



Hello, again!

Since December, 2002, there has been a lot of 'wondering if' there would be funding available for the continuation of the work of the Recovery Team. The method of Natural Heritage Trust funding has been changed to a regional process with submissions being prepared for three different Catchment Management Authorities across the Red-tail habitat. Only a few weeks ago, the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA and the Wimmera CMA were able to announce their funding support for the next 12 months. On the eve of the Annual Count, the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage funded the activity.

Many thanks to all those people who have consistently worked towards gaining funding for the project.



Edenhope Focus Group

Landholder Survey

A telephone survey of 501 landholders was conducted in late February, 2003 to gain insights into their attitude towards conservation of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo habitats. Focus groups were held in Edenhope, Hamilton and Coonawarra and with the Biodiversity Committee, Wimmera CMA in Hall's Gap to look at the first level of data analysis and to gather the experience of Natural Resource Management officers and consultants. The project was funded by Wynn's Coonawarra and Threatened Species Network Community Grants (an initiative of WWF Australia and Natural Heritage Trust). The final paper should be available in July and will be available electronically to those interested. Email to register your interest in receiving a copy.

Major findings indicate that there is:

1. a low level of understanding of the critical link between RtBC and stringybark trees,
2. a very high level of membership of the Farmers Federation and Landcare groups,
3. a high level of influence of information via 'Word of mouth' and via advice from farm planning consultants and other extension officers,
4. interest in fencing and revegetation where it provides shade and shelter for stock, erosion control or for wildlife corridors,

5. a need for personal assistance in the preparation of grant applications,
6. little integration of conservation values in farm planning, and
7. a need to pull together and coordinate information on natural resource management activities in the region to achieve biodiversity benefits

The perspective of the Landholder, as he/she manages the farming business, is really important to the Team's approach to engaging them in the conservation of the Red Tails.

Some key information has already been used by the Team to design a new project for submission for Threatened Species Network Community Grants – so WATCH THIS SPACE!

1,2,3.....785

The Red-tails are counted

On Saturday 5th April 2003, more than 97 people took part in the Annual Count. This was a great turn out and shows a strong ongoing interest by the community in the conservation of the Red-tail. Although most were locals, others coming from as far away as Melbourne and Adelaide.

The total count for this year was 785 birds and they were spotted from east of Mount Gambier in the south to near Bangham in the north, as far west as Lucindale (all in South Australia) and Harrow (Victoria) in the east. A total of 713 birds were found in Vic and 72 in South Australia, from only 20 sightings. This years total is the largest number of Red-tails ever counted and highlights the importance of carrying out regular counts. It compares with a total last year of 679. The Volunteer Who Counts the Most was again Dick Cooper – well done Dick.

Rather than indicating that there are more cockatoos this year, the result gives us a clearer idea of the total number of birds that remain. Still endangered. We suspect that the total number of cockatoos is at best remaining constant, but is more likely still slowly decreasing. The biggest problem facing Red-tails is the past and continuing clearance of their stringybark and buloke feeding habitat.

Flock Counting

Flock Counting is currently underway to assess the success of the recent breeding season. This means counting the number of males and females/juveniles in each flock. It is very difficult to distinguish between females and juveniles unless the juveniles are being actively fed. Thus the proportion of males in the flock is used to give us an indication of the 'amount of successful breeding over the past 3 years. This is because young males are thought to assume the plumage of adult males at four years of age – The average percentage of males in flocks over the last five years has been steady at about 40%. This means that on average 2 birds out of every ten in a flock will be less than four years of age. This figure is a little less than found in other subspecies of

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Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and supports our idea that the breeding success of our Red Tails can be improved through collaring of nest trees to reduce nest predation.

More Counting

Recording of sightings (date, time, location and number) is another important ongoing part of research into the Red-tails. It tells us where they are feeding, roosting or nesting, how they congregate and how many there are across the year. This information is fed through to the Bird Atlas of Australia and also into the maps developed by State departments to advise on wildlife conservation and critical habitat areas for land management.

Keep sending in your sightings: 1800 262 062 or email beumer@secnet.com.au

Fencing stringy-bark

This patch of stringy-bark near Mumbanna was grazed for sometime, and has now been fenced. The landholders here are now working out how to get the understory growing again and regeneration of the stringy-bark. They reported "It's much easier to encourage good habitat if it hasn't been grazed before, but we think that areas of bush are really good for the rest of the property."



PO Box 2807,
MOUNT GAMBIER, 5290

South East Field Days 14-15 March, 2003

For the first time, there was a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo site at the field days in Lucindale and located in the marquee with lots of other groups who were promoting sound farm management and conservation of wildlife. The site was a part of the Blue Yakka Trail, so 750 children with families attached came to collect a sticker, lolly-pop and wonder at the big stuffed bird! Quite a number of people collected specific information relevant to their property and their interests, as well as 24 new people for the database to receive the Red Tail News and a dozen new volunteers for the Annual Count. It was great to meet so many people interested in the conservation of the Red-tail. Thanks especially to Evan Roberts and Andrew Craig who gave me breaks during the two days.

It is planned to have a site at the South East and Wimmera Field Days next year.



Red-tales

- Q: Why does a female Red-tailed Black Cockatoo lay her eggs in a hollow tree?
 A: Because if she let them drop, they would break!

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