

COULD IT BE BELL MINER-ASSOCIATED DIEBACK?

The bell miner, *Manorina melanophrys*, is a native honeyeater, which only occurs in eastern Australia. Also known as “bellbirds”, bell miners are loved by many Australians for their distinctive call, which sounds like a high pitched bell ([listen here](#)). It is repeated all day 2-3 times per minute by each bird in the colony.

Unfortunately, bell miners have also been associated with tree death, because they are often found in areas where trees are showing symptoms of dieback. These symptoms include sparse canopies, dead branches, dead limbs and trees that have died.

Like noisy miners (*Manorina melanocephala*), bell miners aggressively defend their territory year-round from other bird species. Some ecologists think that bell miners cause dieback by driving away other bird species that eat herbivorous insects, meaning the insect populations can increase to the point that they eat the trees to death. However, bell miners are also opportunistic and will nest in exotic plant species such as *Lantana camara*, so they may just be moving into areas where forests are already disturbed and under stress. Little is known so far about how bell miners choose sites for their colonies.

You can help by letting us know here if you hear bell miners nearby forest stands with dead trees. We are also monitoring bell miner colonies over at the [Bell Miner Colony Project](#).

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