

MELIPHAGAS HONEYEATERS - AN IDENTIFICATION COMPARISON TABLE

Compiled from Bird Identification Series, David James, Mastering the Mysterious Meliphagas: Honeyeaters with Yellow ear-spots
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Species >>	Lewin's	Yellow-Spotted	Graceful
Characteristic	m.lewinii	m.notata	m.gracilis
Subspecies	<i>m.lewinii.amphochlora</i> (Near Coen Paler & slightly smaller than typical race, slight yellow tinge to throat & Harder to separate from Yellow-spotted)	<i>m.notata</i> {Cape York} has slightly paler underparts than <i>m.notata.mixta</i> (Wet tropics)	<i>m.gracilis</i> (Cape York) <i>m.gracilis.imiatrix</i> (Wet tropics)
Location	Most widespread, Southern Vic to near Coens	Just S of Townsville to tip of Cape York & larger Torres Straits islands	Just N of Townsville to tip of Cape York & Torres Straits & New Guinea
Habitat	Prefer upland rainforests	Rainforests, riparian rainforests, vine thickets, mangroves, mixed woodlands adjacent to these.	
Altitude	Higher altitudes	Mostly below 500-600m Occasionally recorded with Lewin's	Rarely above 600m
Size	Largest & darkest	Intermediate	Smallest
Activity	Sluggish, On a perch holds the body fairly still and moves the head a lot Less often hop or flits around on perches, but flies between them		Very active, constantly moving head and body, flicking wings and hopping between perches
Stance	Varies from horizontal to vertical Sometimes sits with body horizontal and tail cocked down	Horizontal Hunched posture	Often more vertical
Body Shape The best indicator	Bulky Barrel chest	'Awkward' barrel chested body	Slender, with elegant body Body streamlined
Head	Largest	Large	Small
Forehead	Darker & browner than crown	Olive & concolorous with crown, little darker than crown.	
Lores & eye-stripe	Dark & give frowning expression	Eye-stripe less obvious in Graceful than Yellow-spotted, & too subtle to be a good field character	
Facial Pattern	Grey wash in front of ear-spot & under the back of the gape-stripe		
Neck	Pinched	Distinctly pinched	Streamlined. Not prominently pinched
Chin	Olive-grey, concolorous with throat and breast	Slight yellowish tinge & paler than the throat	Distinctive buff tinge to chin
Bill	Short, thick, appears stubby	Short to medium length (Size overlaps the other 2 species)	Long, slender & finely tipped
Lower mandible	Straight		Downcurved
Eye (Iris)	Adult - Blue, Juvenile - Dark Brown	Brown (always)	Brown (always)
Gape stripe	Has two components: a bare fleshy gape-flange in front of the eye and a feathered stripe back under the eye There can be seasonal variations		
	Whitish or pale yellow Paler and duller than the ear-spot	Yellow The gape is a similar yellow to the spot & a bit brighter.	Orange-yellow (weakening/thinning under eye) The skin at the gape is usually distinctly more orange than the ear-spot
Ear-spot	Crescent shaped A reliable indicator for Lewin's	Not Crescent shaped. Could be vaguely rounded, triangular diamond shaped The Yellow-spotted has lightly larger, more angular and diamond shaped with a slight peak at top.	
	The differences are subtle & better characteristics to look for. The tuft can be raised to change shape with posture and behaviour		
Area between ear-spot & eye	Grey wash (also under back of gape-stripe)	Olive	Olive
Upperparts	Comparatively dark	Similar to each other	
Underparts	Shaggy, darker Olive centres & yellowish tinge to edges of breast feathers, which give untidy streaked look.	Shaggy, with hint of yellow flush to belly. Breast mostly grey, but uneven and untidy	Breast clean uniformly Grey Soft yellow ventral stripe
Tail	Lewin's has proportionally slightly longer tail		
Call	Loud and explosive burst or rattle of 20 or more machine-gun-like monotonous notes lasting only a couple of seconds. Sometimes this call rendered more slowly than usual, causing confusion with Yellow-spotted.	Loud, explosive, staccato plisk plisk plisk plisk twik twik twik Starts slowly and accelerates slightly Typically about 8 notes lasting 4 secs. A wheezy petulant quality to the notes lends an urgency that stands in peculiar contrast to the deliberate, slow spacing. During middle of day often lacks some of its petulance. Less often a softer <i>plisk plisk</i> .. repeated monotonously 6 to 12 times, evenly spaced to about 2 notes per second	Most common call is frequently a soft pleasant melodious single-noted plit A slightly harsher but not urgent or wheezy plick plick plick of 4 to 8 notes - about 2 per second A faster call wip wip wip is uncommonly given in sequences of 4 to 12, about 4 per second. This call never explosive or accelerating, nor does it change in structure or tone through its duration Gracefull has a similar call to Yellow-spotted but not so harsh or wheezy
Juveniles	Distinct brown crown & forehead with dark brown eyes		

David James suggests firstly concentrate on either

(1) shape, to see if it is a Graceful or not; or (2) whether it has a grey face and crescent shaped ear-spot of a Lewins

David advises "the 2nd column of Table 1 is *amphochlora*

