

Common Name/Scientific name: Topknot Pigeon / *Lopholaimus antarcticus*

The Top-knot Pigeon occurs along Australia's east coast from Far North Queensland to south-eastern NSW, and during severe droughts a few may sneak across into Victoria. The species gets its name from the feathers which sprout from the top of the bird's head, one set curling forward, down over the bill, and the other which droops back over its neck. Sometimes Crested Pigeons are colloquially referred to as 'topknot pigeons', but they should never be confused with the Topknot Pigeons of Australia's rainforests.



Description: The Topknot Pigeon is a large grey pigeon with a swept back crest that is grey in front and rusty red behind, giving the head an unique shape. It is darker grey above, with dark grey, rounded wings, and lighter grey below, with a pale tail band across the black tail. The eye and bill are red, and the bill has two large bluish-green bumps at the base. Females have a smaller, paler crest than males. Young birds resemble females, with more mottling and have a browner head with a much smaller crest. This species flies strongly and roosts high in tall trees. It may be seen feeding acrobatically among fruits, often hanging upside-down to reach them. It can be located by the sounds of falling fruit and its sharp screech while feeding.

Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens: The Topknot Pigeon is frugivorous, feeding on a variety of rainforest fruits, as well as those of the introduced Camphor Laurels. They mainly feed in the upper canopy, hanging from branches, often upside-down, to reach fruit, flapping their wings loudly to keep balance. They can be detected by the quantities of fruit they dislodge and the loud screeching they make while feeding. They will travel long distances to find food, often in large, straggling flocks.

Breeding and Nesting: After an elaborate courtship of bowing and parading displays, with males also flying very high over canopy to attract females, the Topknot Pigeon forms monogamous breeding pairs. Both parents build the flat, loose and often flimsy stick nest in the crown of a tree, usually among bushy branches or vines, from 2 m to 12 m from the ground. Both sexes incubate the eggs and feed the young, using regurgitated 'pigeon milk' from their crops in the earliest stages. Adults call to their young when returning to the nest, and they are difficult to dislodge from the nest if disturbed, crouching protectively over their young until an intruder is quite close

Similar species seen in the gardens: Young Topknot Pigeons might be confused with young White-headed Pigeons, but have a darker face, a banded tail and lack the greenish-black back. The Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) which is not at all similar, can sometimes locally be called a Topknot or Topknot Pigeon, but its crest is erect rather than drooping. White-headed Pigeons and Crested Pigeons have been recorded very infrequently at the Maroochy gardens.



Crested pigeons