



Rainbow Bee-eater

Name	Scientific	<i>Merops ornatus</i>
	Common	Rainbow Bee-eater.
Description	<p>The feathers of these colourful birds really do look like the colours of the rainbow. When flying, the sun-light catches on their pale green, blue and bronze-orange feathers as they twist and turn catching insects on the wing (as they fly). They have a long curved black bill and a band of black feathers through their eyes which makes them look a little like a masked bandit. Their triangular shaped wings are broad and pointed. Both male and female birds have extended shafts to the central tail feathers, which are slightly longer on the male. Both sexes measure between 23-27cm long.</p>	
What it feeds on	<p>A variety of insects. As the name suggests, it is particularly fond of honey bees and wasps and is able to carefully remove the stings from these insects before swallowing them by knocking them against a branch.</p>	
Where it feeds	<p>In all layers of vegetation. They perch in trees and shrubs and fly down to catch an insect before returning to the perch. They will also catch insects above the surface of water in lakes, wetlands and along rivers.</p>	
Breeding	<p>Breeding takes place around Perth between November and January. They dig nesting burrows up to a metre long in soft soil. The nesting chamber is at the end of the tunnel where 3-7 eggs are laid. Both parents <u>incubate</u> the eggs, sometimes with help from other Bee-eaters in the colony. The young leave the nest about 4 weeks after hatching.</p>	
Effects on other species	<p>Insect control.</p>	
Did you know?	<p>Some Rainbow Bee-eaters migrate from Northern Australia to the Perth area in October. They breed here, then the whole family flies North again in March. Others stay in the North and nest there.</p>	

