

RAINBOW LORIKEETS FEEDING ON CASUARINA SEEDS AND APRICOT LEAVES.

On 3 June 1994, while conducting a regular census of birds at Adelaide Airport, my attention was drawn to a casuarina in the International Terminal car park by the calls of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus*. There were several birds at the top of the tree and, as they appeared to be feeding, I observed them for several minutes with 10x50 binoculars. The light was poor because of cloud cover, but I could see the silhouette of one bird that was clearly taking something, presumably seeds, from a casuarina cone. While I could see other birds in the tree, I could not see them clearly enough to be sure that they were feeding on mature cones. Eventually eight Rainbow Lorikeets flew out of the tree and all appeared to have been feeding.

The casuarina was a female tree, about 12 m tall and with many mature cones and small red flowers. Adelaide Botanic Gardens' staff identified specimens of the leaves and cones as belonging to swamp oak *Casuarina glauca*. It is well known that the Glossy Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathami* feeds almost exclusively on casuarina fruit, ripping and crushing the cones to extract the seeds (Blakers *et al.* 1984). There are also records of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos *C. banksii*, Pale-headed Rosellas *Platycercus adscitus* and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets

Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus taking casuarina seeds (Barker and Vestjens nd). Barker and Vestjens (nd) also note several records of Rainbow Lorikeets eating the seeds and the young shoots of casuarinas. However, the species of casuarina is not noted in these references.

On 15 March 1995, my daughter Lydia and I observed a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets eating the mature leaves of an apricot tree in our garden in suburban Gilberton. Both birds were tearing at and consuming leaves and we could see a number of half-eaten leaves towards the top of the tree. There is no mention in Barker and Vestjens (nd) of Rainbow Lorikeets eating leaf material and we hypothesised that the more usual food of these lorikeets might be in short supply owing to the very dry conditions in 1994 and early 1995.

REFERENCE

Barker, R.D. and Vestjens, W.J.M. nd. *The food of Australian Birds. 1, Non-Passerines*. CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology, Lyneham, ACT.

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