna of the Hunter & Mid Coast



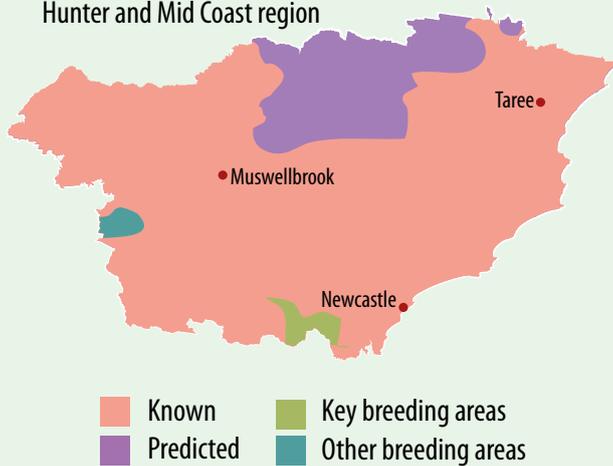
## Regent Honeyeater {*Anthochaera phrygia*}

The Hunter and Mid Coast regions provide important habitat for this critically endangered woodland bird which has become a flagship species for the conservation of declining woodland birds and mammals. With its glorious yellow and black plumage, the rare Regent Honeyeater is a sight to behold.

They feed on the nectar from eucalypts or mistletoe, as well as insects, and sugars excreted via leaf-sucking insects (lerp). They travel large distances in search of flowering trees in preferred woodland and forest types, primarily being box – ironbark and gum – mahogany, unfortunately much of these preferred feeding habitats have been cleared or degraded. Their preferred nesting habitat is often along watercourses and includes River She-oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) forests where flowering mistletoe occurs and Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Mugga Ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*) stands where there is sufficient blossom.

The Hunter Valley has one of four key breeding areas for the Regent Honeyeater in Australia. This species is at risk of extinction due to habitat fragmentation, and low population numbers.

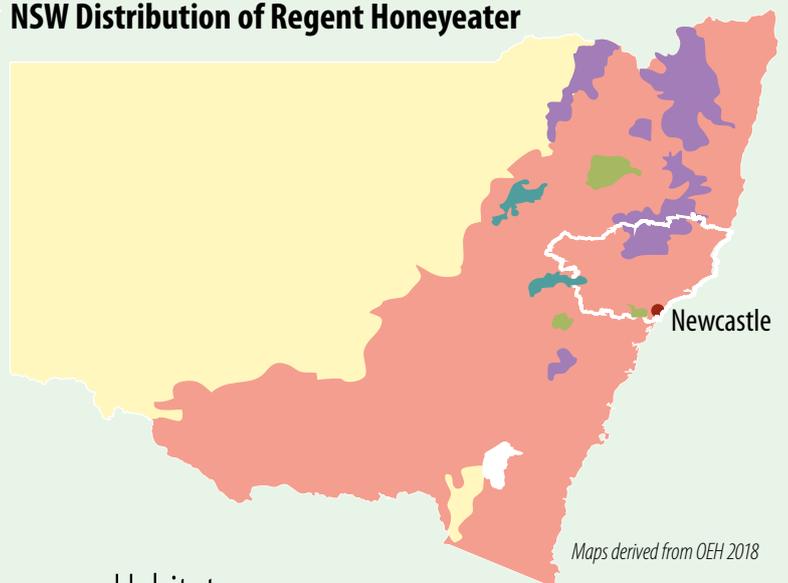
## Hunter and Mid Coast region



■ Known    ■ Key breeding areas  
■ Predicted    ■ Other breeding areas

The areas shown in pink and purple are the sub-regions where the species or community is, or known to occur. They may not occur throughout the sub-region but may be restricted to certain areas. The information presented in this map is only indicative and may contain errors and omissions.

## NSW Distribution of Regent Honeyeater



## Are Regent Honeyeaters found near you?

Once recorded between Adelaide and the central coast of Queensland, its range has contracted dramatically in the last 30 years to between north-eastern Victoria and south-eastern Queensland. There are only four known key breeding regions remaining: north-east Victoria and in NSW in the Capertee Valley, Hunter Valley (upper and lower Hunter) and the Bundarra-Barraba region. Places like the Mudgee - Wollar Key Biodiversity Area (Goulburn River National Park and surrounds) are also important breeding areas. In NSW the distribution is very patchy and mainly confined to the main breeding areas and surrounding fragmented woodlands. Regent Honeyeaters will push close to the coast during autumn/winter to seek out winter-blossoming trees.

In the Hunter and Mid Coast regions, Regent Honeyeaters predominantly occur within drier forests of the Hunter River catchment. Mostly, these are in two broad sub-regions; one being the lower Hunter forests within the Cessnock and Singleton Local Government Areas (LGA) and the forests of the Upper Hunter within the catchment of the Goulburn River. They also occur in the coastal zones where flowering Swamp Mahogany trees are found, particularly in the southern half of Lake Macquarie. On occasions they are found elsewhere, such as coastal forests around Port Stephens and the drier forested areas of the Manning – Great Lakes areas.



## Habitat

In the lower Hunter, Regent Honeyeaters feed in the Spotted Gum (*C. maculata*) – ironbark (*Eucalyptus spp.*) forests in and around the Cessnock Key Biodiversity area. In Lake Macquarie the key feeding areas are the swamp mahogany forests around Morisset, Wyee and south of Swansea. In the Upper Hunter they can be found in a variety of dry forested areas, dominated by White Box (*E. albens*), Yellow Box, Mugga Ironbark and mature River She-oak where there is Needle-leaf Mistletoe (*Amyema cambagei*) present. Key feeding areas in the Upper Hunter include Goulburn River National Park, Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve and surrounding areas. In the Hunter this species inhabits two Threatened Ecological Communities, Central Hunter Valley eucalypt forest and Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands, and also breeds and moves along water courses of She-oak Forests.

Regent Honeyeaters are strongly nomadic (moving across a large range), following blossoming trees. They feed mainly on nectar and lerp but also feed on insects and spiders, and at times native and cultivated fruits. They forage in flowers or foliage, but sometimes come down to the ground to bathe in puddles or pools, and may also catch insects in mid-flight.

Regent Honeyeaters may breed from late August until early January when conditions are suitable.

## Why is this species important?

The Regent Honeyeater feeds mainly on nectar from a small number of eucalypt species, acting as a pollinator for many flowering plants.

The latest Regent Honeyeater population estimates are as low as 350–400 mature individuals (with an 80% decline within the breed's last three generations – 15 years). Their greatest current threat is critically low numbers and ability to deal with events like wildfires or disease. Other threats stem from habitat loss and fragmentation, habitat degradation and competition from other birds (particularly from native Noisy Miners). Predation at nest sites by birds (e.g. Pied Currawongs, Kookaburras) and mammals (gliders and possums) is also a major threat. The bird is a flagship species as it relies on habitat that also supports 32 threatened woodland birds, mammals and reptiles in the Hunter.

Captive breeding programs are in place to support recovery of this species.

The Regent Honeyeater is listed as **critically endangered** in NSW and Commonwealth conservation legislation.



Courtesy, D Ingwersen

## Threats

- Habitat loss and degradation, including the loss of preferred tree species
- Lack of regeneration of canopy trees due to stock grazing, weed competition are also contributing to the decline in numbers. She-oak Forests along riversides have been particularly impacted by overgrazing and clearing
- Competition and predation by other birds, such as the Noisy Miner and Pied Currawong (native birds)
- The small population size and restricted habitat availability make the species highly vulnerable to local extinction through issues such as drought, wildfire, competition and disease.

## Identification

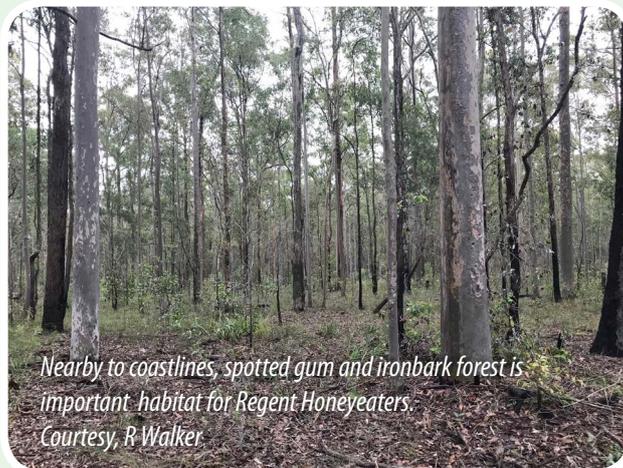
The Regent Honeyeater is a striking and distinctive, medium-sized, black and yellow honeyeater with a strong, curved bill. Adults weigh 35 - 50 grams, are 20 - 24 cm long and have a wingspan of 30 cm. Its head, neck, throat, upper breast and bill are black and the back and lower breast are pale lemon in colour with a black scalloped pattern. Its flight and tail feathers are edged with bright yellow. There is a characteristic patch of dark pink or cream-coloured skin around the eye. Males are larger, darker and have a larger patch of bare facial-skin. The call is a soft metallic bell-like song; birds are most vocal in non-breeding season. It bobs its head when calling. This species is social, and moves around in flocks.



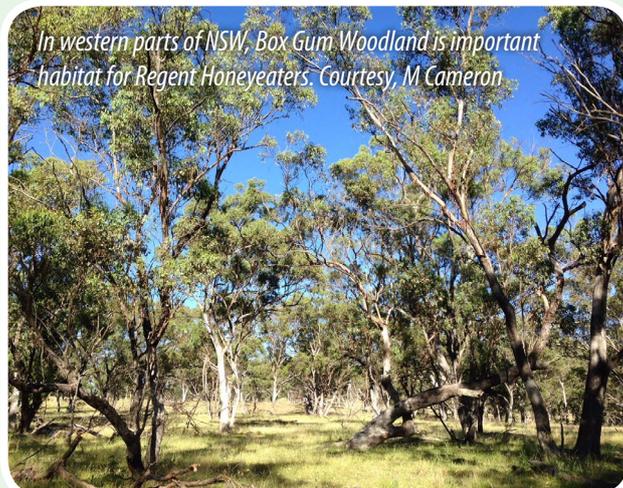
*Noisy Miners are an aggressive native competitor. Courtesy Oystercatcher.*



*Monitoring helps understand population trends. Courtesy, L Wilson*



*Nearby to coastlines, spotted gum and ironbark forest is important habitat for Regent Honeyeaters. Courtesy, R Walker*



*In western parts of NSW, Box Gum Woodland is important habitat for Regent Honeyeaters. Courtesy, M Cameron*



*Courtesy, BirdLife*

## You can help the Regent Honeyeater.



1. **Report any sightings of Regent Honeyeaters to BirdLife Australia.** The species is so rare and sightings so few, that EVERY record of a Regent Honeyeater is vital. BirdLife Australia maintains the sightings database on behalf of the Regent Honeyeater recovery team, with the information directly assisting the recovery effort.



2. **Protect remnant woodland and plant native trees and shrubs** in your community or on your land to provide habitat for all our native animals, including the Regent Honeyeater. Incentives may be available to encourage landholders to manage key areas, contact Hunter Local Land Services for more information.



3. **Strategically graze stock in woodland habitats** to allow natural regeneration of native trees and shrubs to occur where possible.



4. **Leave dead and fallen timber on the ground** and avoid taking trees with hollows. Ask firewood merchants where their timber comes from and avoid box and ironbark species where possible.



5. **Avoid cutting down mature** nectar trees or trees with hollows.



6. **Support local efforts to conserve threatened species** in your area by joining a local organisation such as Landcare or Hunter Bird Observers Club.



7. **Participate in biannual surveys** to locate Regent Honeyeaters. Each year the Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team relies on the involvement of volunteers to find Regent Honeyeaters and identify what resources they are using. This information directly helps the recovery effort for this species. Surveys are conducted twice a year on the 3rd weekend in May and the first weekend in August and are coordinated by BirdLife Australia.



8. **Participate in special events**, bird surveys, information sessions and tree planting days.



*Courtesy, Central Tablelands Local Land Services*

Birding routes in the Hunter Region can be found at  
<https://www.hboc.org.au/resources/birding-routes/>

## For more information contact

### Hunter Local Land Services:

P: 1300 795 299

E: [admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au)

W: [www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au)



### Office of Environment and Heritage:

P: 131 555

E: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)

W: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

### Mid Coast to Tops Landcare Connections

*Karuah & Great Lakes* - Joel Dunn

P: 0401 932 533

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*Manning* - Lyn Booth

P: 0427 530 681

E: [lyn@manninglandcare.org](mailto:lyn@manninglandcare.org)

*Manning Coastcare* - Pieta Laing

P: 0409 456 846

E: [pieta.manningcoastcare@gmail.com](mailto:pieta.manningcoastcare@gmail.com)

W: [www.midcoast2tops.org.au](http://www.midcoast2tops.org.au)

### Hunter Region Landcare Network Inc.

*Lower Hunter* - Stacy Mail

P: 0429 444 305

E: [lowerhunterlandcare@gmail.com](mailto:lowerhunterlandcare@gmail.com)

*Upper Hunter* - Paul Melehan

P: 0408 499 838

E: [upperhunterlandcare@gmail.com](mailto:upperhunterlandcare@gmail.com)

W: <https://hunterlandcare.org.au/>

### Report all sightings to BirdLife Australia:

P: Freecall 1300 621 056 E: [dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au](mailto:dean.ingwersen@birdlife.org.au)

or [mick.roderick@birdlife.org.au](mailto:mick.roderick@birdlife.org.au)

W: [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au) E: [info@birdlife.org.au](mailto:info@birdlife.org.au)

### Biodiversity and Conservation Trust

W: [www.bct.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bct.nsw.gov.au)



Australian Government

National  
Landcare  
Program



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