

Blue Faced Honeyeater

The Blue-faced Honeyeater (*Entomyzon cyanotis*), also colloquially known as Bananabird, is a passerine bird of the Honeyeater family Meliphagidae commonly found around the northern and eastern coasts of Australia and New Guinea. The only member of its genus, it is most closely related to honeyeaters of the genus *Melithreptus*. Three races are recognised. It is large for a honeyeater and easily identified by its bare blue face-patch. Found in open woodland, parks and gardens, its diet is made up of nectar and invertebrates. Originally described as *Gracula cyanotis* by ornithologist John Latham in 1802, though he also considered *Merops* (as *M. cyanops*) and *Turdus* (as *T. cyanus*). It is the only member of the genus *Entomyzon*, though its plumage suggests an affinity with honeyeaters of the genus *Melithreptus*. It has been classified in that genus by Storr, though others felt it more closely related to Wattlebirds (*Anthochaera*) or Miners (*Manorina*). A recent molecular study, however, has resolved it as close to *Melithreptus* after all. DNA analysis has shown the honeyeater family Meliphagidae, to which the Blue-faced Honeyeater belongs, to be related to the Pardalotidae, and the Petroicidae (Australian robins) in a large corvid superfamily; some researchers considering all these families in a broadly defined Corvidae. The generic name is derived from the Greek stems *ento-* ("inside") and *myzein* ("to drink" or "suck") while the specific name "blue-eared" comes from *cyano-* ("blue") and *otis* ("ear"). Other common names include Banana-bird, Pandanas-bird, White-quilled Honeyeater, Morning-bird, Blue-eye and Gympie. It is called (minha) yeewi, where *minha* is a qualifier meaning 'meat' or 'animal', in Pakanh, (inh -) ewelmb in Uw Oygangand and Uw Olkola, where *inh-* is a qualifier meaning 'meat' or 'animal', in three aboriginal languages of central Cape York Peninsula. Three races are recognized:

- *E. c. albipennis*: described by John Gould in 1841 and found in north Queensland, west though the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory and across into the top of Western Australia, with white on the wings and a discontinuous stripe on the nape.
- *E. c. cyanotis*: nominate race described below - found from Cape York Peninsula south through Queensland and New South Wales into the Riverina region.
- *E. c. griseigularis*: From southwestern New Guinea, described in 1909. A large honeyeater 25-32 cm (9-13 in) in length, the adult Blue-faced honeyeater is easily recognised by its patch of bare blue skin around its eyes. The head and throat are otherwise predominantly blackish with a white stripe around the nape and another from the cheek. The underparts are white and the back and wings olive in colour. Juveniles are distinguished by their yellow or greenish face patches and dark brown rather than black on the head. The call is a ki-owt. They live throughout open woodland, pandanus, paperbarks, mangroves, watercourses, parks and gardens. They are commonly known to suck the nectar out of grevillea trees and are very common around the backyard. Their diet consists of pollen, berries, nectar, and cultivated crops such as bananas or particularly grapes, but the bulk of their diet consists of insects. Usually very inquisitive, and friendly birds, they will often invade a campsite, searching for edible items.

Blue-faced honeyeaters may nest from June to January, breeding once or twice during this time. The nest is an untidy deep bowl of sticks and bits of bark in the fork of a tree, Birds Nest or Staghorn Fern or deserted babbler nest. Two or rarely three eggs are laid, 22 x 32 mm (1 x 1S in) and buff-pink splotched with red-brown or purplish colours. It is one of the many bird species parasitised by the Asian Koel.