



The first half of 2005 has been hectic with lots of news to report. Early in the year, Martine Maron presented important results from her work on buloke. Her findings are described below. We also had encouraging results from this year's annual count in May, with record numbers of Red-tails sighted. And fingers crossed for the success of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority's bid for funding to protect and enhance Red-tail habitat areas.

## **Buloke tree study results featured at the Edenhope Field Day**

The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo is one of seven threatened species included in an innovative government study: 'Threatened Species and Farming'. Jointly funded by the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the project aims to help conserve threatened species by developing and improving farm practices. A key objective of the study is to achieve conservation outcomes that won't affect farm productivity.

In February, Martine Maron presented findings from the project at a field day in Edenhope. Key results included:

- an alarmingly high rate of loss of buloke trees (Red-tail feed trees) in the southern Wimmera;
- demonstrated positive effects on health and fruit production of paddock buloke trees when they're protected from livestock damage;
- encouraging results from trials aimed at promoting regeneration of habitat trees through suckering from parent trees.

### **Habitat tree loss**

Martine's results revealed a grim future for paddock buloke trees. The study measured the rate of buloke

tree loss by comparing aerial photographs of known Red-tail habitat areas from five different landscapes (representing a range of land uses). Tree loss in different land use categories was determined by comparing images from 1981/82 with those from 1997. Findings included:

- tree loss as high as 38.9% in the Neuarpuir site, where expansion of irrigated horticulture has occurred;
- 4.4% tree loss at the Patyah study site, which is a sheep grazing area;
- overall percentage tree loss of 32.5% in areas where paddocks are cultivated; and 20.6% in pasture paddocks.

Based on these findings, Martine forecasts alarmingly high buloke decline, as shown in Figure 1.

Buloke trees take on average 100 years to become large enough to provide seed for Red-tails. Based on Martine's work there is considerable urgency in ensuring buloke trees are protected in the Red-tails' range and that revegetation work commences soon.

### **Sucker production trials**

Martine's sucker production trials involve "tickling" or "ripping" buloke tree roots at distances from 5m to 35m from the parent tree. While the trial is still in the early stages, in the first year, one sucker has been recorded at 7m from the parent tree. Results from the second year's monitoring aren't available yet.

Buloke are notoriously difficult to grow from seed so suckering may be an excellent option for landholders keen on regenerating areas dominated by ageing, isolated paddock trees. The availability of incentives for landholders wishing to undertake on-ground works is looking promising – see the article below.

For further information please contact Martine Maron on (07) 4631 1319 (mob: 0417 110 537, email: maron@usq.edu.au).

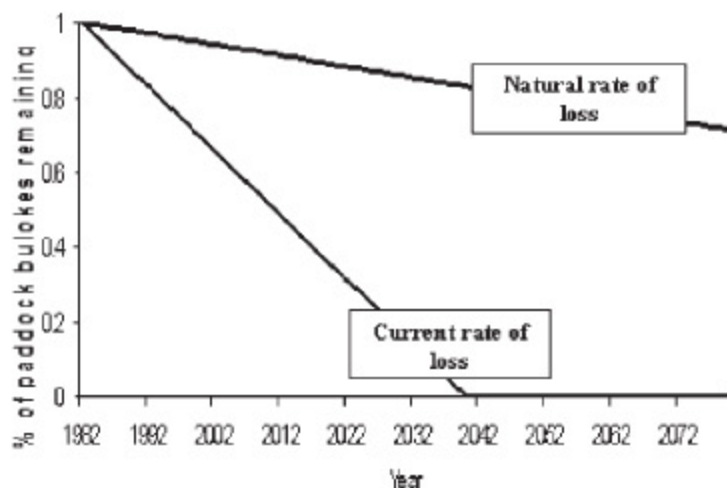


Figure 1 : Forecast trends in buloke decline based on current data



# RED TAIL News

August 2005

## ***Funding to protect and enhance Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo habitat***

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority has taken the lead role in applying for cross-border funding for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (RtBC), as part of the Buloke Community project. This project will develop an on-ground works program for permanent habitat protection and rehabilitation, based on high resolution habitat mapping and modelling. A strong focus of the project will be to work with landholders to provide incentives for the protection and enhancement of buloke and stringybark habitat. An announcement on the success of the funding proposal is expected in late-July or early-August this year. We'll be able to tell you more about this project in the next newsletter.

If you would like further information, please contact:

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*Wimmera Catchment Management Authority*

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*E-mail: robertsond@wcma.vic.gov.au*

## ***2005 Annual Count***

Perfect conditions and a committed and enthusiastic group of volunteers resulted in an annual count tally fit for the Guinness Book of Red-tail Records: 952 birds. It was a cloudy day with not even a whisper of a breeze (although probably sunny in the north!). A total of 119 tireless volunteers covered 2044 km of stringybark forest to find the birds.

Murray McKenzie and his troupe of keen birdwatchers spotted 197 of the 245 birds recorded near Chetwynd. This large flock at Chetwynd was brought to our attention in late March by Mr Lloyd Carey of Nareen. Dick and Richard visited the site prior to the count and were treated to a fantastic view of the birds coming in to water at a trough adjacent to state forest. The landholder was equally impressed - he hadn't seen flocks of more than about 40 birds in over 30 years of living in the area.

Other large flocks included 102 birds at Wandilo State Forest (about 20km N of Mt Gambier), 100 birds north-east of Naracoorte and 80 at Yallakar State Forest.

Also of interest is the comparatively high number of birds found in SA in this year's count. 30% or 283 of the birds counted were found west of the border.

Thanks again to everyone involved on the day - in particular the groups and individuals who travelled considerable distances to participate. Our volunteers continue to reward us with their keen support. Take for example Neil Tippet from Adelaide, whose strong commitment to Red-tails is demonstrated by his unflagging enthusiasm for covering Padthaway Conservation Park over the years, despite a consistent zero presence of Red-tails. It is important that all sites are covered to ensure that we don't miss any birds. Registering a zero count is just as important as seeing birds.



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo annual count results 2005

0 20 40 Kilometers



Dick Cooper (left) with Brian and Di McKinnon and their sons Scott and Aaron, participating in the annual count.....with that big cocky.





# RED TAIL News

August 2005

## Casterton Treeplanting

*"Karak" Commonwealth Games Community Tree Planting Days Saturday September 3 and Sunday September 4, 2005, Casterton*

Can you help plant 5000 Brown Stringybark seedlings in the Drajurk State Forest, home to the Commonwealth Games mascot Karak, a Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo?

Red-tails feed on the seeds of stringybark and buloke. Food shortages are the main threat to survival of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. When these trees mature they will increase the available feeding habitat for Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and soak up greenhouse gases during and after the Games.

The tree planting is part of the Victorian Government's Commonwealth Games Environment Program, which aims to plant up to 1 million trees across Victoria to make the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games the first ever 'carbon neutral' event.

The planting day has been organised by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in association with Birds Australia and South West Sustainability Partnership.

To register, contact Greening Australia on (03) 9450 5315 or visit [www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/VIC](http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/VIC)

## Agricultural Field Days

Lots of positive feedback was received in response to the Birds Australia display about Red-tails at the Lucindale and Wimmera Machinery field days. Several new landholders registered for the annual count, particularly in SA. This year Wynns Coonawarra Estate donated two gift-boxed selections of wine as prizes for our Red-tail Quiz. The SA Department of Environment and Heritage donated the children's prize – a Bush Stone-Curlew hand puppet. Once again we took part in the Lucindale Primary School Blue Yakka Trail – handing out Freddo Frogs to hundreds of participating children. Helping out with the milling crowds were Kay and Evan Roberts, Bryan Haywood and Wendy Beumer – thanks everyone!



Wimmera Machinery Field Day.



Casterton Auskick participants meeting Karak on May 1 – a few could even boast Red-tails in their own backyard!

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Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo



# RED TAIL News

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## *Seen any Red-tails?*

Please ring in on the freecall number 1800 262 062 if you see any Red-tails. A CFA map reference, number of birds seen, direction of travel and notes on activities such as feeding, drinking or roosting are important. With Spring imminent, sightings of single birds or pairs are particularly significant.

To register for a newsletter or for more bumper stickers so you remember the 1800 number, please phone, write or email:

Tania Rajic on the 1800 262 062, [mulga@icisp.net.au](mailto:mulga@icisp.net.au) and/or PO Box 3473 Mt Gambier 5290.

## *Website upgrade*

Keep an eye on the Red-tail website ([www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au) <<http://www.redtail.com.au>> ). The current site which is about 4 years old is undergoing a major upgrade thanks to funding provided by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The new site is expected to be on-line by the end of this month.

## *Wanted: Volunteer Nest Searchers*

Experienced bird watchers with a 4WD are required to search for new nest areas this Spring. If you are interested please contact Tania Rajic on 1800 262 062 or Richard Hill on (03) 5554 2302.

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Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo



*Recovery Team members meeting in Casterton in July 2005.*

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