

## Dollarbirds

by Matthew Palmer

### Introduction

Nature Watch has returned after a short recess. This month we introduce our writer, Matthew Palmer, a member of our local bushcare group.

Matthew's article is pertinent as we observe the rapidly diminishing bushland in our suburbs. The bushland loss is largely attributable to insensitive subdivision development practices that often involve total obliteration of remnant native vegetation. The planning processes that permit this are also a contributory factor.

**Ed Parker – Nature Watch coordinator**

At this time of year in the Centenary suburbs the cackling call of the Dollarbird is often heard through the day.

The Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*) is a summer migrant to Australian shores where they breed in suitable tree hollows. They are a stocky bird in shape approximately 30 centimetres long. They have a bright red beak and a short dark tail with an overall blue green wing colouring turning darker around the head and tail.

As they are quite often very high up in the top of the canopy, they can be easier to identify by their call. The call is a distinctive "kak kak kak kak kak" sounding like a croaky frog.

The Dollarbird is the only member of the roller family that is found in Australia (there are 11 species world wide).

The Dollarbirds are beautiful in flight and can often be seen performing a series of dives, loops and spirals which is believed to be a kind of mating ritual. When they are viewed at the right angle the iridescent blue-green of their wings is outstanding. A significant light-coloured round circle is visible in the centre of both wings when they are seen flying overhead.

Unfortunately the Dollarbirds are coming under threat. The reduction of available nesting hollows has reduced their breeding sites as the most common nesting site is in old dead Eucalypts.

This is being compounded by the introduced Common Myna or Indian Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) which now appears in larger numbers through the Centenary suburbs than ever before. The Myna is an aggressive breeder which overtakes the nesting site of the Dollarbird and many other hollow users such as parrots, lorikeets and Kookaburras. Consequently the Dollarbird can be left with no suitable sites to breed in.

*This regular Nature Watch column is contributed by your local Centenary bushland care groups.*

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