

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,  
Jim Butler



## **magnificus, superbus & regina!**

The totally beautiful Rose-crowned Fruit-dove is currently everywhere. Last week I watched in amazement as four bickered over the boundaries of their territories high in the forest canopy at Deerhurst St Park beside Gap Creek at Kenmore Hills. There are fifty fruit-dove species (Genus: *Ptilinopus*) worldwide, all in the Oceania region; but only three live in Australia. Twelve of them occur in New Guinea where the genus originated about 30 Million years ago (Ma). All fruit-doves are arboreal and frugivorous. Green dominates their plumage colour but a large variety of vibrant colours and intricate patterns exists in the genus.

All three Australian fruit-doves live in the Brisbane district: Wompoo (*P. magnificus*), Superb (*P. superbus*) and Rose-crowned (*P. regina*). Their species names proclaim (in Latin!) their extraordinary beauty! Lineage-through-time plots derived from their DNA show that these three species radiated out from their PNG origin about 15 Ma, 10 Ma and 5

Ma, respectively. The Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove is widespread across the northern top and half-way down the eastern coastline of Australia. Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves feed in the forest canopy, mainly in the morning or late afternoon. They swallow whole fruit and prefer figs and the fruit of palms and vines, as well as Camphor Laurel. They feed singly or in pairs and take water from leaves or from dew, not from the ground. The foraging habits of these gorgeous doves are largely opportunistic, utilizing whatever fruit is available at particular times.

The fruit-doves are very influential in seed dispersal dynamics within forest ecosystems because their digestive processes do not harm the seeds contained within the fruit. Seed dispersal is a necessary, although not sufficient factor in the regeneration of forests. Although seedling germination and plant establishment depend on local biotic and abiotic factors, initial seed input to a site is essential, especially on cleared land.

Enjoy the beauty and utility of our fruit-doves.

~ Jim



Contact Jim:

[beautifulbirds@y7mail.com](mailto:beautifulbirds@y7mail.com)

Image: Rose-crowned Fruit-dove  
taken by Ed Frazer at Brookfield