

Cheddar Road Habitat Assessment

Andrea Canzano

Senior Environment Officer - Biodiversity

INTRODUCTION

Darebin Council has developed concept plans to improve road safety issues in Reservoir. Part of the proposal includes the removal of four Desert Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) trees near the intersection of Cheddar Road and Dole Avenue, Reservoir. Following a query from a local community member, the aim of this habitat assessment was to gain an understanding of fauna habitat on site and determine if the proposed removal of vegetation will have a significant impact on local native species.

Desktop Review

A review of the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (DELWP 2020) shows eight native and two exotic fauna species recorded within a 1km radius of JC Donath Reserve. The majority of records are birds (8 species), followed by two mammal species. One threatened species, Grey Goshawk has been detected within 500m of the park (Lloyd Avenue). Species records are listed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Species records from the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (2020).

Common Name	Status	Count of Sightings	Last Record
Grey Goshawk	Native (Vulnerable-Vic Advisory list)	1	16/09/2017
White-plumed Honeyeater	Native	1	21/04/1988
Noisy Miner	Native	1	14/10/2017
Red Wattlebird	Native	1	21/04/1988
Grey Butcherbird	Native	1	21/10/2018
Australian Raven	Native	1	21/04/1988
Common Brush-tailed Possum	Native	1	1/09/1968
White-striped Freetail Bat	Native	1	4/04/1995
Common Myna	Introduced	1	21/04/1988
Common Starling	Introduced	1	21/04/1988

Habitat Assessment and Fauna Observations

A rapid habitat assessment was undertaken on 1st July 2020, during cool, partly cloudy conditions (13.6°C). The survey was undertaken in the morning to maximise the opportunity for observing morning bird activity. Each tree proposed for removal was assessed to determine its suitability as habitat. The assessment included a search for nests, scats, feathers, bones, possum dreys, burrows and any other evidence that might be present within the proposed construction zone and surrounds.

RESULTS

Four trees were assessed as part of this investigation (**Figure 1-4**). At the time of the assessment (mid-winter), the trees were leafless, making it easy to see into the canopy and check for signs of fauna activity. There was no evidence of remnant nesting material, animal scats, burrows, hollows or dreys. Fauna activity consisted only of two Australian Magpies perching in the trees for a short period.



Figure 1. Tree 1 (Desert Ash), north of Dole Avenue



Figure 2. Tree 2 (Desert Ash) north of Dole Avenue



Figure 3. Tree 3 (Desert Ash) opposite Dole Avenue



Figure 4. Tree 4 (Desert Ash) south of Dole Avenue

Fauna

Table 1 below lists the fauna species observed during the survey. This consisted mostly of native birds, with the presence of one exotic species, Common Miner heard calling in close vicinity of the park. The birds most commonly observed were Rainbow Lorikeets and Noisy Miners.

Table 1. Fauna species recorded during the survey.

Native Species	Notes
Australian Magpie	Foraging in trees in JC Donath Reserve. Perched in Desert Ash.
Little Raven	Seen flying overhead.
Magpie Lark	Heard outside the park (IW Dole Reserve)
Noisy Miners	Present throughout most of the park. Seen foraging in eucalypts and open areas.
Rainbow Lorikeets	Observed foraging in eucalypts in JC Donath Reserve and in street trees.
Raptor (Collared Sparrowhawk or Brown Goshawk)	Single bird flying overhead, being harassed by other birds
Welcome Swallow	Single bird seen flying overhead.
Introduced species	Notes
Common Miner	Heard outside the park (in surrounding properties)

DISCUSSION

During the assessment there was little evidence that native species were using the Desert Ash trees as habitat. This species is an environmental weed in Victoria and generally not preferred habitat for native species; however, they are used for perching and may provide nesting habitat during the spring months, particularly for birds such as Crested Pigeons or other common species.

The removal of these trees is unlikely to impact upon the survival of any species, given the presence of native trees in the park, opportunities for foraging in other areas of the park and proposed landscape planting that will occur as part of the road upgrade. However, All care should be taken to manage potential impacts to fauna, particularly if tree removal is scheduled for spring and/or summer.

Recommendations

Recommendations include the following:

- Biodiversity Officer to undertake a spotlight assessment within a week of the trees being removed.
- Ensure that the Biodiversity officer is present during tree removal.

REFERENCES

Victorian Biodiversity Atlas <https://vba.dse.vic.gov.au/vba/index.jsp> accessed on 13th July 2020.