



Red-tails in farm planning

At the launch of our report on Threatened Species Day, Mr Patrick Secker MP, Member for Baker, announced that Australian government funding of \$7,000 will be provided, through the Threatened Species Network Community Grants. This will be matched by funding from Wynn's Coonawarra Estate and volunteer activities.

a project put forward by the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team.

The new project will develop and present a series of workshops for landholders, which will assist them to include measures for the conservation of wildlife, Red-tails in particular, into farm plans and encourage action to protect native vegetation and revegetation. The emphasis will be on local knowledge, local support and local success stories. Our recent research in the region has shown that landholders are keen to replant and protect native vegetation where it will provide shade and shelter for stock and help control erosion. While Australian farmers are the most efficient in the world, there is still more that can be done to integrate conservation goals into farm planning and practice. By developing the workshops with local natural resource management officers, there will be a lasting legacy of local relevant information available for many years. You will probably see most action on this in 2004.



Patrick Secker MP, Member for Barker announces the new project funding.

South Australia: A Private Land Conservation Story.

Flocks of 100 or more cockatoos in South Australia are rarely reported. The last record we have was from the Wild Dog Valley north of Naracoorte in 1994; from privately-owned stringybark country. Recently a large flock of cockatoos was recorded on a large privately-owned stringybark east of Penola. In fact most records of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in South Australia are on private land.

A quick look at the statistics of where native vegetation remains tells us why this is so. Of the estimated 31,750 ha of stringybark woodlands left in South Australia, 42,438 ha or 77% occurs on private

land. Of this only 29% is protected by some sort of management agreement to ensure that stringybarks aren't killed by stock ringbarking and that regeneration to replace ageing trees occurs. Stringybarks in paddocks, which are grazed by cattle can be at serious risk of being killed by ringbarking. For example, in four paddocks near Naracoorte regularly used by Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos for feeding, 76% of stringybark trees had some degree of ringbarking caused by cattle rubbing, and 15% of the trees were dead. Clearly saving Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in South Australia must be a story about conservation on private land.

Richard Hill, Field Biologist

Nest tree collar inspections: A tongue-in-cheek field report

Late winter is the time for checking the condition of all known nesting trees and making sure that the collars are secure. On one such expedition recently, our trusty Field Biologist decided to test a new method of checking; never tried with Red-tails before. We are at the forefront of conservation endeavour here!

Method:

1. Drive 4WD over apparently solid wet ground in red gum country
2. Make sure that you have a carload of observers
3. Ensure one has a camera to record findings
4. Make sure 4WD sinks to the chase
5. Help local friendly farmer bog tractor
6. Cheer farmer boss who solves problem with another big tractor and long chains
7. Bribe reporters

Recommendations:

Use only for wading birds and mudlarks.

Listen to friendly field companion who said: "Don't go into we red-gum country"



'Eureka' for the Bird Atlas

Birds Australia was the winner of the prestigious Australian Museum Eureka Award, an acknowledgement of excellence in biodiversity research for their development of The Atlas of Australian Birds. Go to the website and find out more about this famous and fabulous research and how you can be a part of it into the future. www.birdsaustralia.com.au Wingspan, September, 2003



South-eastern Red-tailed

a flagship for the Greater Green Triangle

Findings of a survey of landholders' understanding of and attitudes to

While a Steering Committee was established in 1994, the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team has been researching, developing and implementing a Recovery Plan in the years 1998-2003. Three main issues highlighted the need to establish the effectiveness of their community awareness raising activities and to review all extension activities:

1. Acknowledgement that the available feeding trees is the most critical limiting factor for RtBC,
2. Very low uptake of fencing for protection of degraded habitat and/or revegetation by landholders, and
3. Continuing unsatisfactory levels of clearing of feeding habitat either in stands or isolated paddock trees on private land.

Survey

During February, 2003, a telephone survey of 500 landholders in the habitat range of the RtBC was conducted. So that the landholders' views would not be influenced, the questionnaire contained open questions and the responses were coded by the surveyor. Focus groups of natural resource management consultants commented on the first-cut analysis of the data and contributed to the further analysis. Recommendations were finalised by the Recovery Team.

Key Findings

Age and experience of landholders:

47.5% of farmers have been operating the oldest part of their property for more than 40 years. This implies long-term knowledge and understanding of the property. The age profile demonstrates that farm management is not usually assumed until 30+ years of age. Assuming the retirement of the over 60 years of age group in the next ten years, 22% of properties will change manager. With this anticipated critical loss of 'farm operational intelligence' within the next ten years, it is important to continue efforts to educate future farm managers about RtBC and engage them in habitat conservation practices.

Organisation membership:

62.6% of farmers indicated affiliation with one of the state based farmers federation organisations, while 27.7% were members of Landcare groups. These groups are clearly key contact points for future contact and RtBC promotional materials will be reviewed in consultation with these groups. The

Recovery Team will seek to work more closely with them.

Farm Planning:

While 76% of farmers had a farm plan and 45% had attended farm-planning workshops, focus groups believed that farm planning still needs to be encouraged and that the inclusion of RtBC conservation information would be valuable in influencing on-farm decision-making.

Awareness and Knowledge of RtBC:

93.6% of respondents had heard about RtBC and in marketing terms, this is excellent brand recognition, showing a high level of basic awareness. Their information came largely from 'word-of-mouth'; again emphasising the importance of working with groups to which farmers already belong.

Only 7% of farmers demonstrated an accurate knowledge of the link between stringybark seeds and RtBC, whereas 20% cited buloke. The knowledge of buloke requirements may reflect the fact that the birds are easier to see in buloke paddocks and that farmers will rarely work in stringybark stands. Since feeding needs are critical to RtBC conservation, it is important to promote stringybark in particular, more actively.

Landholders demonstrated a reasonable level of understanding of the need for large hollows for RtBC nesting. This has been re-enforced by legislation, which protects dead trees with large hollows suitable for RtBC nesting in all local government areas in the habitat range.

Landholders demonstrated a reasonable level of understanding of the habitat range of RtBC and this is important so that they can establish a relationship between the RtBC presence and their properties.

55.9% of farmers understood that there were two types of black cockatoo in the area (RtBC and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo). Because of the abundance of Yellow-tails, it is concerning that 27% of farmers believed that there was only one type of black cockatoo. This could be a contributing factor in the overestimation of RtBC numbers recorded and the apparent lack of knowledge of feeding requirements.

Recovery Team activities which will increase landholders' accuracy of knowledge about RtBC needs to be continued and expanded.

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Towards the conservation of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

52% of landholders reported seeing RtBC locally, but only 15% of these reported the sightings to a bird monitoring group. Most reporting was through the 1800 number provided by the Recovery Team. 5.4% of landholders reported involvement in the Annual Count of RtBC, which is largely carried out on public lands. Targeted encouragement of landholders to participate in the Annual Count could lead to more accurate counting by including a larger component of private land and more engagement in monitoring RtBC on their properties.

117 respondents provided feedback encouraging continuation of the good job being done to conserve RtBC and re-enforcing the need for protecting feeding trees, nesting sites and the birds in general and providing more information about the birds' needs. Many people admired the bird and wished to be able to see more of them in the area, supporting the view that the RtBC is a good species for use as a 'Flagship for the Greater Green Triangle'.

Replanting/protecting native vegetation:

Conservation alone accounted for only 7% of revegetation activities and 91% of replanting was reportedly made to enhance farm productivity (shelter belts/windbreaks/alley, combat land degradation/salt and fodder or forage). The message to increase the level of replanting clearly needs to be based on improving farm productivity and the promotion of plant species relevant to RtBC, rather than conservation values alone.

Similarly, 54% of the farmers protected native vegetation on their properties to provide shade and shelter for stock, erosion control or to provide corridors for wildlife movement. Clearly a conservation message is 'sellable' to the farming community.

Only 8% of farmers used grants for fencing native vegetation; but grants were essential to 36% of those people. 34% used grants for revegetation activities and 12% of those would not have replanted without grant assistance. Overall, there was a very low level of uptake of grants.

Landholders believed that they would be encouraged to fence and/or revegetate if the cost of materials and labour were met and if there was help to apply for grants. Collectively, there was also some nervousness about their future ability to manage areas set aside for conservation. While many grants covered all direct costs, future efforts need to focus

on personalised help on the ground. Focus groups identified three reasons why this is currently difficult:

1. A higher level of personalised help and follow-up will require a higher level of Project Officer resourcing than is currently available.
2. The one year funding cycle for grants is too short to fit into the farm planting cycle.
3. Recruitment of Project Officer staff does not always take into account the interpersonal and 'selling' skills to engage landholders.

Summary:

The Recovery Team has gained significant new information about landholder perspectives and attitudes about RtBC conservation.

Recommendations have been proposed which will influence the future operations of the Recovery Team including:

1. Expansion of membership
2. Review of all promotional materials to focus on landholders
3. Encouraging the inclusion of conservation values into farm planning
4. Opportunities for co-operative planning with landholders and regional natural resource management officers
5. Influencing policy and funding agencies

The author would particularly like to thank the landholders, who completed the survey, and all land managers and Extension Officers who participated in the focus groups.

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A copy of the full report can be obtained by contacting the author, Wendy Beumer phone (08) 87 24 8090 or email beumer@secnet.com.au. It will be available on the website www.redtail.com.au in late November, 2003.



RED TAIL News

September 2003

Launch of Major Regional Landholder Survey

The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team celebrated national Threatened Species Day at Wynn's Coonawarra Estate with the launch of our survey into the knowledge and views of landholders about the Red-tail.

In launching the report, well-know conservationist and landholder, Barry Clugston, commented that the operation of this Recovery Team is one of the best in Australia because of its combination of scientific input, government agency co-operation and community involvement.

Dr David Baker-Gabb, Chair, said that 'the Recovery Team is already making adjustments to its program of activities based on the findings of the report. We have invited wider representation onto the Team and

we are working towards a closer relationship with farmer organisations in the region.' Regional Vineyard Manager for Wynn's Coonawarra Estate, Allen Jenkins said, 'As landholders, our industry is very keen to make sure that our practices will complement the needs of the local native plants and animals. If not, neither our wine nor birds like the Red-tails will be here for our children and grandchildren to enjoy in the future.'

And more awards:

One of our enthusiastic Recovery Team members, Vicki-Jo Russell, was recently awarded the Order of Australia (AM) for 'service to conservation and the environment through encouraging community-based participation in activities aimed at conserving threatened flora and fauna in South Australia and for the initiation and establishment of the Birds for Biodiversity-MLR programme'. Congratulations V-J.

Soroptimists learn about Red-tails

There was lots of interest and interesting questions when Wendy gave a presentation about Red-tails to Soroptimists International, Mount Gambier Branch.



If you would like a presentation to your community group, please contact Wendy Beumer, Extension Officer Phone 0887 248090 or email beumer@secnet.com.au



Launch of landholder survey by Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team. (L-R) Guest speaker, Barry Clugston; Author, Wendy Beumer; Regional Vineyard Manager Wynn's Coonawarra Estate and Chair of Recovery Team, Dr. David Baker-Gabb.

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