

Red-tail NEWS

November 2006 • Issue 22



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Red Tail update. . .

Thanks to the 155 volunteers that traversed 2,500km to count Red Tails back in April. Yet again we improved our count tally – it seems that our volunteer counters are getting better every year!

It has been a busy time with Greening Australia undertaking **Habitat Tender** assessments across the SA and Victorian Red Tail range. Participating landholders are about to submit their bids for Red Tail and Buloke protection and enhancement works on their properties.

The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Forum (*10 years of Recovery*) held in Coonawarra in September attracted over 100 registrations and quite a bit of media interest. Thanks to Wimmera CMA for their assistance and Barry Clugston for helping to ensure the day ran smoothly.

The **Kowree Farm Tree Group** received a \$15,000 donation from Birds Australia's Karak Number Plate funds. This money was raised through the Brack's government 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games initiative which generated over \$180,000 through the sale of Karak number plates. We ran a story on this in the last newsletter. The Kowree Farm Tree Group has undertaken significant revegetation work

through the West Wimmera over a number of years and will use these funds to target buloke revegetation.

Applications to clear buloke in the West Wimmera are currently being assessed in accordance with the Department of Sustainability and Environment interim guidelines. These guidelines have been developed in conjunction with the RtBC Recovery team. DSE and West Wimmera Shire have held a series of public forums to develop a draft Environment Significance Overlay to manage applications to clear buloke more strategically. In the long term the Victorian State Government has indicated that any future clearance of buloke will need to be undertaken in such a manner that RtBC conservation is not compromised. Wimmera CMA has recently appointed The University of Southern Queensland and Greening Australia to model various scenarios of buloke removal, protection and enhancement. The aim is to identify the best combination of these three factors to minimise a future shortfall in buloke feed trees. These initiatives provide a framework to ensure that future buloke clearing does not compromise the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Below — Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo — 10 years of recovery forum held at the Old Soldier's Memorial Hall in Coonawarra in September 2006.



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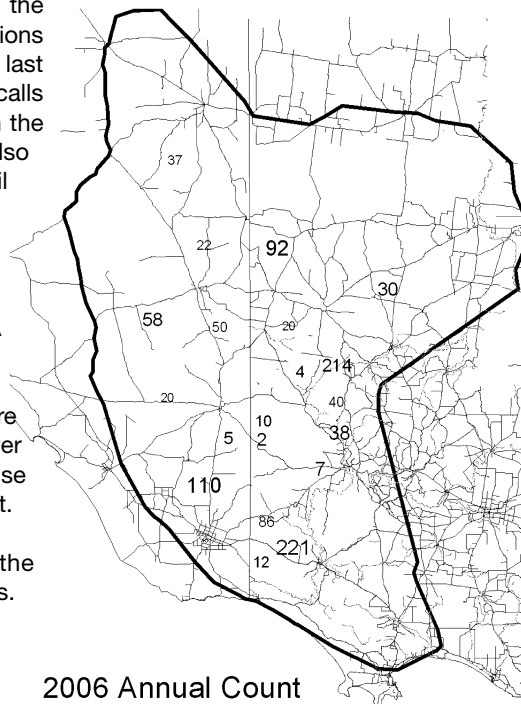
2006 Annual Count

RtBC volunteers put in a big effort to count 1078 Red-tails on April 29th 2006. We had cocky counters from across the range as well as Melbourne, Adelaide, Mildura, Ballarat and Langhorne Creek. 316 Red-tails were recorded in South Australia and 762 in Victoria. This is the highest tally since counting began back in 1996. As you'll see from Richard's flock count results, the increased tally reflects the high standard and range coverage being achieved by volunteers rather than a significant increase in the population. Good weather conditions have also been on our side over the last couple of years. Numerous phone calls from farmers and other observers in the weeks leading up to the count also helped us get a picture of Red Tail distribution, as do the countless hours Casterton volunteer Dick Cooper spends helping Richard locate birds both before and immediately after the count. A recipe for success!

I've attached a map showing where Red Tails were seen. The Lower Glenelg flock of 221 was a surprise find in the weeks following the count.

From feedback I've received, the campout was a resounding success. In total, 35 volunteers spent all or part of the evening camped at Bailey's Rocks. Many thanks to

David Luck for suggesting this as a venue. 4 Red-tails were spotted flying over the campground first thing Saturday morning by a keen-eyed Hamilton observer. A small group enjoyed the creek-walk the next morning, spotting several orchids. The consensus seems to be that the campout should become an annual event. It provides everyone with an opportunity to meet other counters, find out more about the recovery program and more importantly, relax after a hard days counting.



2006 Annual Count



Left to right — Gloria Freeman, Geraldine Ryan, Ken Jones and Katrina Eggleston at Bailey's Rocks



Bill Scutchings and Phillip James — annual count regulars.

2007 Annual Count

We're about halfway through to next year's Red Tail count so I thought I'd give everyone early notice. The 2007 count will be held on Saturday April 28th with a Bailey's Rocks Campout to close the day. Another reminder will go out in about February but you can register now if you'd like to, particularly if you haven't been involved before.

Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association Fundraiser

The Trust for Nature and Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association Torch of Concern relay will travel through Victoria over the coming months to raise funds for the purchase of habitat for the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. The relay will travel from Yarra Valley to the Trust for Nature offices in Melbourne. It is anticipated that the Torch will then travel on to Casterton where there are plans to purchase three new habitat reserves for the bird. The Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association has committed to match, dollar for dollar up to \$50,000 raised through the relay. For those wishing to help with and/or participate in the relay please contact the Association at: admin@jesavewildlife.org, or call (03) 5962 6399.

RtBC Sightings:

Change of email address:
Please forward sightings information through to:

Tania Rajic,
PO Box 3473
Mt Gambier SA 5290;
Freecall 1800 262 062
email: ttrajic@aapt.net.au

Thanks to everyone that has sent sightings information through. With the breeding season gearing up the recovery team is keen to hear about sightings of single birds or pairs.

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Support for Habitat Protection

By Lisa Moore, Trust for Nature

You may not know it, but the West Wimmera has been identified as having critical conservation values in showcasing up to 26 per cent of the State's remnant bushland and encompassing a major portion of the endangered Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo habitat range.

Trust for Nature's Conservation Officer, Lisa Moore, who is based in Stawell is available to specifically work with landholders throughout the West Wimmera to find the best option for permanently protecting their remnant vegetation.

Trust for Nature is Australia's oldest land Trust and has been working with local communities for over 34 years. The Trust with the support of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and the Natural Heritage Trust created Lisa's role in 2004.

Additionally Sue Mudford Regional Manager for Trust for Nature and based at Woorndoo will be known to many. Sue covers the area from the West Wimmera to the sea in the Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Region.

The focus of these roles is to work closely with landholders to help protect bushland on private property and in turn help to protect the many endangered plants and animals of the region,

including the endangered Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Permanent protection through a Trust for Nature Conservation Covenant may enable landholders to access financial support for items such as fencing of the bushland (in the West Wimmera up to \$5.00 per meter), pest plant and animal control. Additionally advice is available on taxation concessions.

Some people are unsure about what exactly is a Conservation Covenant. Essentially it is a voluntary agreement between a landholder and Trust for Nature which protects the natural, cultural and scientific values of the land. The covenant is registered on the property title which means the land is protected into the future if it is sold to new owners and so protects the conservation values of the land forever. Any land which is of high conservation significance can be protected by a covenant.

Conservation covenants are supported by ongoing stewardship through Trust for Nature's network of 27 regional staff who help the landholders develop management plans, provide flora and fauna advice and assistance with pest and weed control.

If you have bushland you would like to see protected please contact Lisa Moore on 0419 825 830 or email lmoore@chariot.vic.net.au for the West Wimmera region and Sue Mudford on 03 5599 5223 for the Glenelg-Hopkins region. Further information is available on the website www.tfn.org.au



On site, Lisa Moore Conservation Officer for Trust for Nature and covenantor Barry Hall of Edenhope.

Farm Planning Field Day

One of the recommendations of Wendy Beumer's 2003 Landholder Survey was that the Recovery Team needs to emphasise programs which encourage both improved farm productivity and conservation. The survey found that most on-farm revegetation activities were undertaken for farm productivity purposes ie. shelter belts, windbreaks/alleys and erosion/salinity mitigation. Only 7% of landholders surveyed undertook this work with conservation in mind.

In order to strengthen the links between farm productivity and biodiversity conservation the recovery team received funding through the Threatened Species Network (a community-based program of the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and WWF Australia). The funds are being used to conduct field days and develop a brochure which feature Property Management Planning (PMP) with a focus on biodiversity.

If you're interested in incorporating environmental protection into every day farm operations while learning more about biodiversity protection consider the Bangham Farm Planning Field Day. Guest speakers include Bryan Haywood (Fire and Biodiversity) and Environmental Best Management Practice advisor Bindi Hunter. Jeff Laws will speak on property management planning. The day will close with a tour and discussion at a Bangham property which showcases one landholders approach to Property management Planning.

Where: Bangham Hall
(north of Frances on the Bordertown Rd)

When: Wednesday 29th
November 2006
9:00am till 1:30pm
BBQ lunch provided

RSVP: Tania Rajic
ph: 08 8724 7615

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Australian Government

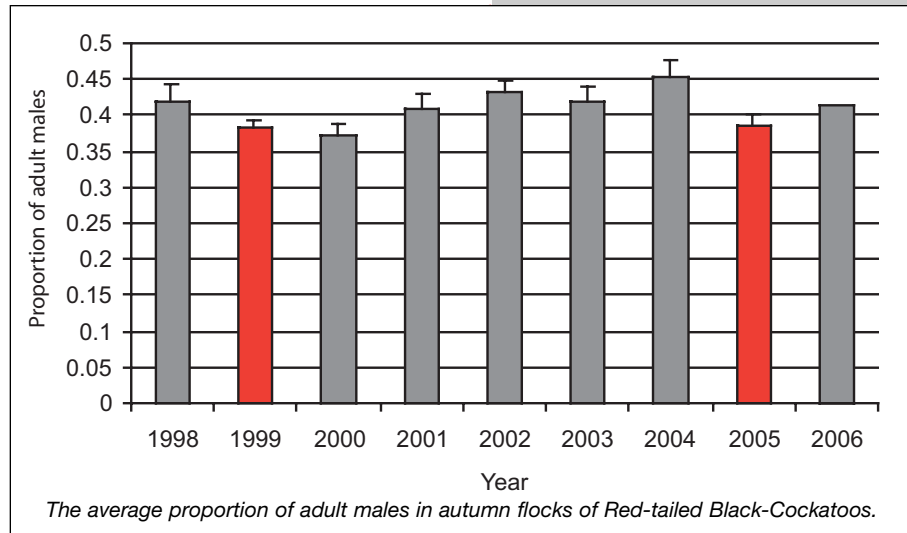


Birds Australia

Flock counts show breeding success down in 2005 breeding season

Immediately following the annual count Richard Hill, the recovery Team's Field Biologist collects flock count data. He uses these data to estimate the proportion of adult males in each flock and the average proportion of adult males across the range. He does that because females and young birds up to 3 years of age are indistinguishable in flocks. The proportion of males in flocks is used to indirectly measure breeding success; the higher the proportion of males, the lower the nesting success.

This year Richard collected flock counts from Lucindale in the north to Mumbannar in the south from flocks totalling 607 birds. These counts revealed an average of 41% adult males in flocks in May/June (see figure below). This is considerably higher than last year, indicating lower nesting success last year than in 2004. This lower nesting success is consistent with our predictions based on the availability of young (< 12 month) stringybark seed crops. Birds breeding in spring 2005 were feeding primarily in older stringybark seed crops across the range in both *E. baxteri* and *E. arenacea*. The next young seed crop in *E. baxteri* will be



available in spring 2006, and in *E. arenacea* not until spring 2007. Flock count data has been collected since 1998 and in that period, the highest nesting success occurred when both species of stringybark had young seed crops. This was in 1999 and 2005 and is not predicted to occur again until 2010. This year's result also indicates that the increased total population size found in the annual count in 2006 is a result of increased success at finding birds, rather than the result of a particularly good nesting season.

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