

Extreme dietary switching: widespread consumption of meat by Rainbow Lorikeets at garden bird feeders in Australia

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Although wild bird feeding in Australia has a similar participation rate to that of North America and the United Kingdom, many of the species visiting feeding stations are carnivorous and are attracted by the provision of meat products. Whilst numerous species utilising feeders in Australia, including Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus*, consume seed mixes, a 2015 media report described this species also feeding on meat items. In order to determine whether this was more than localised, aberrant behaviour, a national online survey was conducted. A total of 140 respondents reported Rainbow Lorikeets consuming meat at feeding stations located throughout much of the species' distribution. Many of these reports were from the larger urban centres and a large proportion of respondents indicated that this behaviour had been occurring for more than five years. The phenomenon of meat-eating by Rainbow Lorikeets (and a range of other species) was found to be widespread and well-established. It is likely that this behaviour is an extension of the natural dietary switching of the species, it but could potentially be harmful if this type of food contributed significantly to the overall diet.