



RED TAIL News

August 2001

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Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Next Annual Count

The Annual Count was cancelled this year because of debate about the best methods to use. As all of you who have participated in the annual count will know, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos are extremely difficult to find and then to count accurately. Knowing the total number of birds is very important when it comes to arguing and justifying actions to protect Red Tails.

On reflection the Recovery Team have decided that the best method to use is the one we've always used! - But there are a few changes.

The first is that the date will be changed until mid to late Autumn, probably April. This is because Red Tails tend to be in bigger flocks at this time of year, and bigger flocks are easier to find than smaller flocks. Also the weather tends to be more stable and better for finding cockatoos', we avoid the fire season and thus it is safer, and the sandy tracks are easier to drive on as the sand should be damper and firmer.

The second change is that if you do find cockatoos, you will be encouraged to flush the birds to get all of them into the air, and hopefully get a more accurate count. We believe that if you move on after flushing and counting the birds, they will soon settle back down to the job of feeding without distress. We think that counting birds while they are perched can miss up to half of the birds there, because birds feeding in stringybark can be very difficult or impossible to see. Of course if they are perched out in the open where you can see all of them, there would be no need. This way we hope to get a better idea of the total population size of Red Tails.

You are encouraged to phone in any comments on these proposed changes to 1800 262 062.

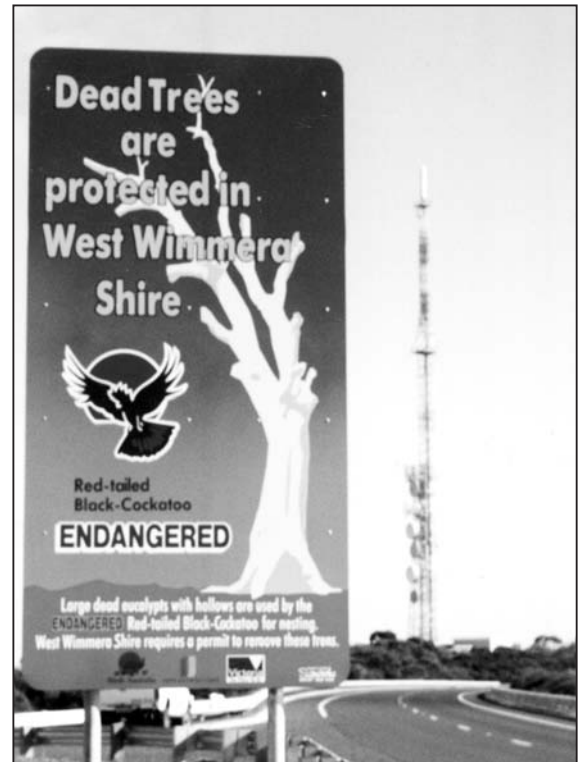
Red Tails are on the move!

Because our wonderful observers report Red Tails comings and goings from their district, we have been able to get a good picture, for the first time, of Red Tail movements and it's an interesting story:

Originally Red Tails were thought to migrate north each autumn to feed on Buloke fruits and then south again when the Buloke finished fruiting in April/May. Then Paul Koch from

Adelaide University came along and with the aid of some very knowledgeable beekeepers in the district, showed that there was a second species of stringybark which was also a very important food source for Red Tails.

Paul's work shows that in most years stringybark seed, the Red Tails preferred food, is available on only one of these species. (There is normally seed on stringybarks, but Red Tails are fussy and probably need young fruit in high density to stick around).



Last year, based on his observations of flowering patterns in the two species of stringybark, Paul predicted that the majority of birds feeding north of Edenhope/Naracoorte on Desert Stringybark would, this year, move south into areas dominated by Brown Stringybark. And this is what has happened. Whereas most sightings of birds in 2000 were in the north of the cockatoo's range in areas dominated by Desert Stringybark, in 2001 most sightings of birds have been further south where Brown Stringybark becomes the more common tree.

The last year when there were a lot of birds in the southern areas like Mt. Gambier and Casterton was in 1998, when Paul's work



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indicates Brown Stringybark would also have been the main species with suitable seed for Red Tails.

Interestingly substantially more of the Brown Stringybark country has been cleared than the Desert Stringybark country. Perhaps as much as 75% of the Brown Stringybark country in Victoria and even more in South Australia was cleared for pine plantations and other agriculture. It may be a shortage of Brown Stringybark woodland in particular, which has led to the cockatoo becoming so rare.

New Websites On Line

Our new website - www.redtail.com.au - is on line! As it is a new site we are particularly keen to find out what you think of it. We want to know things like; does the site offer the information you want, does it download fast enough, is it easy to use. We intend to continually update the site to ensure it is of most use, especially to school students. You can contact us via the website or on tburnard@hotmail.net.au.

This site was funded by the Victorian, Department of Infrastructure to help in our efforts to protect the Red Tail and its habitat, in particular dead trees with hollows now protected in Glenelg and West Wimmera Shires.

Teachers will also be interested in another new

site titled 'Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Education Kit'. The kit uses the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo as an example of a Recovery Plan process used to save an endangered species. The kit includes course notes, handouts etc. and is aimed at late secondary to early tertiary students. Take a look at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/rtbced

Road Signs

You may have noticed some colourful new road signs lately, publicising the new laws that protect dead trees with hollows in the Glenelg and West Wimmera Shires. These signs were funded by the Victorian, Department of Infrastructure and have been placed on the main roads that run through the Victorian range of the Red Tail. The aim of the signs is to ensure that landholders and woodcutters are aware of the laws and don't accidentally remove this important nesting habitat.

If you have any sightings of Red Tails or you want to find out more you can contact:

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