

# Red-tail News

Issue 42 March 2016

## WELCOME

Welcome to 2016 and Edition 42 of Red-tail News.

We hope all of our supporters had a lovely Christmas and relaxing New Year break. This year we look forward to bringing you all the latest news and updates regarding our Red-tails, and hope that you can join our cause in helping to create a brighter future for our charismatic cockatoos.

This year we say farewell to Tim Burnard, our Recovery Team chair who has worked tirelessly over the last two years to achieve some amazing outcomes for Red-tail conservation. Tim has been a very active member of the Team for many years now, fulfilling the project coordinator role for a number of years, conducting our annual flock counts, long-term seed crop monitoring and nest maintenance, assisting with the annual count and strongly advocating for improved fire management across the Red-tail range in Victoria. Luckily for us Tim will be staying on as a member of the Team and will continue to assist with many of these duties in the future. On behalf of the Team I'd like to say a huge thank you to Tim for his outstanding contribution!

On that note, I'd like to say another big warm welcome to Vicki-Jo Russell, who many of you would recall co-chaired our Team back in 2010. Vicki-Jo brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in working on and with recovery teams and threatened species across the country. Welcome Vicki-Jo!

*Bronwyn Perryman*

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All part of the job  
- Tim carrying out  
nest maintenance  
duties

Photo:  
Evan Roberts



birds are in our nature



  
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## HOW CAN YOU NOT LOVE THOSE RED-TAILS?

It is a great honour to be back in the role as Chair of the SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team. Tim Burnard did an amazing job and I cannot thank him enough for the hard work, leadership and tenacity he brought to the role. Tim will be staying on the Team so we are doubly lucky.

For those who don't know me I have been on the Red-tail Recovery Team off and on for 20 years and co-chaired with Dr Martine Maron 2010-2013. I have typically worked in environmental non-government groups and have a long history of Recovery Team and threatened species conservation management including KI Glossy Black-Cockatoo, Mt Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wren and KI Threatened Flora. I am also the 'manager' of the 'Cockies helping cockies helping cockies' program; a great task made easy by the fantastic efforts of Kerry Gilkes based at Lucindale and the landholders she works with.

I live in Adelaide with my husband (a mad birder) and two lively kids. The Red-tail Team is fortunate to have a wide range of experience, skills and organisations represented across the cockatoo's range who work for the most part in a highly collaborative way (it would be boring otherwise!) to oversee the implementation of the Recovery Plan, address key threats to the cockies and support great community efforts like the annual Cocky Count and 'Kids helping cockies helping cockies' school project.

It is an exciting time for the Team with the Red-tails recently recognised as one of the 20 priority threatened species for the federal Threatened Species Commissioner which we hope will translate to more opportunities to deliver our Recovery Plan; after all how can you not love those red-tails?!

*Vicki-Jo Russell AM*



## FOCUS ON COCKIES



*The SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo has recently been selected as one of 20 priority threatened bird species under the Threatened Species Strategy. Photo: Bob McPherson*

Earlier this year, the Australian Government announced the remaining sixteen species of the forty threatened birds and mammals prioritised for conservation under Australia's first Threatened Species Strategy.

The strategy, which was released by the Threatened Species Commissioner in July last year, sets out an action-based,

prioritised approach to protecting and recovering Australia's threatened fauna and flora in partnership with the community and government agencies over the next five years. Included in the strategy is a commitment to improve trajectories of 20 threatened birds and 20 threatened mammals by 2020.

The first tranche of birds and mammals targeted for action were identified upon the Strategy's release last year, leaving only sixteen species to be prioritised for selection.

Of the remaining eight priority birds to be selected under the strategy was our very own South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (SERTBC).

Over the next four years the Australian Government will look to support actions and projects that improve habitat conditions, mitigate key threats and build community support and participation in recovery efforts for the SERTBC across its range in SA and Victoria.

In particular, projects submitted under Australian Government funding initiatives such as 20 Million Trees, National Landcare Programme and Green Army that target threats and support the implementation of key recovery actions for the cockatoo will receive increased attention as a result of this listing.

Other threatened bird species to be recently selected included the swift parrot, eastern curlew, Australasian bittern, malleefowl, white-throated grasswren, cassowary and golden-shouldered parrot.

For more information on the Threatened Species Strategy and other threatened species targeted for conservation as part of this strategy please visit <https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/strategy-home>.





A flock of Red-tails captured on video drinking from a cattle trough near Nangwarry.

Photo: Tim Burnard

## CALLING COUNTERS FOR 2016 ANNUAL COCKY COUNT

The Recovery Team and BirdLife Australia are again seeking volunteers to assist with the 2016 annual count for Red-tails, which will be held on Saturday 7 May.

2016 marks the 20th year of counting cockies, with the Recovery Team keen to see a good turnout of volunteers to help locate as many flocks as possible across more than 60 sites in stringybark forest across the cockatoo's range in the South-east of South Australia and South-west Victoria.

Participating is easy – all you need is a survey partner/friend or group, binoculars, a love of the outdoors and a vehicle; preferably 4WD. Volunteer groups will cover their allocated site, stopping their vehicle regularly to listen out for the distinctive call of Red-tails.

Volunteers need no prior experience with surveying for birds, but are required to become familiar with what Red-tails look and sound like, as they can often be mistaken for the more common Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. To hear the difference between a Red-tail and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo please visit our website [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

Sites are scattered from Nelson to Little Desert National Park in Victoria and from Mount Gambier to Keith in South Australia. Landholders who have remnant stringybark 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 often use watering points such as cattle troughs and remnant stringybark habitat on private land that is inaccessible to our counters. As such, we encourage all landholders or anyone who notices birds on the day to phone in their sighting(s) to freecall 1800 262 026 so these sightings can be followed up.

Why do we count? The most important reason for conducting the annual count is to identify large flocks for subsequent

counting (to determine the proportion of males and females/ juveniles) as part of our annual flock counts. Flock counts are undertaken each year, following the volunteer count, to gain an indication of breeding success in previous seasons.

The count also allows us to better understand how the Red-tails use their habitat and build community knowledge and capacity to become involved in recovery efforts.

An annual count training session will be held on the morning of the count in Casterton for those who haven't participated or would like some more tips on searching for Red-tails. Volunteers will learn what Red-tails look and sound like, what their feeding signs look like and how to identify stringybark habitat apart from other gum woodland habitats.

Following the count, volunteers are encouraged to attend the annual Bailey's Rocks BBQ and Campout, this year celebrating 20 years of counting cockies. This is very informal; bring your own food, drink and camping gear.

To register your interest in participating or to find out more information please contact Bronwyn Perryman on 1800 262 062 or via email [redtail@birdlife.org.au](mailto:redtail@birdlife.org.au).

Registrations are taken up to two weeks prior to the count; however we highly recommend registering well before the deadline 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 Recovery Team looks forward to hearing from both returning and new participants and hopes for another successful year of cocky counting. Although we can't guarantee you'll see a Red-tail on the day, we're sure you'll enjoy a fun day out in the bush searching for our colourful cockatoos.



Evan Roberts gets a hug from Karak.

Photo: Tim Burnard



A female SERTBC with chick at entrance to nest hollow. Photo: Bob McPherson

## NEST SEARCH CONFIRMS THREE ACTIVE NESTS

Three active nests have been found on a landholder's property near Benayeo again this season thanks to the help of one of our most dedicated volunteer's Evan Roberts.

Evan, who has been a member of the Recovery Team for over 12 years, has been helping to monitor and inspect nests reported through the nest incentive scheme since the project's launch back in 2011.

Over the last five years, landholders and members of the public have helped project staff and Recovery Team members such as Evan to identify 14 new nest sites of the cockatoo across its range in both SA and Victoria. Of the 14 'new' nests found, five have been re-used by Red-tails again in subsequent years. A further four nests reported through the scheme were known nests found to be in use again.

The three nests found at Benayeo this season have been used previously by Red-tails back in 2011 and 2012. The area continues to be a hotspot for nesting with Red-tails found nesting on the property most years since 2011. A fourth nest (likely to be new) was also reported close by in Tallageira State Forest, but was not able to be confirmed.

Although the main breeding season is finished for another year, Red-tails have been found to nest year round. Sightings of single adult males or pairs of birds coming into water or to trees with large hollows may serve as clues to nesting birds. Anyone who notices this behaviour is encouraged to report their observations to the Project Coordinator on 1800 262 062.

## REPORT YOUR COCKY SIGHTINGS

The Recovery Team is again urging the public to report all sightings of the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in preparation for the 2016 annual count. At this time each year we call upon landholders and members of the public to report all sightings of Red-tails to maximise the numbers of cockatoos counted on the day. Pre-count sighting information helps us to strategically situate volunteers participating on the day in areas where birds have been recently seen.

We are particularly interested in reports of Red-tails drinking at troughs or dams, as this is where we tend to count big numbers of birds on the day.

The success of the count relies heavily on this information. If you see Red-tails between now and May don't store them up, get in contact and let us know as it will make all the difference, call us Freecall 1800 262 062 or via the website [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

Make sure to provide your contact details, the date and time of the sighting, 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 ie feeding, drinking etc.

I look forward to receiving your reports.





*A series of images documenting the growth of stringybark plantings at a former pine plantation near Lucindale. Photos: Kerry Gilkes*

## COCKIES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Most of the South East has really suffered under the second year of another dry spring/summer. It is easy to get despondent when planting trees as there is a lot more effort required watering over spring to ensure seedlings survive.

The Cockies Helping Cockies Project has been planting trees with local landholders across the ranges from predominately Naracoorte to Lucindale since 2009 and through the good and bad seasons we are really starting to see some changes in the landscape from all the plantings.

After planting is completed, a photo-point is established at each site to track progress and document success rates and changes in the vegetation over time. I recently visited the very first site we planted in 2009 (a former pine plantation) and thought I would share the before and after shots of what the site looks like six and half years down the track.

The trees have grown out and many are flowering. It just goes to show the transformation of a barren sandy hill into not only a future feeding site for our Cockies, but a beautiful place to enjoy a walk or picnic.

It really is worth revisiting your old photos to get a feel for progress – you're sure to be amazed with the changes and what can be achieved in a very short time.

If you are in a Red-tail area and would like to plant some stringybark habitat on your property please give Kerry Gilkes from the Zoos SA Cockies Helping Cockies Project a call on 0429 660 027.

*Kerry Gilkes*



A female SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo at home among the stringybark.

Photo: Keith & Judy Humphreys



## KIDS CREATING HABITAT FOR COCKIES

At the end of 2015 the Kowree Farm Tree Group (KFTG) successfully gained funding to run a 'Kids creating habitat for Cockies' project, which is currently being run with four schools across the West Wimmera; St. Malachy's Primary School, Edenhope College, Goroke P-12 College and Apsley Primary School.

Bronwyn Perryman from the South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo Recovery Team presented all the schools with a power-point on the life of the SERTBC, with the students' SERTBC knowledge and questions impressive.

Iestyn Hosking from KFTG taught the students how to plant stringybark seeds and how to look after them once germinated. Building the shade houses for the seedlings proved a little challenging and time consuming, however, the students showed great enthusiasm and patience.

Despite students going on School Holidays, the seedlings were well looked after and are now thriving. A couple of schools even had strike rate greater than 100% and have begun separating the cells with multiple seedlings.

We look forward to continuing this project, working with local schools within the West Wimmera and cannot wait to see the trees growing many years down the track.

*Rachel Lloyd*

*Students at Apsley Primary School enjoyed learning all about Red-tails and what they can do to help create a brighter future for our cockies.*

*Photo: Tanya Turner*



A completed shade house built to house the stringybark seedlings.

Photo: Rachel Lloyd

## PULLING PINES TO PROTECT RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO HABITAT

Glenelg Hopkins CMA has secured funding for on-ground work to improve habitat for Red-tailed Black Cockatoos within Drajurk State Forest and Wilkin Flora Reserve.

The project is supported by the Victorian Government with funding through its Threatened Species Protection Initiative (TSPI), the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning and Parks Victoria. Birdlife Australia and the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo Recovery Group also support the project. Wildling pines have established themselves in large numbers in many neighbouring remnant stringybark woodlands in the Far South West. Pines suppress the growth of young stringybarks and most understorey plants, and where pines are thick they can outcompete and kill native vegetation.

This can lead to food shortages, the main threat to the long-term survival of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Due to their dietary specialisation, food shortages have a profound effect on the birds' annual distribution, movements, and nesting success. There is also mounting evidence that cockatoo breeding success is related to the availability of fresh stringybark seed crops.

Some food shortages are natural and due to the fruiting cycles of feeding trees. However, the impact of natural shortages are exacerbated by the historical removal of feeding habitat and by current activities such as clearing of habitat, scattered tree removal, tree decline and death due to damage from domestic animals, and deliberately lit fires.

GHCMA staff and Conservation Volunteers Australia will treat pine wildlings in a 7000ha area of high priority Red-tailed

Black-Cockatoo habitat within Drajurk State Forest and Wilkin Flora Reserve over the next few months. The team will make their way through the forest removing any seedlings under 4 metres high and marking any bigger pines for removal by Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning staff in the Far South West.

The CMA project is part of a much broader pine wildling project that DELWP have been undertaking for the past eight years over 5000ha of crown land. These areas have been heavily infested with pine wildlings. The treatment is hopefully allowing re-establishment of natural bushland which benefits the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo with improvement of habitat.

*Marty Gent*



*Pines coming up amongst the stringybarks in Drajurk State Forest. Photo: Marty Gent*



## PVA REAFFIRMS THE IMPACT OF FIRE ON RED-TAILS

Last year, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning commissioned the first ever Population Viability Analysis (PVA) for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. PVAs are hypothetical models commonly used to predict the future abundance of species, evaluate extinction risks and assess the impact of different management interventions based on current knowledge of the species and key threats.

Three models were explored (the base model, food model and food and fire model) to estimate how mortality rates of 0-1 year old birds influence population growth based on survival, food availability and applications of planned burning.

A key part of the analysis was to investigate the impact of different scenarios of planned burning on population performance using the food model, which was built on our understanding of the interaction between stringybark food supply and breeding success (ie years of low food availability coincide with low breeding success and fewer immature birds).

Results showed that changing food availability can influence juvenile mortality and the trajectory of the population, and that fire (through its impact on food availability) can markedly affect population performance.

In particular, the probability of extinction was found to increase significantly with increasing area burnt, with extinction rates significantly higher under a 5% burning scenario (5% habitat burnt per year - as representative of more recent levels of burning) compared to that of more historical rates (1.5% habitat burnt per year).

The study also identifies important knowledge gaps and highlights areas where future research should be targeted to better understand key relationships between management actions and SERTBCs.

Although some caution needs to be taken when interpreting

the results (because of the uncertainty around some of the predictions/assumptions that input into the models) the study reinforces the need to maintain a burning regime which ensures no more than 15% of SERTBC stringybark habitat is burnt in a 10 year period. Any increase in canopy scorch beyond the historical average of 15% is likely to significantly impact the population.



*'The PVA showed that fire, through its impact on food availability, can have a marked effect on population performance.'*  
Photo: Geoffery Dabb

## SPOTLIGHT ON RED-TAIL EXHIBITION



*One of the many beautiful pieces of artwork on display as part of the Red-tail Art Exhibition.*

Photo: West Wimmera Advocate

The Red Tail Art Gallery in conjunction with the Kowree Farm Tree Group (KFTG) are thrilled with the success of last year's Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo themed Art Exhibition. The Gallery received around 50 entries from paintings, photographs, sculptures, carvings, films, quilt-work to various forms of kid's craft.

The exhibition kicked off on the 8 November 2015 with around 75 people attending the official Red Tail Exhibition Opening. Gallery owners, Colin and Gail Kelly, and event facilitators Ros and

Andrew Bradey from the KFTG were overwhelmed with the high level of interest in the exhibition and large number of people attending the opening.

People of all ages have enjoyed admiring the many pieces of artwork, all while learning more about the plight of our Red-tails.

Bronwyn Perryman, Project Coordinator provided an informative talk to guests attending the opening about the challenges facing our Red-tails and what actions are currently being taken to halt the rate of decline.

The exhibition has not only show-cased the artwork of many fabulous artists, but has provided a platform for raising the profile of one of the region's most endangered bird species.

During the month of November 2015 the exhibition attracted over 100+ visitors from near and far with differing backgrounds and interests. Visitors included local and interstate artists/exhibitors, conservationists, farmers, bird enthusiasts, tourists, land managers and interested community members. Several school groups also attended the gallery to view and discuss their most favoured art work.

The exhibition has helped to stimulate discussions around conservation efforts for the cockatoo and has certainly highlighted the importance of ensuring that these iconic birds remain in the landscape for many more generations to come.

Thank you to the Red Tail Gallery and the KFTG for all their hard work in organising and bringing together a wonderful collection of exhibits, and to all the exhibitors for kindly sharing their love of art and Red-tails.

The Red Tail Gallery is located at 50 Elizabeth Street, Edenhope. Opening hours are 11am – 3pm Wednesday to Sunday. For more information on current and upcoming exhibitions please visit their Facebook page.



*Guests at the Red-tail Art Exhibition Opening listened to an informative talk about the challenges facing our Red-tails.*  
Photo: West Wimmera Advocate

# VISIT US AT THE 2016 LUCINDALE FIELD DAYS

The Red-tail Recovery Project will again be attending the South East Field Days, which will be held in Lucindale on the 18 and 19 March 2016.

Project staff and Recovery Team members will be on hand to provide information and advice about the recovery project, upcoming events including the annual count, habitat restoration for Red-tails, nest incentive scheme and how people can become involved with recovery efforts for the cockatoo.

The Team will also be taking registrations for participation in the 2016 annual count and any sighting information that may not yet have reported to the Team. Visitors to the site will also have to opportunity to view our interpretative displays including our flock count video and will go into the draw to win a beautiful bottle of Black Cocky Wine thanks to Max Arney.

We will also be part of the popular Blue Yakka Trail with pens, tattoos and stickers on offer for the kids.

This year we will be situated at our usual site (site 383) on Wilson Street. Just look for our flying Red-tail flags. So get down and visit Karak and the Team at the Lucindale Field Days!



Come visit Karak and the Recovery Team at the 2016 South East Field Days.

Photo: Bron Perryman

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