

Red-tail News

Issue 54 April 2022

WELCOME TO EDITION 54 OF RED-TAIL NEWS.

Welcome back to Red-tail News, the first edition of 2022. Can you believe it's April already? That means our team has already been busy out and about, kicking goals for Red-tails and the landscape.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the community affected by the December/January Poolaijelo bushfire which burnt over 7,000 hectares, resulting in huge stock loss and loss of Red-tail habitat in Western Victoria. We will hear from DELWP about what is being done to protect SERTBC habitat from future bushfires in this edition of Red-tail News.

In happier news, the Annual Cocky Count is on again! More information about the count can be found in this newsletter, especially if you are a prospective volunteer. This year it will be held on Saturday the 7th of May.

Also in this edition, we will hear once again from the incredible Kowree Farm Tree Group and what they have been up to in the past 12 months as well as a peak at the new look Frances Town Square which has a special tribute to Red-tails. We'll learn about an ongoing buloke monitoring project and we will also hear how the Recovery Team enjoyed a few days at both the Mundulla Show and the Lucindale Field Days this March.

On a side note, would you like to receive the electronic version of Red-tail News instead of the postal version? If so, send me a quick email to redtail@birdlife.org.au.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories in this edition of Red-tail News and remember to keep your eyes and ears peeled for the sights and sounds of our beautiful cockatoo.

Thanks, Skye



*A pair of cockies enjoying the shade in some buloke north of Apsley
Photo credit: Skye McPherson*

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IT'S TIME TO COUNT OUR COCKIES

The Recovery Team and BirdLife Australia are again seeking volunteers for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Annual Count. In 2022, the Count will be conducted on Saturday, 7th May. The Recovery Team is hoping for a good number of volunteers to assist to locate as many flocks as possible across South-eastern South Australia and South-western Victoria. The count will take place at more than 60 sites of stringybark forest ranging between Keith and Mount Gambier in SA, to Nelson and Little Desert National Park in Victoria.

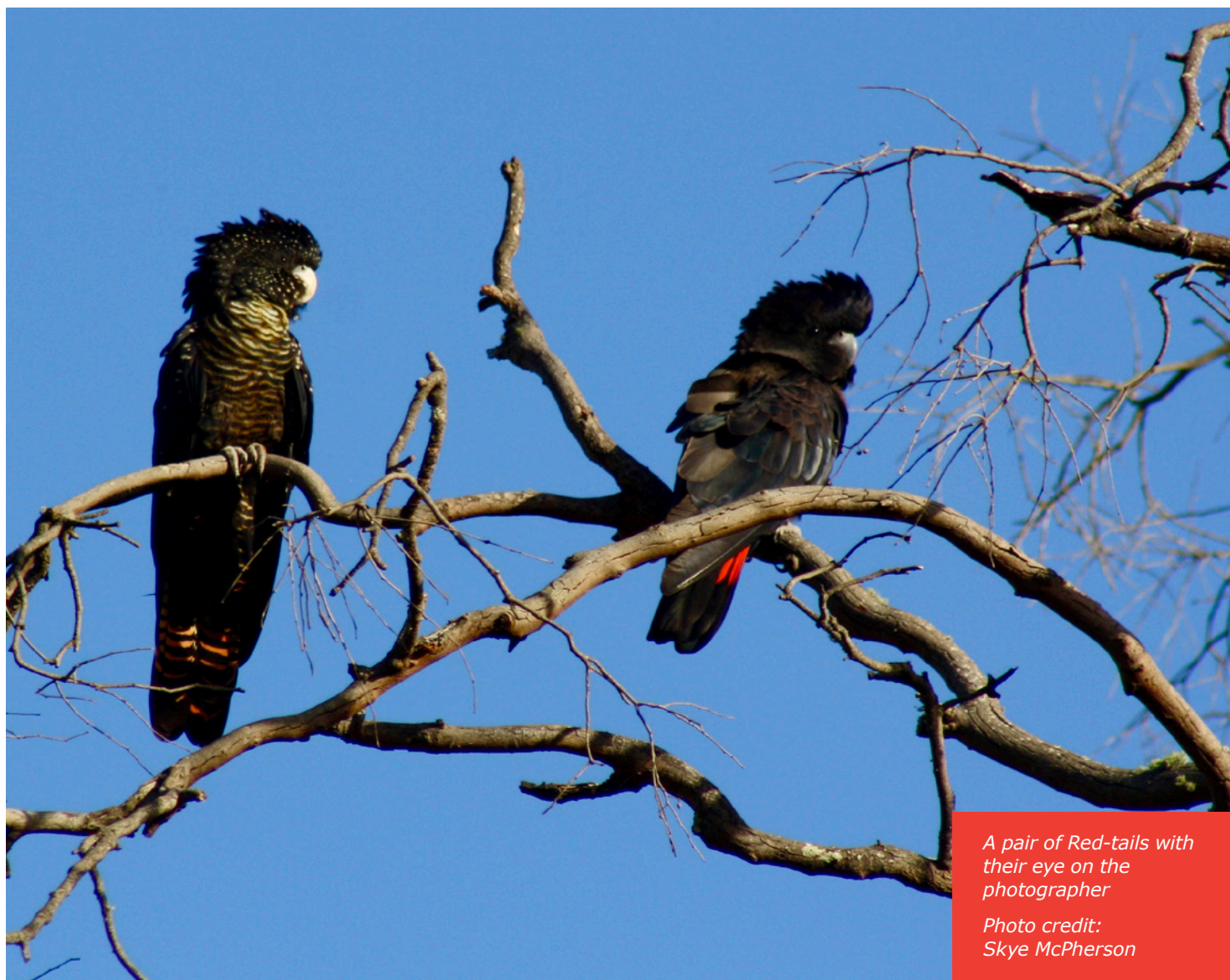
Participating in the count is simple, all you need is a: partner/friend or group, binoculars, a love of the outdoors and a vehicle, preferably 4WD. Volunteers will be allocated a site to cover via vehicle, looking and listening out for the distinctive 'karak-karak' call of the cockatoo. Volunteers need no prior experience for surveying the birds but are required to become familiar with what the Cockies look and sound like before the count so they are able to tell the difference between Red-tails and Yellow-tails on the day. These birds are often mistaken for each other, so to become more familiar with the difference between the two head to our website at www.redtail.com.au. Landholders with stringybark on their property are also encouraged to search their own property. You can request a particular area to search when you register or nominate to search your own property. Red-tails regularly use stock troughs as watering points and feed in stringybark trees

on private land. These areas are usually inaccessible to our counters so we warmly encourage landholders (and other community members) to report sightings and check out your troughs at the start and end of the day.

The main reason for conducting the annual count each year is to identify large flocks of Red-tails across the range. Flock counts are undertaken after the annual count and are guided by where volunteers spot large flocks on the day. Flock counts provide us an important indication of breeding success in previous years.

To register your interest or to find out more please contact Skye McPherson on 1800 262 062, via email redtail@birdlife.org.au, or visit our website at www.redtail.com.au. Registrations are accepted up to two weeks prior to the count; however, we recommend registering early to secure your preferred search area. A package of survey instructions and a map will be sent out to registered volunteers in the fortnight leading up to the count. The wellbeing of our volunteers and community is very important to us; please follow the COVID-19 instructions found in your information pack and note we will be in contact with you further to provide any updates if required. We urge everyone to consider the risk and your own circumstances before deciding whether to take part in the count or not. There will be plenty of chances in the future to join the fun!

Skye McPherson



A pair of Red-tails with their eye on the photographer

*Photo credit:
Skye McPherson*



A small flock flying between roadside buloke
 Photo credit: Skye McPherson

SIGHTINGS CRITICAL FOR THE COUNT

Throughout the year, the Recovery Team encourages members of the public to report any sightings of the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in preparation for the 2022 Annual Cocky Count. At this time of year however, it is extra important. Each year, between March and May, we call upon members of the public and landholders to report all sightings of Red-tails to assist us to determine where the cockies are currently located and maximise the number of birds counted during the Annual Cocky Count by strategically placing our volunteer effort. We are particularly interested in reports of Red-tails drinking at troughs or dams, as this is where we tend to count larger numbers of birds. The success of the count relies heavily on this information. Call us on 1800 262 062 or get in touch via the website www.redtail.com.au. When reporting a sighting, make sure to include your contact details, the date and time of the sighting, an estimate of the number of Red-tails observed, the location and grid reference for the sighting and some information about what the birds were doing eg drinking from trough, feeding. Looking forward to receiving your reports!

FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT IN SERTBC HABITAT

Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) has developed a strong relationship with Birdlife Australia over recent years as we look to undertake our fuel management program in a way that considers the impact any planned burns may have on Red-tail habitat.

Recently a new Bushfire Management Strategic Plan has been developed with a multi-values approach focusing on Community Impacts, Critical Infrastructure, Environmental Values (incl. SERTBC), Agriculture, Cultural Heritage and Plantations. Birdlife has been heavily involved in the development of this plan that factors in bushfire and planned burns impacts on seed crop.

Fuel Management Procedures when undertaking planned burns in Red-tail habitat has been developed to support the plan's implementation. In accordance with these procedures, FFMVic undertake a range of pre-burn tasks as well as detailed post-burn severity mapping to ensure we are conducting the fuel management program in-line with the Strategic Plan.

Key pre-burn tasks include seed crop assessments in proposed burn areas. If a high seed crop is recorded or significant

numbers (20+) are found in the days prior to ignition, the burn will be deferred.

Last October, FFMVic ran a webinar to inform staff involved in planning burns as well as Planned Burn Operation Officers (PBOO - officers that are in charge of the burn on the ground) of the strategy and procedures document. This was then complemented by a recent practical field day to discuss strategies, burn objectives, ignition patterns and burn regimes that was attended by planners, PBOOs, biodiversity department and Birdlife staff.

The day was a great success with many ideas floated and issues raised and discussed in an open environment as the group visited the Meereek State Forest that was recently impacted by the Langkoop – Penola-Edenhope Rd fire in January, as well as planned burns at Chetwynd and Harrow.

FFMVic has commenced its Autumn Planned Burning Program for 2022. If you would like to know more, please visit: www.plannedburns.ffm.vic.gov.au

Dom Uljanic, DELWP



The recent field day with a SERTBC focus

Photo credit: Holly Robson

IT'S SHOW TIME – MUNDULLA AND LUCINDALE SUCCESS

After a two year break due to COVID-19, Recovery Team members recently attended several of the local field days in the region, enjoying the opportunity to get out and about amongst the community. On the 5th of March we headed to the Mundulla Show. We enjoyed some perfect Mundulla weather and chatted to many of the local landholders. Close to 50 kids also took part in the Bunyip Trail where they collected our Red-tail tattoo and some interesting facts about the species. Many of the kids had obviously heard about Red-tails before, saying they had learned about the cockies at school, showing the success of 'Kids Helping Cockies' program.

On the 15th and 16th of March we headed to the South East Field Days in Lucindale. Luckily, we again had perfect weather conditions on both days which resulted in a fantastic turnout. We had huge numbers of landholders and members of the public drop by to learn about the cockies, report their sightings, and have a friendly chat about how they can be involved in Red-tail activities such as planting trees on their property or volunteering for the Annual Count. We again took part in the Blue Yakka Trail this year, handing out temporary tattoos, stickers and Red-tail pencils to about 300 participating kids. We were joined by project partner Trees For Life at the stall, with new Habitat Officer Emily Baldwin showcasing some flyers and brochures about revegetation. There was strong interest in habitat restoration and protection from the public so the 'Communities helping Cockies' team answered lots of questions from landholders about what they can do to help the Red-tails. We also had many people sign up to participate in the upcoming Annual Count.

A huge thank you to our fantastic 'Red-tail Field Days Team' including Evan, Kerry, Bron and Emily for all their help with the site this year – including set-up and pack-up, promotion of events and engagement with our visitors. We would also like to give a big thankyou to the Lucindale Scout Club for the fabulous marquee. Many thanks to everyone who visited our stall and had a chat with us; we are sure next year will be just as fun!

Skye McPherson



*The Lucindale Field Days stall and team.
Photo credit: Skye McPherson*

NEW LOOK FRANCES TOWN SQUARE

The Frances community with the support of the Naracoorte Lucindale Council have recently completed a re-development of the Frances Town Square. The landscape design was based on environmental and nature-based themes, with low maintenance gardens, native grasses and drought-resilient plantings. As part of the re-development the Frances community sought to install some significant pieces of community artwork. Five laser cut powder coated feathers standing at 1.8m height were manufactured by Cut Out. The steel cut feathers were installed to reflect the town's strong connection with Red-tails whilst also adding to the interest of the park.

The Frances Progressive Group have also identified in the Frances Masterplan opportunities to further develop tree plantings for the surrounding township that will provide an additional food source for local Red-tails. No date has yet been set as to when the tree planting will commence.

The Frances Town Square was opened on the 19th November 2021 by Mayor of Naracoorte Lucindale Council, Erika Vickery OAM.

The opening also comprised of a traditional smoking ceremony by the First Nations people and a Welcome to Country which also spoke of the importance and connection between Red-tails to First Nations' people.

*Paul McRostie
Naracoorte Lucindale Council*



The new steel cut feathers in the Frances Town Square. Photo Credit: Paul

KOWREE FARM TREE GROUP UPDATE

The Kowree Farm Tree Group (KFTG) and the Redtail Art Gallery in Edenhope have formed a partnership to host our Landcare Coordinator, Rachel Farran one day a week. This partnership, reflects KFTG's continuing commitment to improve and increase Red-tail habitat in the Wimmera through forming strong community partnerships and improving advocacy through promotion within a communal space.

Private Land Conservation

The Kowree Private Conservancies Network (KPCN) is a group where people involved in conservation on private land swap ideas and learn from one another. Many members own land visited by Red-tails and most members' properties are under covenant with Trust for Nature. Last spring, we finally (after delays due to Covid) met at one of these beautiful properties – 80ha of carefully managed habitat, adjoining Jilpanger Conservation Reserve.

Our Autumn meeting will held be on Sunday 8th and Monday 9th May, following the Red-tail Annual Count on Saturday May 7th. At this stage Sunday will be a training session on GPS and mapping and Monday a property tour. Please contact our Landcare facilitator, Rachel Farran on 0475 357 948 if you would like more information.

Victorian Landcare Grants 2021

Increasing habitat connectivity in the West Wimmera

This grant of \$27,000 for the revegetation of seven sites in the West Wimmera will be used to subsidise fencing and planting costs. Landholders will contribute to the cost of the fencing as well as carrying out construction and site preparation and planting.

Apsley Primary School RTBC STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) project

\$26,000 was secured for an educational program involving working with industry mentors for planning, weed control and re-vegetation of a 13acre conservation block, in Langkoop,

by Apsley Primary School students. In December 2021 the students visited the property to familiarise themselves with the site and the issues that needed to be addressed. After a walking tour, during which the students collected grass and tree seeds, they brainstormed to come up with a management plan, for the next few years. They then watered 70 bulokes, which were planted on the block as part of an agreement with Grampians Mallee Water.

The approach of giving the students ownership has engaged them with the thinking process - why we plant trees and what needs to be done to make this successful. The project follows on from a successful STEM project on Red-tail conservation and carbon sequestration involving students in 2021.

Annual seedling order

Every year, irrespective of whether we have a specific project or not, KFTG orders a minimum of 1,000 to 1,500 buloke and stringybark seedlings and finds sites to plant them. However, after doing this for many years it is getting harder to place these seedlings. **We are keen to hear any suggestions for projects or of new people to work with. Help us to find the seedlings a good home!**

Joan Kirner Landcare Award for our President, Andrew Bradey

As well as revegetating 20% of their own farm Andrew (and Ros), through KFTG and other networks, have worked tirelessly over 30 years to champion the benefits of on farm conservation work. Andrew has shared his own vast practical experience, supported research and encouraged beneficial partnerships to bring funding to the West Wimmera, and ensured that the region is incorporated into wider conservation plans, such as Habitat141. As a result of this dedication, Andrew was awarded the Joan Kirner Landcare Award in the 2021 Victoria Landcare Awards. Congratulations Andrew (and Ros) for this fitting recognition.



KPCN members under a large red gum on a private property adjacent to Jilpanger Conservation Reserve.

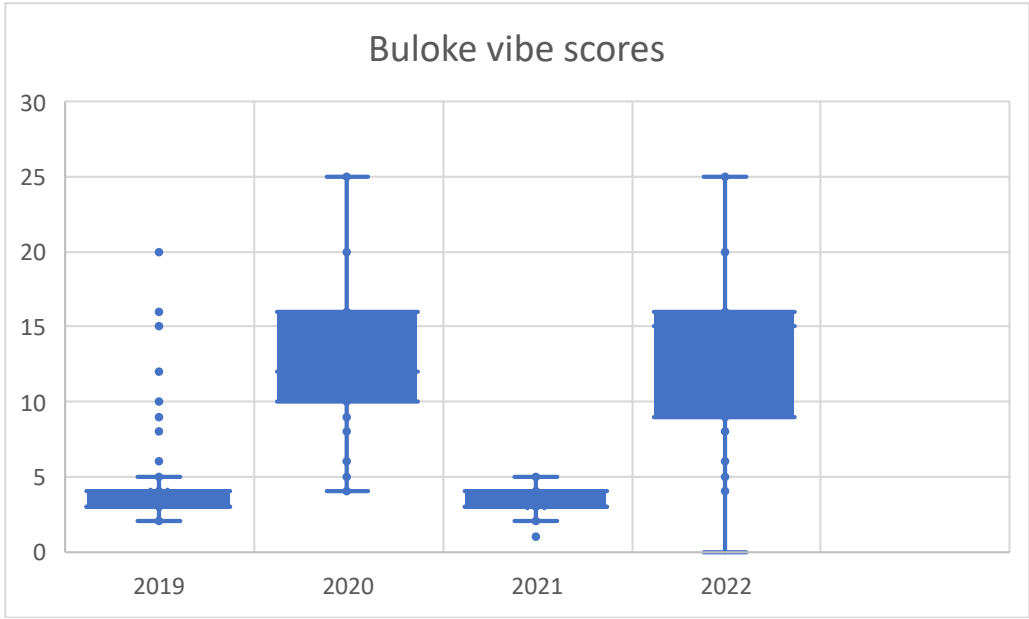
BULOKE MONITORING FOR RED TAILS

This is the fourth year that I have monitored cone production in bulokes. We have set up this monitoring activity to give us a better idea of the extent to which bulokes vary between years in the amount of food they produce for Red-tails.

As you probably know, bulokes flower in Summer and grow out their cones on the female trees after Christmas through to the end of February. The cones then remain on the trees for only a few months, but during that time they are often the first food of choice for Red-tails. We have only recently started to monitor buloke food production annually, using the 'vibe' method we developed for stringys. We give the tree a score of 1-5 for canopy volume and 1-5 for the amount of capsules. The highest value a tree can score is therefore 25. I've collected these data from 50 sites and 250 trees each year.

In the first four years I have found that the cone production has varied markedly. For two of those years, there was virtually no cone production, and in the other two, virtually every tree had a lot of cones. Red-tails were feeding at several sites as I assessed the trees, along with galahs and sulphur-crested cockatoos.

As we gather more of these data we will gain a better understanding of the ebbs and flows in buloke food production and how these influence Red-tail movements and breeding success. This understanding will help us better plan our buloke restoration for Red-tails. And just like stringybark monitoring, buloke monitoring is easy to do, and the more trees we assess the better our data is. If you would like to assist in next year's buloke monitoring, please contact Richard at Richard.hill@delwp.vic.gov.au.



YOUR CHANCE TO BE A STRINGYBARK SCIENTIST!

To study the blooming and capsule production of stringybarks for Red-tails, researchers from Melbourne University are asking for some local help. **If you live in the Red-tail's range it is easy to help.** When you cross paths with brown or desert stringybark, simply take some photos showing its flowers, buds, and/or capsules and send them to the email: stringybarks@gmail.com including date and place. The camera on your mobile phone will be fine.

To share the location of your photo you may:

A) Open your Maps app and tap the location of the tree on the screen and then take a screenshot where the coordinates are visible (this method is preferred), or

B) Send a description of the location as accurately as possible.

You may send regular photos throughout the year and the landscape, and you don't need to identify the species. The more examples you send the more we will learn. Contact stringybarks@gmail.com for more information.



E. arenacea flowering in the Naracoorte Caves National Park this year.
Photo credit: *Skye McPherson*

LIMESTONE COAST Paddock TREE PROJECT

Paddock trees are an icon of the Australian agricultural landscape and provide significant benefits to sustainable agriculture and our natural landscapes. For the nationally threatened South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, they provide key nesting hollows and feed sites. Recent research for South Australia's south east shows a loss of existing old trees and a lack of recruitment of a new generation. Without interventions, paddock trees may be lost from the region's landscape. The protection and enhancement of paddock trees is expensive and time consuming. This project seeks to draw on the range of best practice methods designed to protect and enhance remnant paddock trees, and encourage farmers to work with us to find new, practical and resourceful solutions.

This project aims to establish a new generation of paddock trees by planting and guarding 1,800 seedlings on private land, as well as protecting 25 existing paddock trees. The project received overwhelming interest to its first call for Expressions of Interest from landholders and this has enabled us to achieve these numbers within the first two years of the project.

Project targets are on track and the second year of planting and guarding will take place in May-June 2022. Once again several different guard types are being trialled. The project will produce a number of practical fact sheets and videos describing the most successful guards and tips to install and maintain them.

Get in touch for more information at samanthar@treesforlife.org.au.

The Limestone Coast Paddock Tree Project is funded by the Smart Farms Small Grants (Round 4), and is supported by the Community Helping Cockies project team, the Limestone Coast Landscape Board, Birdlife Australia, and Zoos SA.

*Samantha Rothe – Trees for Life
Limestone Coast Paddock Tree Project*



Pallet guards.



Mallee mesh cattle guard.



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Stringybark regeneration after bushfire.

Photo credit: Skye McPherson

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Skye McPherson

Project Coordinator, South Eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team

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