

# Birds of the Perth Hills



By Talitha Huston

"For a teenager to produce a book like this, is a great compliment to Talitha. Not only are the photographs first class, but her observations of the birds, and their behaviour, shows that hours of watching have been recorded. Talitha, it is my great pleasure, to highly compliment you on your book, and hope that another may follow."

*Eric McCrum OAM  
'The Bird Man' ABC Radio*



"I am very impressed with Talitha's enthusiasm and enterprise to write this book. The photography is very good. It gives me a good feeling to know that the young ones are interested in birds. Looking forward to her next book!"

*Ray Garstone  
Naturalist and Author - 'Birds of the Great Southern', 'Birds of the West', 'Birds of Australia'.*



42

## Gilbert's Honeyeater (Djingki) *Meliphreptus chloropsis*

### Found

Gilbert's Honeyeater is found in forests and woodlands. It is usually in areas of temperate weather but rarely in drier regions.

Gilbert's Honeyeater can also be seen in gardens, farmlands and urban areas.

### Diet

Gilbert's Honeyeater feeds on nectar, manna, insects and their products (honeydew and lerp). Feeding takes place in the middle and upper stories of the canopy. Gilbert's Honeyeaters are found in banksias, eucalyptus trees and flowering bushes when feeding. They are often in the company of other small Thornbills and Honeyeaters.

### Breeding

Breeding takes place from July to January, raising a clutch of 2-3, in a small neat cup nest of bark, fibre and fine grass stems bound with cobwebs. This is hidden in drooping outer foliage 3-15 metres above the ground. Incubation lasts 14 days, with the female incubating the eggs and both parents feeding the young until they fledge at 14-16 days. The female builds the nest with at least two broods raised in a season.



43

### Tips

Gilbert's Honeyeaters are often seen dangling precariously to drink nectar from Marri flowers and eat lerps. They are also seen drinking from bird-baths in summer months, where they are rarely visible perching in trees or fences. Usually they will feed in groups and are often in close proximities to other small birds such as Thornbills and Brown Honeyeaters. They can be playful and aggressive towards each other, but it isn't common. They are often confused with the White-naped Honeyeater, but are larger, have a longer and thicker bill and have white to pale blue-green skin above eye which is red in the White-naped honeyeaters.

### Male or Female

Both sexes are identical, except for minor differences between races.

**Conservation Status:** Least concern, population stable

**Life span:** 3 years

**Skittish rating:** 4



## About the Author

Talitha Huston is a 17-year-old hills high school student. By the time she was five years old she had taken 10,000 photos on the family camera and her mother Janette, using her remarkable photos, produced an unpublished book titled "In the Eyes of a Child."

At five years old she received her first camera and took thousands more photos. Travels around America and the north-eastern parts of Australia increased her appetite for the wilderness. She developed a love for nature photography—particularly birds.

After taking hundreds of photos of birds, she decided to make use of them in producing a book called Birds of the Perth Hills from the age of 14-16.

The book has 105 pages, 47 birds and is on recycled paper with vegetable dye ink.

What is remarkable about this book is that not only did Talitha take all the photos, hand-paint the maps and do all the research, she completed it without anyone, including her family, knowing she was doing it. The first they knew of it was when she presented it to them spiral bound and professionally printed, virtually just how it looks today.

Unlike other bird books, this book is special. Talitha has created her own rating called a 'Skittish Rating' and tips for photographing all the birds in the book.

10% of the full proceeds of her book will go to Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre.

The book has been extremely popular. Within a week of launching the book she had sold 200 books. Within 11 weeks 700 were sold.

The State Library said it was extremely professional, like Talitha had been doing it for years. The photos, she has been told, are world class.

Talitha has done radio interviews with ABC, Curtin FM, Noongar Radio, 6PR, Kalamunda Community Radio, Boom radio. She has done a podcast, has Facebook Page and soon a website.

