

## FIRE INFORMATION NOTE | MALLEEFOWL

### Species and conservation status

Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata* – Vulnerable

### Description

Malleefowl are large, ground-dwelling birds about the size of a domestic chicken. Malleefowl have distinct grey, black and white banding across their body and wings. Their breast and belly are cream-white, and their neck and head are greyish with a white stripe under the eye. Malleefowl move quietly and are well camouflaged making them difficult to spot. They rarely fly unless disturbed.



### Where are malleefowl found?

In Western Australia malleefowl are found primarily in shrublands and woodlands dominated by mallee (multi-stemmed eucalypts) south of a line just north of Carnarvon to Carnegie and the Warburton Range. Malleefowl are most common in and around the Wheatbelt region where they occur on many reserves and private properties. They also use mallet, marlock and moort woodlands, mulga and some coastal heaths. There is an unusual population in the southern forests that occurs in a small area of karri forest with an understorey of karri wattle.

### Ecology and biology

- Malleefowl are long-lived (up to 28 years), only reaching sexual maturity after 3-4 years. They are mostly sedentary.
- Malleefowl are best known for their nesting practices. They incubate their eggs in a large mound built of leaf litter and soil that can be more than 5m in diameter and 1m in height. They use the same mound over multiple breeding seasons.
- Malleefowl breed annually, between September and January. The male tends to the mound while the eggs are incubating.
- After they hatch, usually between November and January, chicks dig to the surface of the mound unaided and can fly and fend for themselves within a few hours.
- Malleefowl eat seeds, fruit, invertebrates, tubers and fungi.

### What should I consider when undertaking fire mitigation activities?

- Plan for low intensity burns that create a mosaic of fuels.
- For large areas, plan a management regime that treats small sections over a number of years.
- Protect an area of about 200m radius around active mounds to maintain leaf litter needed for mound building.
- If there are active mounds in your fire management area, conduct your activities (including burns) in autumn to avoid the spring malleefowl breeding season.
- If there are no active nests in your fire management area, you can conduct your activities at any time.
- Consider conducting fox and feral cat control (e.g. 1080 baiting, trapping or shooting) immediately before and after your fire management activities. Continue baiting until dense regeneration of the scrub layer has occurred.

### More information

**Threatened species management contact:** DBCA's Species and Communities Program:  
[speciesandcommunities@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:speciesandcommunities@dbca.wa.gov.au) or your local DBCA Regional or District office:  
[www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/locations](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/locations)

**Fuel management on your land:** [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/plannedburning/](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/plannedburning/)