

BUSH NEWS

from the Natural Areas of Kedron Brook & Environs



No 25, Winter 1995

GreenBrook Association

BEWARE THE NOISY MINER

The following is a heavily edited version of an article by Tim Lowe, which appeared in the 1994 Bush Management News Sheet, published by The National Trust of Australia (NSW).

The Noisy Miner is one of the commonest birds across much of eastern Australia. It is also a highly aggressive bird.

Qld biologist Doug Dow reported attacks on a total of 65 birds. "Even the smallest, seemingly most innocuous, leaf-gleaning pardalotes are chased by miners. Large waterbirds such as cormorants and ducks are harassed at the edge of lakes ... dogs, cats, foxes, cattle, horses, bats and humans have all been attacked ..."

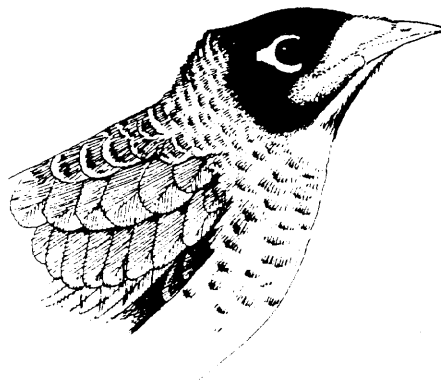
This harassment is no empty threat. Dow watched two miners slaughter a sparrow by hammering the base of its skull. Another gang of five miners pecked the eyes and head of a striated pardalote until it fell down dead.

Miners do not oust all intruders. Medium-sized, strong-billed birds often withstand attack and can be tolerated within the colony. Miners often associate with butcherbirds, crows, rosellas, lorikeets and magpies. In fact, butcherbirds often join in noisy miner attacks.

Noisy miners are found in highest densities around Brisbane in

suburban gardens which retain a eucalypt canopy, followed by suburbs planted with shrubs and trees, small forest remnants, and remnants lacking an understorey. Miners do not live in undisturbed forest.

The implications of this are worrying. A highly aggressive bird is invading the Brisbane region, dominating habitats disturbed by development, and driving away other birds.



The miner invasion raises questions about how we are managing (or mismanaging) our gardens, bushlands and fauna.

Cities support plenty of birds partly because of all the ornamental flowering shrubs and trees. Noisy miners thrive on all the nectar, which they defend against other birds. Gardeners duped by gardening books into planting flowering banksia and grevilleas to attract birds achieve the opposite: they attract more and more miners but fewer birds of

other species.

So how can miners be controlled? Vegetation structure is important. Thick belts of shrubs should be planted to attract forest birds. The shrubs should have flowers pollinated by insects rather than birds (e.g. *Acacias*, *Hoveas*, *Pultenaeas*, *Jacksonia scoparia*).

In bushland reserves, clearings such as open lawns, firebreaks, carparks and picnic grounds should be kept to a minimum. Noisy miners thrive in picnic and camp grounds if there is a woodland-like structure of widely-spaced trees and mown lawns. Picnic spots should instead be bushy with ample tree cover.

Where noisy miners already inhabit a suburban garden, there is little you can do to discourage them, unless you and your neighbours are willing to forego lawns for the sake of a thick shrubby understorey.

While severe, the miner invasion is, in fact, just part of a much larger phenomenon.

All over eastern Australia, open woodland, grassland and other birds are exploding in numbers as coastal forests become fragmented.

Other successful invaders include the topknot pigeon, the pied currawong, the bell miner, the torresian crow and the silver gull.

Ed.

MORE ON BIRDS

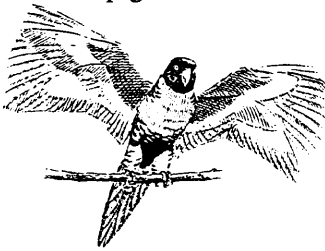
Whether associated with the reasons outlined in Tim Lowe's article or not, the bird populations in our suburb (Alderley) have changed recently. There is now less variety in the birds we see.

Amongst the missing visitors who used to come each year are the rainbow bee-eaters, the noisy friar bird and the dollar bird.

The channel-billed cuckoo, the scarlet honeyeater, the white-throated honeyeater and the white-throated tree-creeper were occasional visitors who now seem to have gone.

On the other hand, an increase in numbers has occurred with noisy miners, crested pigeons and currawongs.

Sharon
Hepburn



RAINBOW LORIKEETS

Parrots are sleek, beautifully plumaged and active birds. The idea of them squeezing into hollows, which they do when breeding, seems quite ridiculous.

However it also seems that, having found a suitable hollow, rainbow lorikeets may spend every night in it, perhaps even right throughout the year.

A pair currently roost in a nestbox in a local park, leaving before dawn every morning. Another pair was recently reported spending nights in a hole in a clay road embankment on the outskirts of Brisbane.

Does anyone else know of similar incidents?

Frank Box

GRINSTEAD PARK

A recent survey of users of Grinstead Park has provided some interesting information on local attitudes to this park.

By far the most common use of the park is for walking, and the most common perceived benefit is an appreciation of nature and the outdoors.

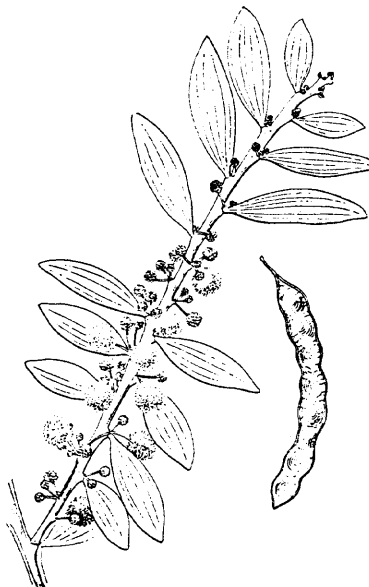
Users displayed a substantial awareness of the animals living in the park, and most placed a high value on the park as fauna habitat.

In fact, there was strong support for not mowing portions of the park in order to provide more habitat. I doubt that such a suggestion would have been very welcome 5-10 years ago.

On the other hand, the least popular suggestion was the provision of BBQs. One factor behind this must be that most users are locals, who want to keep it that way. But it also seems to align well with the passive use of the park - BBQs could well interfere with this.

Thanks to Moira Lowson

PLANT OF THE MONTH



Acacia complanata "Flat-stemmed wattle"

A striking wattle, indigenous to the northern suburbs.

Most often seen as a low shrub to 1½ metres. Flowers are golden balls, appearing 3-4 times per year, but the foliage is the most beautiful feature of the plant.

It grows with arching branches and seems less susceptible to borers than other wattles.

Available: Perrotts Nursery,
Elkhorn St, Enoggera

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HELP SAVE THE BUSH

Due to a major change in the distribution of *Bush News*, some of you will now be seeing it for the first time.

Bush News is produced by the GreenBrook Association, which is a community bush regeneration group. The purpose of the newsletter is to share local information on our natural environment.

If you would like to know more, or even help, our next working bees are on -

9 July / 6 Aug / 10 Sept

Meet at the Blandford St entrance to Grange Forest Park at 8.30am. An old hat, a mug and a bit of energy is all that you will need.

Bob Devine