

Little Lorikeet

by Matthew Palmer

Introduction

Removal of mature native trees from our suburbs means a loss of habitat for native birds and animals.

In this article, Matthew describes another bird of the parrot family that relies upon nesting hollows in older trees, and highlights another example of habitat loss with encroachment of housing on riverfront bushland.

Ed Parker – Nature Watch coordinator

The Centenary Suburbs have three main species of Lorikeet, the Rainbow Lorikeet, the Scaly-Breasted Lorikeet and the Little Lorikeet.

Most people would be aware for the first two being present but not so familiar with the Little Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta pusilla*).

As its name implies the Little Lorikeet is the smallest of the Lorikeets at 15cm while the Rainbow is 29cm and the Scaly 23cm.

The Little Lorikeet does not have the vibrant colours of other Lorikeets. It is green all over except for a red face, orangey-yellow on the underneath of its tail feathers and has an olive smudge on its nape. The Little Lorikeet's preferred food is the nectar of flowering eucalyptus, consequently they can be difficult to spot as they spend the majority of the time in the top of the canopy.

The Little Lorikeet is often heard as it rockets past like a low flying F111. Its call is like a higher pitched version of the Rainbow Lorikeet's screech. They are found along the eastern seaboard and can be found to around 500km inland. They appear to be more common inland than on the coast.

Little Lorikeets nest in hollows that are too small for the more aggressive Rainbows and Scalys. I had been observing a dozen Little Lorikeets nesting for some time in a dead Eucalyptus in parkland along the Brisbane River near Balaton Street at Westlake.

I would watch them shoot out of their hollow like a bullet out of a gun and return in the same way applying air brakes at the last second.

Unfortunately a developer removed this particular tree, with Council's consent, even though it was in parkland because it was seen a risk to new housing.

The Little Lorikeet's ever-diminishing habitat is now slightly smaller. Sadly, all our native animals, which rely on hollows for breeding, are very much threatened by development.

This regular Nature Watch column is contributed by your local Centenary bushland care groups.

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