

## A Honeyeaters' Banquet

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On August 7, 1943, a visit was made to a small patch of scrub just north of Teatree Gully. This scrub covers about 150 acres and consists of scattered Eucalypts, patches of *Banksia marginata* and Yacca (*Xanthorrhoea* sp), and, in most parts, a dense undergrowth of Flame Heath (*Astroloma conostephioides*). Many of the gums are infested with Mistletoe (*Loranthus*). The Flame Heath and a few of the gums were flowering very heavily on this occasion, and an astonishingly large number of Honeyeaters were congregated in the area.

In all 10 species of the family *Meliphagidae* were identified, viz.:— White-naped Honeyeater (*Melithreptus lunatus*); Black-chinned Honeyeater (*M. gularis*); Brown-headed Honeyeater (*M. brevirostris*); Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (*Gliciphila melanops*); Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Meliphaga chrysops*); White-plumed Honeyeater (*M. penicillatu*); Yellow-winged Honeyeater (*Meliornis novae-hollandiae*); Noisy Miner (*Myzantha melanocephala*); Little Wattlebird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*); Red Wattlebird (*A. carunculata*).

With the exception of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater, each of the above species was represented by numbers of individuals. It was impossible to estimate even the approximate numbers, as all species were feeding among the Flame Heath and, as we walked

through the undergrowth, they were flitting back and forth in all directions.

The air was filled with their varied calls, the clamor of their squabbling, and the rustle of wings. The fluted notes of the Black-chins, the plaintive calls of the White-napes and Tawny-crowns, the scolding of the Yellow-wings, the care-free whistle of the Greenies, the chattering of the Brown-heads, and the bullying of the Miners combined with the raucous shouts of the Wattlebirds almost to drown the calls of all other birds. In several instances five, and even six, different species could be seen at the one time, and practically at all times two or three were in view. Only two of the Yellow-faced birds were definitely identified, but several other birds seen were thought to be this species.

The only occupied nest found was that of a Yellow-wing. This was situated in a Yacca and contained two eggs.

The paramount reason for this large gathering of Honeyeaters appears to have been the abundance of food available in the Heath blossoms, and to a lesser extent in some of the gums. From time to time a large congregation of some particular species has been seen, but never before have we seen such numbers of so many species in the one part.

Among other birds seen on this occasion  
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were a number of Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) feeding in the flowering eucalypts. Silvereyes (*Zosterops halimaturina*) were fairly plentiful, as were Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia castanotis*). Several recently occupied nests of the latter were seen.

A total of 38 species were seen in the scrub, but apart from those mentioned above only one or two individuals of each were observed, and several species, which are usually fairly numerous in this part, were not seen at all.