



Yellow-rumped Thornbill



Thornbills *Acanthiza* species

What do they look like? Small grey, yellow or brown birds about 10 cm long that rarely sit still for long. They have a thin, pointed beak. Several species occur in the region. Inland, Yellow-rumped, Buff-rumped and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill are the most common species. The Yellow-rumped Thornbill is the easiest to identify because it is often in open country and its yellow rump is obvious as it flies away. If you manage to get a good look at a thornbill, the eye colour, leg colour and amount of streaking on the chest and face are important for identification.

Where do they live? Most woodland habitats, but often overlooked because of their small size. Yellow-rumped Thornbills are sometimes common in open areas and cleared country. Other thornbills prefer intact vegetation with woody mid-storey vegetation.

What do they need to live, eat and breed? Thornbills are 'gleaners', hunting food by inspecting leaves, twigs, tree bark and flowers for small invertebrates. They may form mixed groups, using all levels of the area they inhabit, so it is common to have some feeding on the ground and others in the tree canopy.

When might I see (or hear) them? Daytime. Some species have distinctive twittering, trilling or soft calls that may give their presence away.

What management actions affect this species? Maintaining structural diversity within patches of thicker scrub and woodland areas benefits thornbills. Wildfire, tree clearing and mechanical thinning of understory shrubs and trees reduce the amount of foraging space available and leads to localised declines. Except for Yellow-rumped Thornbills, they decrease when diversity of vegetation structure is lost. Grazing systems which retain leaf litter on the ground at the end of the dry season are also likely to help thornbills.

How do they benefit the land I manage? Thornbills are efficient feeders on large numbers of insects. Due to their small size and active nature, they find insects in thick vegetation, which other bird species overlook. Their feeding complements other larger insectivorous birds that hunt in other vegetation strata, and all together, help keep many invertebrate species in check.

Similar species: Weebill (*Smicromis brevirostris*) has a short wedge-shaped beak and is smaller in stature.

