

Red-tail NEWS



Buloke clearing continues

Further to the article in our last newsletter 'Buloke clearing continues in West Wimmera' the Recovery Team would like to thank all those who contacted us to see what could be done to stop ongoing clearing of Red Tail habitat. While this case is closed, permits to clear buloke and other Red Tail habitats are still regularly issued in South Australia and Victoria.

In the case mentioned, the outcome was that the tribunal issued a permit for clearing of just over half the trees and gave protection to the others. Thus the decision wasn't a complete loss, but reasserts the right of farmers to continue

clearing at least where they can offer up substantial areas of similar Red tail habitat to protect as an 'offset' to the clearing. The decision also required better protection of the paddock trees than was being offered by the proponents, so it attempted to find a 'balance' between the two competing interests. The Red Tail recovery team will continue working with the West Wimmera Shire and the Victorian Government to try and achieve this balance between the interests of farmers and the needs for better protection of the Red Tail habitats.

Electronic Red Tail Newsletter

Many people are conscious of the need to reduce paper usage and would prefer to receive electronic newsletter rather than the paper version. If you would like to be on our new electronic distribution please let me know by emailing me with the address you would like the newsletter to, on email rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au

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Red-tail NEWS

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Welcome to the winter edition of the Red Tail News.

Many of you will know that I'm filling in for a few months while Tania Rajic is on extended leave travelling around Australia (Last Tania sighting was that she was in a flock of 4 including 2 juveniles and 1 adult male and female- moving in a westerly direction from the East Kimberlys). Thanks to all of you who have made my brief return to the position a welcome one, and I must say that it's been a pretty busy time with the annual count, a new website and a tree planting near Mt Gambier.

Results from the 2007 Red Tail Count

The annual count was held on Saturday April 28th in pretty good conditions. Whilst it was a bit cool and rain earlier in the week had made some tracks a bit tricky, the day was calm and made for good Red Tail listening.

Those who took part in the count or who saw media articles directly after the count, will know that there was a surprising drop in the numbers counted, but the initial number has been lifted slightly following a couple of late entries. At first we had reported a total of a mere 675 Red Tails throughout the range, compared to last years record number of 1078. This number has now been increased to a total of 801.

While the number counted is the lowest we have seen for several years it is not to say that the birds have actually suffered a population dive since last years count. It's more likely that we just missed the birds in the scrub.

And as those who have been out looking for Red Tails can testify, missing the birds is easily done. Red Tails roam from the Lower Glenelg National Park up to Keith and from Lucindale to Balmoral and finding the approximately 1000 birds in a total possible area of 18,000 km2 is always going to be a bit hit and miss. We do trim down the area by holding the event after bulokes have dropped their seed. This means that all the Red Tails will be in stringybark forest, so at least we don't have to look in the buloke areas.

It's still a huge area and we will never be assured of counting all the birds. For example, from recent sightings, we were reasonably sure that a large mob of up to 200 would be found in the Lower Glenelg National Park but come the count, nobody found them and subsequent searches by the Recovery Team and Parks Vic have failed to find them. Oh well, that's Cocky counting! Even though we can't count all the Red Tails, the Annual Count is still important because it gives more than just an indication of population size. By taking this snapshot across the range, we get a better understanding of the birds preferred habitat and use this information in helping to target future conservation works.

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Contact details:

Tim Burnard

Extension Officer;
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Recovery Team

Post Office Box 25
Casterton, VIC 3311

Telephone: 1800 262 062
Email: rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au



Max Arney (far left) showing some of the other cocky counters where the birds were!

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Stringybark Monitoring

In January we set up some long-term monitoring plots to monitor stringybark seed production across the Red Tail range. Using a method set up by Paul Koch from Greening Australia we estimated the size of the new seed crop across the range (new being the recently matured seed capsules which Red Tails strongly prefer). Our predictions before going out were that none of the Desert Stringybark (e. arenacea) sites would have new seed crops, as Pauls' work has previously shown that these stringybarks tend to produce seed at the same time every three years across the Red Tail range, with the next predicted season of new fruit being 2007. The Brown stringybark (e. baxteri) seed crop is considered less predictable based on Paul's work.

What we found was that the Desert Stringybark seed crop was much more variable than expected with one site having no seed crop and only one site having a majority of trees with a seed crop. Brown stringybark was, as expected, also quite variable with only half of six sites having any new seed. Paul suggests that the protracted drought may have caused this unexpected dip in seed production in the desert stringybark.

This is not good news as we know that Red Tails breed best when there is an abundance of new seed across the cockatoos range. Thus it looks like the coming nesting season will be another relatively poor one as the stringybark seed crop is quite variable across the range, with no indication of a large new crop of seed which would boost nesting success.

New Website

For those of you that are 'connected', you'll be interested to hear that we have given our website a complete makeover. It's now much easier to go direct to the picture gallery and the sound recordings. These are particularly handy for people wanting to brush up on telling the difference between a Red and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

You'll still find loads of information that will answer most people's questions about our Red Tails; it's especially good for school student projects. The information covers subjects like, the effects of fire on food supply, where red tails were seen on past annual counts plus a lot more on the biology of our Red Tails. Take a look and let us know what you think.

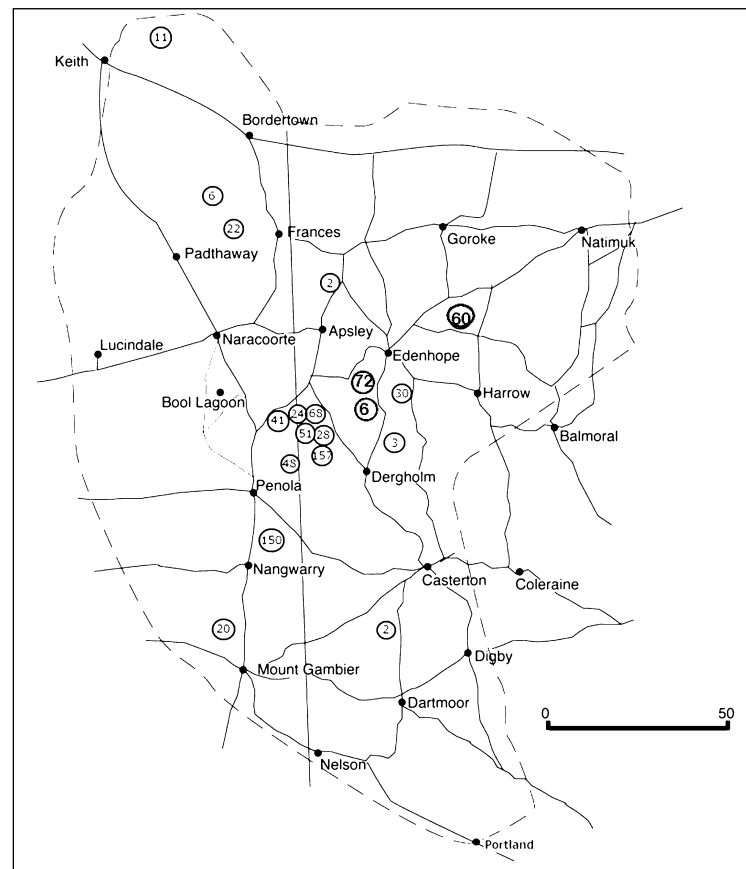
Results from the 2007

Red Tail Count *Continued from page 1*

Good news was that while the number of Red Tails counted was down, the number of volunteers has again climbed. This year 190 volunteers took part. Some travelled from as far as Adelaide and Melbourne, but the majority of those involved were from within the region. Many of the volunteers were local landholders surveying their own properties; others were supplied with a map and instructions on how best to spot Red Tails.

The big winner region in this years count was along the SA/Vic border near Penola and Nangwarry. Locals, Max Arney and Jim Childs saw the most birds. Max spotted 299 birds including 157 in one flock, and Jim saw a mob of 150. Both men have a long interest in the birds and like many other participants, have been involved in the count for most of the past 11 years.

The Baileys Rocks (just north of Dergholm) camp out on the Saturday night was another success and for all those who didn't see a Red Tail during the day, the campers were rewarded by a group of three that flew over at sunset and again at sunrise. I was particularly pleased as, after 10 years of taking part in the count, it was the first time I had seen Red Tails on the actual count day!



Map indicating the 2007 final count.

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We're looking for land

One of the best ways of protecting Red Tail habitat is to buy suitable land and introduce management policies that will have a long term benefit. That's exactly what organisations such as the Trust for Nature, the Nature Foundation of South Australia and the Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association are considering for land suitable for our Red Tails.

Money raised from several campaigns, including money raised from the sale of Karak number plates during the Commonwealth Games, is being targeted at purchasing land within Red Tail range, and you can help.

Often land that is suitable for these purchases is not actually on the market and can best be identified through local knowledge. We are looking for properties that have intact Red Tail habitat (Stringybark or buloke woodlands) in the \$60,000-\$300,000 price range. The better condition the land is (ie little or no cleared land and without weeds) and its connection to other blocks of native vegetation the more valuable it is for cockatoos. If you know of land that might suit Red Tails please contact Tim on 1800 262 062.

Tree Planting

Another great activity to help secure the future for Red Tails is the planting of habitat. There is something very satisfying about planting seedlings, particularly when you know they will supply food for Red Tails roughly 15 years down the track.

Neville and Jill McKenna, landholders adjacent to Telford Scrub Conservation Park (about 12 km north of Mt Gambier), decided to replant an area previously planted to pines with local species suitable for Red Tails. The cockatoos are regularly seen in this area and drink and roost on their property when they are about. Replacing the pines with stringybarks has a double benefit; not only will it supply food for Red Tails, but it eliminates the source of wildling pines on the north side of Telford scrub.



Volunteers at McKenna's property adjacent to the Telford Scrub.

Russell Fisk, a Mt Gambier volunteer, generously offered to grow just over 600 stringybark seedlings to make a start on the approximately 3 ha site from seed collected just over the fence in Telford scrub.

So on Sunday 8th of July a group of 15 people from Friends of Mt Gambier Area Parks and a few other volunteers helped Sharn Lucas from PIRSA put in the trees with guards. We were blessed with a beautiful sunny day and with the recent rains, are confident that the trees have a bright future.

Meanwhile there's an even bigger planting of stringybarks just over the border where international student volunteers have been planting in the Rennick State Forest. The students, from the USA and England, are working with the Department of Sustainability and Environment to plant

between 4,000 and 5,000 brown stringybark seedlings in regeneration areas within the forest under the guidance of DSE Forest Manager Justin Cook.

The aim is to regenerate native vegetation in three one-hectare plots that were formerly pine tree trial areas. The plots were burnt about five years ago and although native understorey species regrew from underground root stocks, the Brown Stringybark did not because there was no seed stored in the soil.

The seedlings were grown from seed collected from nearby stringybark trees and will also help other threatened species like the Southern Brown Bandicoot and Heath Mouse.

Following the planting the students enjoyed an Aussie hamburger and a few games of pool at the local pub – warm and dry out of the rain.



International students recently helped out at tree planting in the Renick State Forest.