



# Forty-Spotted Pardalote

## *Pardalotus quadragintus*



### What is a forty-spotted pardalote?

One of the smallest and rarest birds in Australia, the forty-spotted pardalote belongs to a group known as 'diamond birds' because of their tiny, jewel-like appearance.

### Why is it endangered?

The forty-spotted pardalote is only found in Tasmania (endemic) and is classified 'Endangered'. Its distribution is restricted to four locations in eastern Tasmania: Flinders Island, Maria Island, Tinderbox and Bruny Island. The only colonies of more than 100 birds are on Bruny and Maria Islands. The greatest threat to the forty-spotted pardalote is the destruction of its habitat and competition from other species such as noisy mynahs who enter the 'forty-spots' fiercely defended territory. Cats may also take adults and nestlings.

### What do they look like?

Measuring about 9 - 10 cm, the body is light olive green with pale yellow around the eye and on the rump. The wings are black with distinctive white dots. There are no head markings. The call is a low pitched 'where..... where..... where..... where'. Other calls it can be confused with are the spotted pardalote which has a higher pitched 'me.. me' call and the black-headed honeyeater. They

can be seen most often in the upper foliage of white gum where they live and feed, and may be found alone or in small groups. Binoculars are essential to catch a glimpse of these tiny birds and identify them correctly.

### Why are white gums important?

Forty-spotted pardalotes live in dry eucalypt forests and woodlands only where white gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) occurs. This tree is the key to the birds survival. They feed on a variety of insects, and also lerps (a protective insect coating) and manna, a sugary secretion produced by the tree in response to insect attack. The birds are called 'foliage gleaners' because of the way they pick the insects from the leaves and branches.

### Identifying white gum

White gum is a common species in dry eucalypt forests throughout eastern Tasmania. It has a rough bark collar on the lower trunk with a smooth white and grey streaked surface extending to the branches and canopy. Leaves are slender and usually 10 - 20 cm long. Considered a moderate sized tree it can grow to approximately 50 m in height and 1 - 2 m in diameter.



## Other pardalotes

Two other pardalotes also occur throughout Tasmania. Both are common and widespread and are similar in appearance and habit. The spotted pardalote has a spotted head and the striated pardalote has streaked head markings. Both species have vivid yellow throats, rumps and small patches of red. Neither species are considered rare and both are found on mainland Australia.

## What's being done?

The Parks and Wildlife Service, with funds from the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, has established a recovery team of representatives. This team manages the habitats and populations of the forty-spotted pardalote — thereby increasing awareness about the threats to the birds and ways we can help save them.

## What can 'forty-spots' do for you?

Having a 'forty-spot' colony nearby has its advantages — especially for farmers and gardeners. 'Forty-spots' eat a variety of insects and so are a great natural way to help control pests.

## How can you help?

Fortunately we can help save the 'forty-spots'. If you have white gums growing on your property don't cut them down or remove old growth or dead spars — these trees provide food and nest sites for the birds.

Plant white gums on your property to ensure food and homes for the future. A planting program is underway offering information and seedlings to people owning land near the colonies.

## Further information

A video on the recovery program which shows rare footage of the bird and chicks is available from the Nature Conservation Branch.

## Contact

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