

Rainbow Lorikeets Nesting Below Ground Level

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Summary. In suburban Sydney, New South Wales, a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus* nested for three consecutive years in an underground hollow beneath a cut-off tree-stump.

For three consecutive years, 2004–2006, a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus* nested in an underground hollow beneath the stump of an old Red Bloodwood *Corymbia gummifera* in the suburb of Wahroonga in Sydney, New South Wales. After the tree was cut off close to ground level, a vertical hole about 50 cm deep developed beneath the stump, accessible through the stump itself (Plate 15). The nest-site was in a horizontal side-passage off the hole, in one of the old tree roots. During the 3 years of occupancy to date the nest has been successful, producing an unknown number of young. The birds attended the nest-hollow throughout the year.

Rainbow Lorikeets were not recorded nesting below ground level by Higgins (1999), their usual nest-site being in a hollow spout of a tree at a height of 3–30 m. However, subsequently they have been recorded entering and leaving a small gap between the ground and a concrete slab at Currumbin, Queensland (Taylor & Williams 2004), and, outside Australia, the species nests and roosts in rock crevices and burrows on several islets in the Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea (LeCroy *et al.* 1992). Other Australian lorikeets, Musk Lorikeets *Glossopsitta concinna* and Little Lorikeets *G. pusilla*, also commonly nest high above the ground, but in an unusual case a pair of the latter species continued to use for three years a hollow 90 cm above the ground after the nest-tree had been felled (Courtney & Debus 2006).

Although Rainbow Lorikeets probably mate for life, the occupancy of the nest-site outside the breeding season was not mentioned by Higgins (1999). LeCroy *et al.* (1992) asserted that activity at presumed nest-holes has been recorded in most months, presumably in Papua New Guinea. Both Musk and Little Lorikeets are also monogamous and are known to visit their nest-sites periodically to maintain them in the non-breeding season (Courtney & Debus 2006).

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References

- Courtney, J. & Debus, S.J.S. (2006), 'Breeding habits and conservation status of the Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna* and Little Lorikeet *G. pusilla* in northern New South Wales', *Australian Field Ornithology* **23**, 109–124.
- Higgins, P.J. (Ed.) (1999), *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, vol. 4, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.



Rainbow Lorikeet perched on cut stump, at entrance to nest-hole located below ground level, Sydney, NSW

Plate 15

Photo: Ruth Bright

LeCroy, M., Peckover, W.S. & Kisokau, K. (1992), 'A population of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus flavicans* roosting and nesting on the ground', *Emu* **92**, 187–190.

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