

Tree hollows in Hornsby Shire



Tree hollows form in the trunk or branches of a live or dead tree. They are usually found in older trees but may form earlier in some tree species. Trees with hollows are known as 'habitat trees'.

Hollows take a long time to form. Large hollows are in large 100 - 150 year old trees. They form as a result of limbs being broken off in the wind, lightning strike, fire or after attack by termites, other insects or fungi. They can be large or small - with small ones having openings of 2 - 6cm and large ones having entrance diameters of 18-30cm or more.

Many different animals use tree hollows from microbats to large forest owls such as the Powerful owl, cockatoos such as the Glossy Black-cockatoo and possums such as the Yellow-bellied Glider.



A large tree hollow
Photo: John Turbill NPWS

Why are habitat trees important?

Habitat trees are important for animals (including threatened species) that need hollows for shelter and nesting, either during the day or night and during different seasons.

These animals include many bat species, tree living mammals, birds and reptiles. For these species, hollows in trees are crucial for their survival. The different animals need hollows of different size, depth, volume and positions on the tree.

Clearing for development or removal of dangerous trees in an urban setting reduces the number of hollows left. This can lead to a loss of animal species and in some cases may result in local extinction of these species.

How can we help keep tree hollows?

The retention of trees with hollows is extremely important in retaining our wildlife. When undertaking developments or landscaping, efforts should be made to avoid and protect all trees with hollows including dead standing trees wherever possible. An arborist can assist to ensure these are kept in a safe condition.

Additionally, young trees also need to be kept or replanted to develop into trees that will form hollows later for future animals.

In areas where natural tree hollows are scarce, nest boxes can be used as artificial hollows for many hollow dependent fauna species. Whilst nest boxes can increase habitat for many fauna species, they should not be considered a replacement for natural tree hollows.

A hollow-bearing tree is generally an old tree which is alive or dead and contains one or more visible hollows (cavities within the trunk or branches) suitable for the occupation of hollow-dependent fauna as nesting, roosting and/or denning sites.



Galah in a tree hollow
Photo: John Turbill NPWS



Musk Lorikeet in a tree hollow.
Photo: John Turbill NPWS