

## **Beating the bullies: managing aggressive Manorinas to restore bird assemblages**

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## Project overview

The composition of many Australian woodland and forest bird assemblages is controlled by a single, hyper-aggressive native bird, the noisy miner *Manorina melanocephala*. In many situations at least 80% of small bird species are excluded from otherwise suitable habitat by noisy miners, and this exclusion results in a shift from an assemblage with diverse foraging strategies to a homogenized one, predictably dominated by large-bodied and ground-foraging species, and a high proportion of avian predators of vertebrates. The cascading ecological effects of this shift are likely to be substantial. Yet while numerous individual, local-scale studies have documented this phenomenon, and large datasets exist, there remain significant knowledge gaps. Despite the critical importance of this issue to the health of woodland bird assemblages across eastern Australia, we lack a large-scale synthesis of the nature, causes and solutions to the noisy miner problem.

This working group will address these knowledge gaps by harnessing diverse existing datasets and using them to develop and test models of noisy miner occupancy and impacts, leading to new management approaches. Collectively, working group members possess significant avifauna datasets representing decades of research from across the range of the noisy miner, in many ecosystem types, and in urban, periurban, and rural areas. These datasets will be standardised and analysed in order to, firstly, reveal geographic variation in the effects of noisy miners on bird assemblages; secondly, develop alternative conceptual models of the anthropogenic and natural factors contributing to noisy miner domination; and thirdly, test the models using the combined data set in order to identify a single unified theoretical model of the process of noisy miner invasion. Finally, we will develop a decision support tool for management responses to noisy miners which identifies where action to control noisy miner impacts is necessary, and which approach is most cost-effective.



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