



SAVING OUR SPECIES

Malleefowl

Leipoa ocellata

Endangered

The malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) is a large bird growing to 55 to 60 centimetres and weighing up to 2.5 kilograms. It has a buff-grey head and neck and a dappled brown, black and white body. Its excellent hearing and eyesight enable it to detect danger, when it will rely on its camouflage to sneak away.

The call most often heard is a loud booming made by the male, usually from on or near its mound.

Although they were originally found widely throughout Australia, malleefowl are now mostly limited to areas of inland semi-arid scrub. They prefer a dry environment with low-growing eucalypt trees and shrubs, referred to as mallee country.

Malleefowl feed in open areas on seeds of acacias and other native shrubs (*Cassia*, *Beyeria*, *Bossiaea*), buds, flowers and fruits of herbs, insects (cockroaches, ants and soil invertebrates) and cereals if available.

They build large mounds from earth, sand and leaf litter where the eggs are laid for incubation.

The male monitors the temperature within the egg chamber using his bill and regularly works the

Malleefowl are ‘megapodes’, from the Latin for ‘big foot’. They use these big feet to scrape leaf litter and soil into a mound in which the eggs are incubated.

The composting of the leaf litter provides the warmth, and the temperature is regulated by adding or removing the soil/leaf mixture from the mound.

mound during the breeding season to maintain a constant temperature around 34° Celsius.

While the male is keeping the temperature of the mound constant, the female is busy laying eggs and helping with the digging. Generally, an egg is laid every four to eight days. A female malleefowl lays between 15 and 24 eggs in a season, though the number will vary depending on availability of food.

Malleefowl provide no parental care. Chicks hatch and emerge from the mound, beginning a solitary life independent of their parents, relying on camouflage for defence against foxes and other predators.

Support local action and help save the malleefowl



Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*). Photo: Marc Irvin/DPIE

The malleefowl is now endangered in New South Wales mainly due to the clearance of mallee vegetation and predation by foxes.

Other threats to the species include:

- fragmentation, reducing habitat extent and increasing isolation
- predation by cats, particularly on young birds
- disturbance to mounds from goats and pigs
- competition for food from feral animals
- fire destroying food sources, along with the litter used in mound construction and the understorey vegetation which provides shelter from predators
- uncertainty with respect to ecological factors influencing population size and breeding success.

Saving our Species (SoS) works in partnership with a wide range of other organisations and private landowners to save the malleefowl.

Management activities are being undertaken through the SoS program at priority management sites across western New South Wales.

The recovery effort aims to:

- implement appropriate fire regimes to promote a range of habitats and food resources in a locality
- retain stick and leaf litter and ground debris

SoS is a NSW Government flagship program targeting on-ground action to secure threatened plants and animals from extinction. The program aims to increase the number of species that can survive securely in the wild.

SoS can only succeed if we work together. We need your support to ensure that today's actions help to secure the future of NSW's threatened species.

Find out more about threatened species in New South Wales and SoS programs at environment.nsw.gov.au/SOS



Malleefowl mound. Photo: Stuart Cohen/DPIE

- use cameras to monitor activity around nest mounds to record predation, disturbance and nesting success (images are uploaded to the Australian Museum's DigiVol site to enable processing by citizen scientists across the world)
- control vertebrate pest populations (e.g. foxes, cats, pigs and goats) which prey on the species or degrade habitat and compete for resources
- reduce stocking intensity or exclude grazing in some areas to allow regeneration of vegetation and improve habitat quality
- retain understorey shrubs and allow them to complete their life cycle (i.e. seed set, germination, establishment, growth to maturity).

You too can help

To support the ongoing success of the recovery of the malleefowl you can:

- register on the Australian Museums DigiVol site to help process SOS monitoring images (<https://digivol.ala.org.au/>)
- join the National Malleefowl Recovery Team (nationalmalleefowl.com.au/get-involved/volunteer/) and participate in the field with Malleefowl Monitoring
- register to receive the National Malleefowl Newsletter to stay informed of malleefowl happenings across the country (nationalmalleefowl.com.au/)
- contact us to register your interest to assist in future volunteer opportunities (environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/help-save-our-threatened-species)
- report malleefowl sightings to BioNet (bionet.nsw.gov.au).

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