

# THE FORAGING BEHAVIOUR OF AVIAN NECTARIVORES IN A MONSOONAL AUSTRALIAN WOODLAND OVER A SIX-MONTH PERIOD

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*Received: 8 March, 1996*

The foraging behaviour of one lorikeet and six honeyeater species were compared over a six month period in tropical woodland near Darwin, Northern Territory. The study identified three broad groupings of nectarivores — the Rainbow Lorikeet, small honeyeaters (Brown, Dusky) and large honeyeaters (Silver-crowned and Little Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater and Yellow-throated Miner). These groups were differentiated principally on relative dependence upon flowers and choice of flower types, but also on non-nectar foraging strategies. Larger nectarivores fed predominantly in eucalypts and smaller nectarivores at a greater variety of sources. There was surprisingly little variation between honeyeater species in their dependence upon flowers (54–74% of foraging observations), but the Rainbow Lorikeet fed almost exclusively at flowers. The study suggests several ways in which tropical Australian nectarivore communities may differ from their temperate-zone counterparts.