



Grey-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus temporalis*

What do they look like? Medium sized, slim, dark brown bird, approximately 30 cm long. They have a pale chin and crown that looks white, but it is usually pale grey on close inspection. Grey-crowned Babblers have a thin, curved beak, similar to a honeyeater's. They generally occur in co-operative family groups.

Where do they live? Open woodlands and occasionally more closed forests with mixed ground layer. They are often very common in areas that have a layer of smaller trees or shrubs like quinine bush, in which they nest. Widespread in eastern and northern Australia but has declined in Victoria and New South Wales. Still common across most of the region.

What do they need to live, eat and breed? Usually feeds by moving as a group slowly through undergrowth and low shrubs. Grey-crowned Babblers are gleaners of insects and other small invertebrates. Roosts and breeds in large, round nests of twigs about the size of a basketball, usually only a few metres off the ground. Family members 'pitch in' to feed and raise chicks.

When might I see (or hear) them? Active by day, often associates loosely with Apostlebirds (happy jacks). The natural behaviour of Grey-crowned Babblers is to move as a group through the undergrowth, muttering and chattering quietly. This is rarely observed because of their vigorous response to humans and dogs when they rise as a flock into mid-storey shrubs and trees and make loud, scolding calls. They sometimes make a loud 'yahooing' call that can be heard from long distances.

What management actions affect this species? Grey-crowned Babblers require a woody vegetation understorey and a mixed ground layer in which to nest and feed. Maintaining structural and micro-habitat diversity and dense ground cover, especially leaf litter, benefits Grey-crowned Babblers. Extensive clearing and thinning causes declines in population. They are invariably absent from long-cleared areas, except around the fringes.

How do they benefit the land I manage? As part of a large suite of insectivorous birds, Grey-crowned Babblers help keep woodland ecosystems healthy by controlling pest insects. One can easily imagine large family groups of Grey-crowned Babblers cleaning up many thousands of moth grubs, or 'hoppers' at the beginning of a locust plague. While foraging, they turn over leaf mulch thus assisting with incorporation of organic matter and nutrients.

