



RED TAIL News

December 2005

Issue 20

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Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

This edition of *Red-tail News* has a distinctly land management perspective with articles from both sides of the border - Department of Sustainability and Environment in Victoria and Forestry SA. Fire management and Red-tails feature.

Since the last newsletter, Wimmera CMA has received confirmation of the success of their \$1.3 million regional funding bid for Red-tails and buloke. While the proposal is currently still being developed, the main objective will be protection and enhancement of RtBC habitat and buloke communities on private land through a competitive tender-based program. Funding will also be available to produce a comprehensive model of critical habitat, including trends across the RtBC range. One example is modelling the availability of food based on fire history.

The new website www.redtail.com.au is now online. Thanks to the Department of Sustainability and Environment for funding the site upgrade.

Karak Treeplanting Day

About 300 school children and volunteers helped to plant about 6,000 stringybarks on a 10ha site at Corndale, west of Casterton in September. The planting day was a Commonwealth Games Environment Program initiative coordinated by DSE and Greening Australia. Planting was tackled with enthusiasm, and by lunch time Day 1, organisers were surprised to discover that most of the rip lines were dotted with trees. Dry conditions for at least a week after planting were worrying, but good follow up rains since early September have helped the trees establish with some already poking up over their guards. Green hills Nursery in Casterton did a great job growing tubestock from locally collected seed.

A highlight for one group of planters on the day was a single Red-tail flying around perimeter of the site. Hopefully the trees will be a great source of food for this bird and/or its progeny in 15 to 20 years.



MacDonald Park Primary School treeplanting crew (who's the big boy in the back row?)

Annual Count - Saturday 29th April 2006

Please note the dates for next year's annual count. We've made it a Saturday event next year and will be having a Saturday night camp-out at Bailey's Rocks, north of Dergholm. This gives everyone the opportunity to brag about sightings and

other annual count adventures. If you'd like to get in early to register your interest, please contact Tania on 1800 262 062. If you've been involved in annual counts over the last two years you will receive a reminder note by the end of February 2006.



Pre-burn assessment of red-tail feeding habitat

*Grant Tucker
Forest Management Officer, Casterton*

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has recently implemented a new initiative in an effort to ensure that the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo is not adversely affected by prescribed burning operations.

Fire poses a threat to life and property while, paradoxically, playing an integral part in the maintenance of many native ecosystems. Addressing fire issues therefore forms a key part of land management. *The Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land* (1995) provides a framework which promotes the efficient, effective and integrated management of fire, and fire related activities on public land. *The Portland Fire Protection Plan* (2004) was prepared within the context of this Code to ensure that fire related activities on public land are carried out in an effective, operationally safe, environmentally sensitive and cost effective manner.

In the Portland region DSE are working in conjunction with Birds Australia to ensure that recovery objectives for the endangered Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (RTBC) are not compromised by fire related activities and prescribed burning operations. One of the key management issues associated with finding the balance between RTBC and prescribed burning is seed crop availability.

The RTBC relies on stringybark seed for food and prescribed burning can interfere with seed set and development. Casterton DSE staff are developing a set of "pre-burn" assessments, the first of which is the *Seed Crop Assessment* which was implemented last autumn. The assessment was developed to determine the potential or current seed crop available for RTBC feeding in any given planned burn area. Burns within the Portland District and the known RTBC range are now scheduled with consideration given to the available and potential seed crop. All burn areas are also checked for the presence of RTBC and known nesting sites are excluded from planned burns.

If you would like further information please contact Grant Tucker on 03 5554 2301.

Drive to save Karak

If you live in Victoria, a VicRoads number plate featuring the Commonwealth Games mascot 'Karak' is now available. Proceeds from sales of the number

plates will go to organisations working to save Karak and will be administered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The aim is to sell 1,000 limited edition number plates – roughly a plate per endangered bird - at \$285 each.

The Karak number plate will help promote and commemorate the Commonwealth Games, and help to save the endangered Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

To place your order for the limited edition Commonwealth Games Karak number plates, go to www.dse.vic.gov.au or phone the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.



Interpretive signs replaced

Thanks to Dave Ryan (Parks Victoria, Nelson) for helping to replace the weather beaten interpretive sign near the Nelson kiosk. DEH kindly loaned their cordless drill and the Mt. Gambier GreenCorp Team sanded and rejuvenated the frame. Padthaway and Naracoorte signs are also booked in for revamping. If you have seen a sign that is in average condition, please let Tania know (ph: 1800 262 062).



Sign maintenance is a social activity - Dave Ryan in Nelson. If you have seen any Red-tail signs that need new perspex, a clean, or a complete overhaul please let Tania know on 1800 262 062.



ForestrySA - managing RtBC habitat

Sharn Lucas (Project Officer – Biodiversity Corridors) & Bryan Haywood (Project Officer-Community Forestry)

In addition to being South Australia's largest manager of radiata pine plantation, ForestrySA also manages approximately 24,000 hectares of native vegetation for conservation purposes. Of this, more than half is protected as Native Forest Reserves in the Lower South East of South Australia.

Stringybark woodlands, an important feeding habitat for the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, comprise a large part of these conservation areas. A number of flocks are regularly seen feeding in Dry Creek, Nangwarry, Wandilo and Deadmans Swamp Native Forest Reserves.

Prescribed burning is an important tool for managing the biodiversity of native vegetation and to reduce the impacts of wildfires. ForestrySA plans prescribed burning for Native Forest Reserves to maximise the retention of differing age classes and successional stages of vegetation. The resultant mosaic of burnt areas encourages a greater diversity of habitats for fauna, and the method ForestrySA has adopted for burning also minimises the damage to stringybark canopies where Red-tails feed.

In February 2000, a wildfire that spread into ForestrySA land saw over half of Wandilo Native Forest Reserve suffer significant canopy scorch. A flock of over 100 Red-tails was observed feeding here in April 2005. Although these birds may have been sourcing most of their food from other areas (Koch, 2003), it is encouraging that even after such a severe wildfire event, Red-tails have returned to visit in due course.

Native Forest Reserves have an equivalent level of legal protection as National Parks, with management plans developed and implemented to maintain biodiversity and support the continued survival of threatened species. Works include pest plant and animal control and revegetation as necessary. Firewood collection is prohibited as the Reserves contain many trees with hollows suitable for a range of species.

Plantations also have a large number of smaller conservation areas that help to create stepping stones of habitat. To further enhance the links between areas of native vegetation, ForestrySA is revegetating many hectares of stringybark woodland as part of a 25 year corridor strategy in the lower South-East. Not only do these corridors help sedentary birds and mammals move from one vegetation patch to another, they will also provide additional habitat for the RtBC.

For more information contact ForestrySA on (08) 8724 2888



*Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in Nangwarry Native Forest Reserve
(Photo: Bryan Haywood)*

SA Signage

Roadside signs advising that dead, hollow trees are protected will be installed across the Red-tail range in South Australia. Legislation protecting dead, hollow trees as nesting habitat for Red-tails was introduced in SA in 2003. The new signs, pictured right will be installed at 6 strategic locations across the south east.





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Red-tail sightings

Thanks to everyone that has passed on information relating to sightings. Reports of nesting activity have come from areas including Youngs Scrub, Tallageira State Forest, along the Naracoorte Ck and Dry Creek Forest Reserve east of Mt Gambier. Reports started coming in from about August/September. Some have commented that flocks seen around the weekend of the annual count are still in the same area and in relatively large numbers. 80 at Wandilo Native Forest Reserve, 100 near Tallengower SF and 35 at Rennick SF. While it is not uncommon for Red-tails to be in relatively large flocks this late into the season, it could also reflect reduced seed availability. While we had a new seed crop to coincide with the 04/05 breeding season, birds are now feeding on 12 month old seed which means they are probably spending longer feeding. If females are leaving the nest to supplement feeding by males, nesting success may be reduced. Next year's flock count data may reflect this.

The Recovery Team is keen to hear about any Red-tail sightings. Please call 1800 262 062 or email mulga@icisp.net.au

Recovery Plan

The draft South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Plan has been released for public comment. Comments on the plan need to be submitted by 4 January 2006. If you would like to receive a copy of the plan please contact the Department of the Environment and Heritage, Threatened Species and Threat Abatement Section, at

GPO Box 787 CANBERRA ACT 2601,
Email: recoveryplans@deh.gov.au ,
phone (02) 6274 2405,
Fax: (02) 6274 1332.

To view the recovery plan on-line visit:
<http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/recovery/public-comment/index.html>



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