

How Long Does the Black-capped White-eye Live?

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The lifespan of birds is difficult to determine without the availability of a capture-recapture programme with ringing of birds. Studies on various white-eye species show that they have been documented to live from at least 3 years to up to 10 years. Some examples from published sources include:

Lifespan Recorded	White-eye Species	Reference
At least 3 years	Warbling (Japanese) White-eye <i>Zosterops japonicus</i>	Van Riper & Van Balen 2020
7 years	Northern (African) Yellow White-eye <i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	Fry & Keith 2000
9 years	Malagasy (Madagascar) White-eye <i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	Woog <i>et al.</i> , 2018
10 years	Orange River (Cape) White-eye <i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	Symes <i>et al.</i> 2001

On 23 June 2025 at Kinabalu National Park, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, we observed a pair of Black-capped White-eye *Zosterops atricapilla* collecting the flowers of *Poikilospermum scabrinervium* to feed nectar to very young nestlings nearby. One of the birds had 4 rings on the feet.



Plate 1: Black-capped White-eye with 4 bands collecting the flowers of *Poikilospermum scabrinervium*, Kinabalu National Park, Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia, 23 June 2025.

The Kinabalu National Park had a bird ringing programme that ended four years ago. The programme lasted for four years and each ring represented a consecutive year. The fact that

this bird had 4 rings indicated it was captured and ringed yearly during that period. This makes the age of the bird at least 8 years.

The lifespan of the Black-capped White-eye and some of the white-eye species quoted above is longer than expected for such small birds. As Healy *et al.* (2014) states "*Maximum lifespan in birds and mammals varies strongly with body mass such that large species tend to live longer than smaller species. However, many species live far longer than expected given their body mass.*" Note however that the lifespan of a species does not speak of survival rates, which may be lower.

It could be possible to keep monitoring this bird's lifespan as the nesting and bands suggest it is localised to an accessible part of the Kinabalu National Park.

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