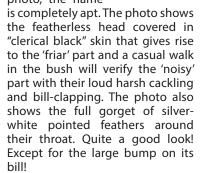# Feather Fascination!
with local Birdwatcher, Jim Butler

THE NOISY FRIARBIRD

I left home at 12 to enter a 'Friar' program. There was so much silence during the youth and adult phases that "noisy friar" was an oxymoron; and for me the "tonsured" phase only came with age after I had left! But for the Noisy Friarbird (35cm) in Ed's photo, the name is completely apt. The photo shows the featherless head covered in "clerical black" skin that gives rise to the 'friar' part and a casual walk in the bush will verify the 'noisy' part with their loud harsh cackling and bill-clapping. The photo also shows the full gorget of silver-white pointed feathers around their throat. Quite a good look! Except for the large bump on its bill!

The Noisy Friarbird is found right down the east coast of Australia and in arid areas along the rivers west of the Great Divide. They are highly conspicuous honeyeaters active in the flowering canopies of eucalypts. They feed in noisy flocks on nectar, fruit and insects. The flocks are characterised by noisy squabbling and fighting while eating; but they spread out to roost individually in tree tops at night and call in the morning to reassemble the flock. Adults form long-term pairs, with both parents defending and tending the nest.

Image: Noisy Friarbird feeding, by Ed Frazer at Brookfield.

The Noisy Friarbird was described by the ornithologist John Latham in 1790.

Ornithologists have studied the native birds, including the Noisy Friarbird, in the greater Brisbane area. Firstly, they categorised Brisbane into six habitat types: large forest remnants, small forest remnants, no-understorey remnants, canopy suburbs (original forest trees present), planted suburbs, and bare suburbs. Total bird abundance and species richness were generally highest in canopy suburbs. In particular, the Noisy Friarbird was most abundant in the planted and canopy suburbs. The inference is that the Noisy Friarbird is living very successfully with us.

Find the bush friar!

~ Jim

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