



# MALLEEFOWL



*Leipoa ocellata*

## STATUS

- Vulnerable.
- Malleefowl have many threats including habitat loss, isolation of populations and introduced predators such as cats and foxes. (They have few natural predators.)
- Bushfires can wipe out isolated populations of Malleefowl which cannot fly far or high to safety.
- Much of the Malleefowl's natural habitat has been eliminated due to agriculture and urbanization.

## DISTRIBUTION


- Malleefowl inhabit the dry southern half of the continent from Western Australia across South Australia into New South Wales and Victoria, west to the Great Dividing Range.

## HABITAT

- Malleefowl are adapted to live in mallee and grassy woodland, and dry coastal heaths.
- They need a habitat with many and varied seed bearing shrubs, herb growth and sufficient leaf litter to support insect life.
- Winter rain is important. In drought the Malleefowl may not breed.

## SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Malleefowl usually pair for life, though they don't interact much out of breeding season.
- During the late winter the male rakes litter and soil into a mound which can be up to 6m in diameter and 1m deep. An egg chamber is scratched out in the top of the mound.
- Over many weeks the female lays 15 to 24 large eggs in the chamber at the top of the mound. Sometimes the eggs together weigh 2 ½ times as much as the female!

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- Malleefowl do not sit on their eggs to incubate them. The eggs are buried within the mound for 50 – 100 days and as the leaf litter decays, it produces heat which incubates the eggs.
  - The male birds stay near the nest throughout incubation and keep the temperature at around 33°C by removing or replacing soil on the eggs. They test the temperature of the mound regularly with their beaks.
  - When the young are ready to hatch the male leaves the mound, and the young must take care of themselves. They are born with full flight feathers, not fluffy down, and after one day can fly well and roost in trees.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

- Malleefowl are mottled black, brown and white in colour with a large black band from the neck to breast. They have a white underside.
- They weigh about 1.5kg and are about 60cm in length: the size of a large fowl.

#### **POINTS OF INTEREST**

- Malleefowl food includes acacia and senna seeds, herbs, flower blossoms, cockroaches and beetles.
- They can survive without drinking water, obtaining enough water from their food.