

Common Name/Scientific name

Laughing Kookaburra/ *Dacelo novaeguineae*



Description: Off-white below, faintly barred with dark brown, and brown on the back and wings. The tail is more reddish-brown, broadly barred with black. There is a conspicuous dark brown eye-stripe through the face. It is one of the larger members of the kingfisher family. Body length 390–420mm

Behaviour in the gardens: Laughing Kookaburras are often seen perching on branches of trees (as well as man made structures such as the picnic shelters), searching surrounding ground areas for suitable prey. Their 'laugh' is not a call of joy but a call to define family territory. It often begins from one bird but other family members quickly join in, and the call can be answered by another family in a nearby territory.

Where seen in the gardens: In open bushland forest as well as trees in lawn and developed garden bed areas, usually perching on lower branches.

Feeding: Laughing Kookaburras feed mostly on insects, worms and crustaceans, although small snakes, mammals, frogs and birds may also be eaten. Prey is seized by pouncing from a suitable perch. Small prey is eaten whole, but larger prey is killed by bashing it against the ground or tree branch. Kookaburras quickly learn that garden visitors bring food into the gardens, and see picnic lunches (and people eating) as a great food source, especially if the visitors are not wary.

Nesting: The nest is a bare chamber in a naturally occurring tree hollow or in a burrow excavated in an arboreal (tree-dwelling) termite mound. Kookaburras compete with other tree hollow nesting birds, a problem in the gardens because nearly all trees are less than 60 years old, not mature enough to have hollows in them. Bird nesting hollows are in high demand and short supply in the nearly 200 ha of bushland included in the gardens and adjoining Tall Gums reserves

Similar Species: Identification may only be confused where the Laughing Kookaburra's range overlaps that of the Blue-winged Kookaburra, *Dacelo leachii*, in eastern Queensland north of the Sunshine Coast. The call of the Blue-winged Kookaburra is coarser than that of the Laughing Kookaburra, and ends somewhat abruptly. The Blue-winged Kookaburra lacks the brown eye-stripe, has a blue tail and a large amount of blue in the wing, and has a pale eye.