

ROOSTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE RAINBOW BEE-EATER *Merops ornatus* IN SUBURBAN DARWIN

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The Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* is a dry season migrant to Darwin. A study of their roosting habits in suburban Darwin during the dry season over three successive years yielded a total of 13 communal roosts, most of which were located by following birds just prior to dusk. The approximate number of birds in each roost and the area over which these birds travelled to forage was estimated and from this an estimate of a density of 0.22 birds ha⁻¹ in the northern suburbs of Darwin was extrapolated. The location of roosts was generally geographically stable both within and between seasons. Rainbow Bee-eaters were observed sharing a roost tree with six other species of bird. The gradual decline of one roost from 320 to no birds, as they migrated south at the end of the season, provided some evidence of group cohesion of foraging and migrating birds.