



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development

Digital Library

---

Biosecurity factsheets

Biosecurity


---

10-2024

## Blackbird

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia

Follow this and additional works at: [https://library.dpird.wa.gov.au/bs\\_factsheets](https://library.dpird.wa.gov.au/bs_factsheets)

 Part of the [Agricultural Education Commons](#), [Agricultural Science Commons](#), [Agronomy and Crop Sciences Commons](#), [Behavior and Ethology Commons](#), [Biosecurity Commons](#), [Horticulture Commons](#), and the [Ornithology Commons](#)

---

This factsheet is brought to you for free and open access by the Biosecurity at Digital Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biosecurity factsheets by an authorized administrator of Digital Library. For more information, please contact [library@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:library@dpird.wa.gov.au).

# Blackbird

DPIRD-141

This factsheet provides information on the identification, biology, and pest potential of the blackbird in Western Australia.



**Figure 1: Male blackbird. Photo - courtesy T & P Gardner/Nature Focus®**

**Figure 2. Female blackbird, reproduced at smaller scale than male bird. Photo: courtesy Brian Chudleigh, Nature Focus ©2001**

## Introduction

The introduced common blackbird (*Turdus merula*) is a pest in eastern Australia. It damages commercial fruit crops and may compete with native birds. The species is prohibited in Western Australia and individuals found here are destroyed.

The Western Australian Organism List (WAOL) contains information on the area(s) in which this pest is declared and the control and keeping categories to which it has been assigned in Western Australia (WA). For more information, see our website at [dpird.wa.gov.au](http://dpird.wa.gov.au).

## Identification

The adult blackbird is about 250 mm long (including a 95 mm long tail) and weighs about 100 g.

The male is all black with a bright orange-yellow bill and eye ring, and brown-black legs.

The female has dark brown upper parts and mottled, paler underparts, which are red-brown in colour. The female also has a whitish chin and a yellow-brown bill and legs.

Juvenile blackbirds are lighter brown in colour than females, with more rufous mottled upper parts. Sub-adult males are brownish black with a black bill.

## Distribution

The blackbird occurs naturally in Eurasia and North Africa. It was introduced to Victoria before 1862, and spread throughout Victoria, Tasmania, southern New South Wales, and eastern South Australia, but its range has only increased marginally over the last 20 years.

## Behaviour

The male blackbird's distinctive song during the breeding season is loud and melodious with a flute-like quality. Males often sing from high perches. Both sexes produce a variety of other calls and can also mimic native birds.

The birds spend much of their time on the ground, walking or swiftly bounding with occasional flickering of the wings. Frequent pauses are made with the head tilted to one side as if listening.

Blackbirds often forage in the open, but as they are timid, cover is usually close by. When they forage in leaf litter under trees and bushes, they can sound like a person walking through the bush.

The blackbird's short flights are low and undulating, but fast and direct over open country. The tail is raised and fanned and the wings are drooped on landing.

Normally blackbirds are seen in ones or twos and both sexes are strongly territorial. They are also found in small groups when the young have just left the nest and are still being fed by the parents. The birds do not congregate in large flocks, but occasionally assemble in areas where fruit is ripening.

## Habitat and food

The blackbird is found in gardens, orchards, thickets, the understoreys of wetter woodlands and forests and along timbered watercourses. Foods include insects, earthworms, molluscs, spiders, and fruits.

## Reproduction

The breeding season in eastern Australia occurs between September and January. The nest is a large shallow cup of dried plant material bound with mud. It is normally located one to 2 metres from the ground in dense vegetation. It may also be on the ground, high in a tree, or in a building. The 3 to 5 eggs are blue-grey with red-brown spots. Incubation takes 13 days and the young leave the nest after another 13 days. Both adults attend the young. In extremely favourable conditions, 3 broods can be raised in one season.

## Damage

Blackbirds are considered pests because they damage a variety of soft fruits including berries, cherries, stone fruit, and grapes. They are thought to spread weeds, such as blackberry. They cause damage in gardens and may compete with native birds for food and nesting sites.

## More information

For more information on the blackbird, contact our Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS).

## Contact information

### **Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS)**

+61 8 9368 3080

Email [padis@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au)

Last updated October 2024

### **Important Disclaimer**

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copyright © State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) 2024.

[dpird.wa.gov.au](http://dpird.wa.gov.au)