

# RAINBOW LORIKEET

**THE THREAT:** Rainbow lorikeets pose an environmental threat to our native wildlife and an economic threat to the New Zealand commercial fruit growing industry.

## Why are rainbow lorikeets a pest?

Rainbow lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) compete with native birds by dominating their food sources and nesting sites. They pose a threat to New Zealand's native honeyeaters such as tui and bellbirds, as they compete for the same food sources. They also compete for nest sites with native cavity nesters such as kaka and kakariki.

Rainbow lorikeets can damage apples, grapes and other soft fruit. They pose a threat to the commercial fruit growing industry, with the potential to significantly impact orchards and vineyards.

Rainbow lorikeets may also carry avian diseases which can threaten the health of native bird species.



Rainbow lorikeet damaging apples

Photo: I Temby, Department of Sustainability & Environment, Australia

## Where are they found?

Rainbow lorikeets were introduced to New Zealand from Australia as cage birds. They are kept as pets in cages and aviaries throughout the country.

Significant numbers of captive-reared birds were illegally and deliberately released in the Auckland area in the 1990s and had started breeding in the wild. By 1999 a feral population of 150–200 birds had established, proving that they can survive and adapt to the New Zealand environment.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) began eradicating the feral population in 2000, concerned about competition with endemic honeyeaters and the possible threat to pristine island habitats such as Little Barrier Island.

Escaped birds are caught using a range of methods including trapping and netting. The captured birds are returned to their owners where they can be identified or sent to commercial aviculturists with secure captive facilities.

## What are rainbow lorikeets?

Native to parts of Australia, the rainbow lorikeet is a distinctive multi-coloured parrot, about 30cm in length. It has a bright red beak and eyes, with a blue head and belly, green wings, tail and back and an orange/yellow breast. It has a distinctive screeching call.



Damage to grapes caused by rainbow lorikeets

Photo: Department of Agriculture & Food, Western Australia

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ](http://WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ)**

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Rainbow lorikeets feed primarily on pollen, nectar and fruits, but they may feed on seeds. They are almost always seen in pairs or in flocks. Like most parrots they nest in hollow limbs or trunks of dead or living trees.

Rainbow lorikeets are prolific breeders, with pairs known to rear as many as three successive broods in a single season enabling the feral population to increase rapidly. They look similar to the eastern rosella, which is already established in parts of New Zealand. A key distinguishing feature is the lorikeets' blue head.

## Legal status

The rainbow lorikeet is an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. Birds may still be kept as pets in secure aviaries and cages but it is illegal to release a rainbow lorikeet into the wild. People releasing them into the wild may face heavy penalties.

The rainbow lorikeet is one of the pests MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, in partnership with DOC and regional councils, manages under the National Interest Pest Response initiative. The aim of the response is to prevent rainbow lorikeets from establishing in the wild.

## What can I do

If you own a rainbow lorikeet you must be a responsible owner and keep it in secure caging. Advice is available from the DOC Auckland Area office on how to construct suitable caging that reduces the risk of the rainbow lorikeets escaping. Unwanted birds must not be released into the wild. They can be surrendered to bird rescue or the DOC Auckland Area Office.

Within the greater Auckland area, DOC offers a service to rainbow lorikeet owners in getting their birds banded for identification at no cost. This allows them to be returned to their owners if they escape.

If you hear of, or see rainbow lorikeets in the wild please contact:

### In the greater Auckland area

Department of Conservation, Auckland Area Office  
Phone: 09 445 9142

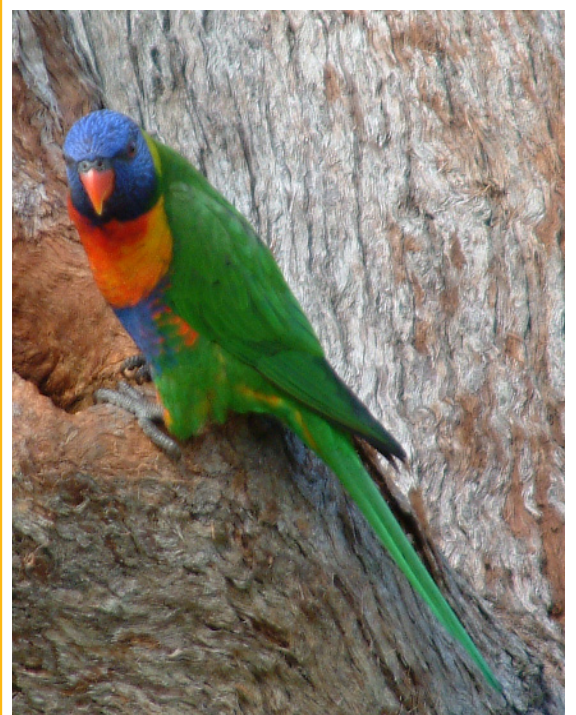
### In all other regions contact your regional council or if you suspect a population has established, contact

MAF Biosecurity New Zealand  
Freephone: 0800 80 99 66



Identity can be mistaken with the eastern rosella

Photo: © K A Rodgers 2004



Rainbow lorikeet

Photo: G van Meeuwen, Department of Conservation

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