

# Rose Robin

*Petroica rosea*

#5 MAY 2021



Hunter Bird  
Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia



Adult male Rose Robin (photo: Rob Palazzi)

## Description

Adult male Rose Robins have a bright pink breast with contrasting white belly, and no white wing bar. That combination of features rules out all other species of male robin in Australia. Also they have a dark-grey head and upper parts and a barely perceptible white spot on their forehead; again these are unique features in combination.

Females have a generally more subdued plumage, and they have off-white wing-bars, visible on their folded wings. Some females, possibly the older ones, have a pink wash on their breast (note though: so do immature males). Those features also apply for female Scarlet Robins; however the latter have a large white spot on their forehead, just above their bill, a feature which the female Rose Robin does not possess. Also, the Rose Robin is a smaller bird. Immature birds of either sex have light brown wing-bars which are larger than the off-white wing-bars of females.

Juvenile Rose Robins resemble most other juvenile robins e.g. all are similarly shaped and have a generally brown appearance with much fine white

streaking. Juveniles of the various robin species have differences in their wing-bar and tail patterns, but those differences are subtle and are not addressed here. Juveniles moult into immature plumage within 2-3 months of fledging.

No sub-species are recognised. Only the females incubate, building their neat cup-shaped nest in wet sclerophyll forest or rainforest and lining it with spider webs. In the breeding season birds call often, and the call is a distinctive trill which can be heard over a considerable distance under favourable circumstances.



Immature male Rose Robin, with extensive pink colouration on breast, brown primaries and bone-coloured lower mandible (Photo: Rob Palazzi)

### An altitudinal migrant

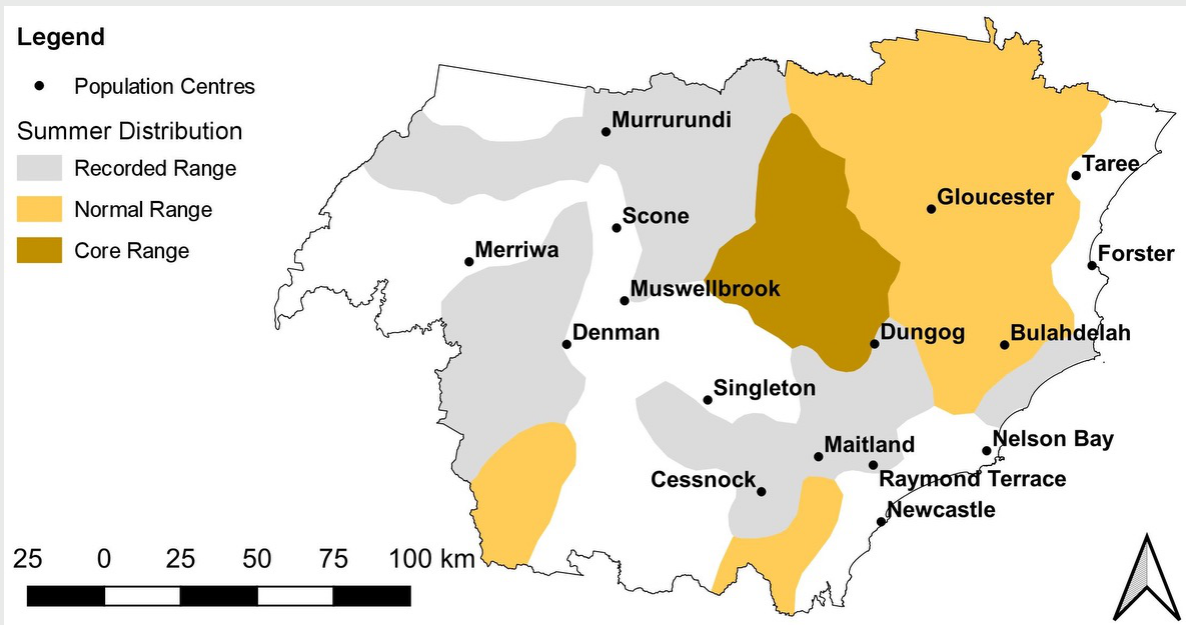
Although most Rose Robins are resident in the Hunter Region they are altitudinal migrants. In spring they return to breeding grounds at higher altitude locations such as the Barrington Tops and The Watagans. The two timelines below indicate the migration period and the two maps show the summer and winter distribution (maps and timelines prepared by Dan Williams). It is around about now, in May, that we start to see the main arrival of <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> birds at the lower altitude sites. The habitats they occupy in autumn-winter are very different to those that they occur in during summer and are usually quite open and dominated by dry forest.



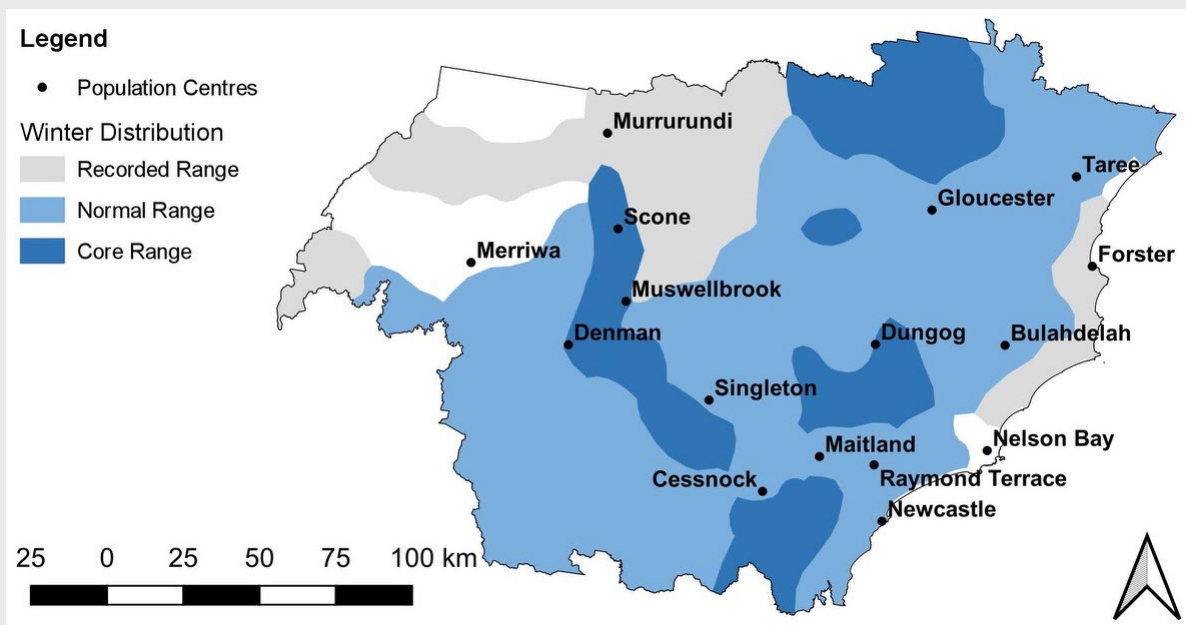
Timeline for Rose Robin records at high altitudes (above c 400m) (timeline produced by Dan Williams)



Timeline for Rose Robin records at low altitudes (below c 400m) (timeline produced by Dan Williams)



Summer distribution of Rose Robin in the Hunter Region (map produced by Dan Williams)



Winter distribution of Rose Robin in the Hunter Region (map produced by Dan Williams)

## About the name



## Rose Robin

The Australian robins are so-named because some of them have a superficial resemblance to the European Robin, which belongs to a completely unrelated genus. In Old English, that European bird was called the Ruddock. However, as it was a species familiar to most and with a bright red breast, people began to call it Robin Redbreast (Robin being an affectionate version of Robert). Eventually, usage of the “Redbreast” part of the name died away. However, when English colonists encountered red-breasted birds in a new colony they could not resist calling them robins. As another example, a thrush in North America which became the American Robin.

### *Petroica rosea*

The species name stems from the Latin *roseus*, meaning rose-coloured, and is descriptive. The genus name means “rock-dweller” from the Greek words *petros* (rock) and *oikos* (house or dwelling place). The name was bestowed because the type specimen for the genus was collected on Norfolk Island in 1829, in rocky habitat.



Female Rose Robin – note the off-white wing-bar and faint white spot on the forehead  
(Photo: Jim Smart)

Volumes 1-7 of HANZAB (the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds) • Bird in the Hand (ABSA information sheet series) • Menkhorst et al. (2017). The Australian Bird Guide. • Ian Fraser & Jeannie Gray (2013). Australian Bird Names. A Complete Guide. *Information in this fact sheet is provided exclusively to members of the Hunter Bird Observers Club*

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