

Bonin White-Eye

The Bonin white-eye is a small songbird native to the Ogasawara Islands that lives on Hahajima and its surrounding islands. After reaching adulthood, these birds rarely venture more than 20 meters from their nests. They are frequently found in backyards and gardens and are beloved by the people on the island. Bonin white-eyes have round bodies, yellow and green feathers, and a distinctive white ring surrounded by a black triangle around each eye. Their eye markings are the source of their name in both English and Japanese—the English name “white-eye” refers to the white ring, while the Japanese name (*meguro*) means “black-eye” and refers to the surrounding triangle.

Before humans came to the islands, Bonin white-eyes had no predators other than the common buzzard, and they have no innate fear of humans or other land-based animals. They are therefore easily hunted by the cats and rats that came to the islands along with the human settlers. Currently, measures to protect the wild birds of the islands are in place, and all cats must be registered and are generally kept indoors.

Bonin white-eyes primarily eat ants and other insects, but they will also eat fruit and are noted for feeding on the ground as well as in trees. Until humans introduced predators to the islands, storms were the primary danger that the birds faced throughout their evolution. They make their nests near the trunks of trees for maximum protection against the strong typhoon winds that visit the islands. This nest-building strategy is different from that of white-eyes in other parts of Japan, which commonly make their nests near the ends of branches as protection from predators such as snakes and mice.