

# Red-tail News

Issue 44 March 2017



Female Red-tail in the trees

Credit: Mike Sverns

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## WELCOME TO 2017 AND EDITION 44 OF RED-TAIL NEWS

We hope you all enjoyed your Christmas and had a relaxing New Year break.

This edition we feature a number of stories as we prepare for our 21st annual count on the 6th of May. Richard and Tim have been busy counting nuts to gather valuable information on how Red-tails are influenced by stringybark seed production. We bring you an update on Dani's bioacoustic nest monitoring program and urge landholders to report any sightings or information which will help us to locate new nests. The Recovery Team will again be hosting a site at the South East Field Days in Lucindale, 17th and 18th March – Site 383, make sure you call in for a chat and read about a new children's novel starring our very own Red-tails and much more.

## 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 2017 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.

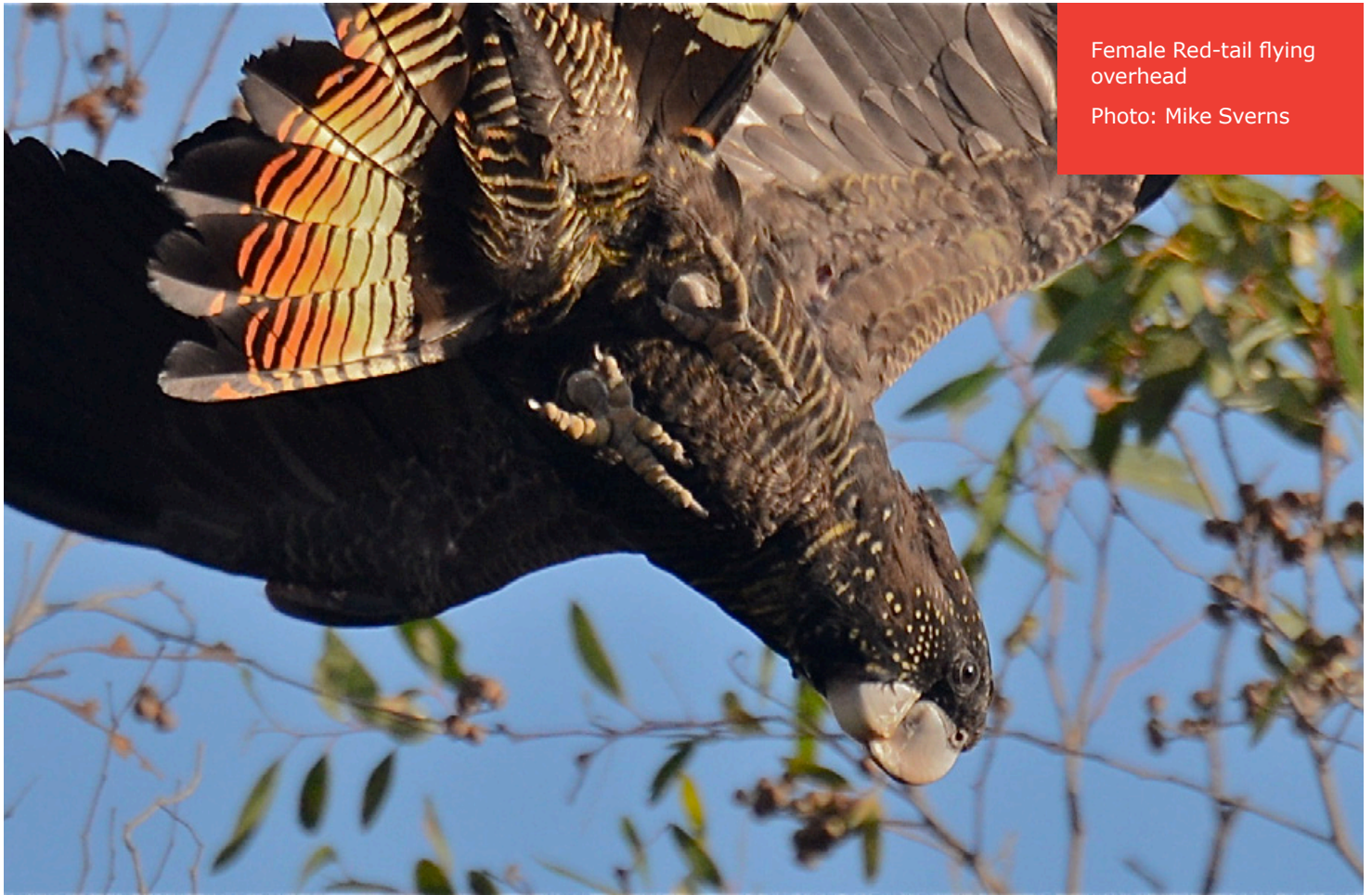
We are particularly interested in reports of Red-tails drinking at troughs or dams, as this is where we tend to count big numbers of birds on the day.

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 get in touch 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, 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 ie feeding, drinking.

We look forward to receiving your reports.





Female Red-tail flying overhead

Photo: Mike Sverns

## JOIN US FOR THE 2017 ANNUAL COCKY COUNT

The Recovery Team and BirdLife Australia are seeking volunteers to assist with the 2017 annual count for Red-tails, which will be held on Saturday 6 May.

2017 marks the 21st year of counting cockies and the Recovery Team is keen to see a good turnout of volunteers to help locate as many flocks as possible 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, a day to give 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 a Yellow-tail 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 on the day. You can request a particular area to search when you register or nominate to search your own property. Many favoured Red-tail spots are on private land and therefore inaccessible to our counters so reports from landholders are very valuable.

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 to gain an indication of breeding success in previous seasons.

The annual 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.

For those who haven't participated or would like some more tips on searching for Red-tails a training session will be held on the morning of the count in Casterton. Volunteers will learn what Red-tails look and sound like, what their feeding signs look like and how to identify potential stringybark habitat to search.

Following the count, volunteers are encouraged to attend the annual Bailey's Rocks BBQ and Campout. This is very informal; bring your own food, drink and camping gear.

To register your interest, to report a sighting or to find out more information please contact Kerry Gilkes on freecall 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 in hot pursuit.



## NEW MURAL AT ADELAIDE ZOO

The Adelaide Zoo has a striking new mural created by street artist Dvate from Graffix Creative. This amazing artwork features the Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby and our very own South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Liberty Olds, Zoos SA said

*"We're excited to be taking our work to save species from extinction to the streets with a new mural outside Adelaide Zoo facing Frome Road.*

*"As a conservation charity, we are always looking for innovative ways to create awareness for South Australia's endangered wildlife.*

"The street art features the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and celebrates our work to protect this species where, with our project partners, we have been working with local landholders in the south-east to restore and protect the cockies' habitat.

For further information about the mural, please check out the video on Zoos SA Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AdelaideZoo/videos/1481207371907363/>



Striking new wall mural at the Adelaide Zoo featuring our Cockie.

Photo: Nicole Miller

## YOU'VE GOT TO BE NUTS!

As regular Red-tail news readers will know, seeds from the nuts or seed capsules of two stringybark eucalypts, Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*) and Desert Stringybark (*Eucalyptus arenacea*) are the main year-round food of our Red-tails. In summer during good Buloke seasons, many birds will switch to Buloke cones, extracting the seeds for the few months they remain in the cone. Stringybark seeds can remain in their capsules for two or more years and provide food for all that time. However, Red-tails are quite fussy about the stringybark trees they feed in, preferring larger trees with more capsules, and preferring capsules that are less than 12 months since they first matured. Red-tails are highly nomadic, moving across their range seeking out these preferred seed sources.

Every year we count these stringybark nuts for several reasons. One is to get an idea of how much food there is for Red-tails in that year, another is to track the relationship between breeding success and food availability. A third is to identify any areas planned for fuel-reduction burning which have higher seed crops. We try and get those burns deferred for a year until the seed crop ages and therefore become less suitable for Red-tails.

This year we've been reviewing these data, and at the same time Dani, our PhD student has been counting nuts around nests where she has auditory recorders. We use binoculars to scan each tree and estimate the density of nuts across the tree, as well as the age of the nuts. We've had to do more this year, because we are evaluating the method we use, to make sure it is telling us what we need to know. We've counted and counted until we literally have been going nuts.

Not to mention the nasty crick in the neck! Our results will help us better understand how Red-tails are influenced by stringybark seed production, which in turn, means we have more confidence in what we are doing to protect Red-tails.

Richard Hill and Tim Burnard.



Cockie Counts her nuts  
Photo: Geoffrey Dabb



## RED-TAIL RECOVERY — THE BOOK!

A recently published story for children looks at the efforts to save the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. *Red-Tail News* spoke to author Emma J. Homes to find out more.

### Tell us about the story...

The main character is ten-year old Ruthie. She has had an unusual childhood – her parents are wildlife scientists and travel around Australia working in remote locations. Ruthie also has a younger brother and sister, and they all live together in a bus, along with Ruthie's pet blue-tongue lizard. The school of the air provides their lessons, and Ruthie has also learnt a lot by helping her parents in their work.

'Red-Tail Recovery' is the third in the series. The two earlier stories are 'The vanishing frogs of Cascade Creek' and 'Saving wombats'.

In this latest book, Ruthie's parents are running the recovery project for a year. For Ruthie this means a lot of exciting firsts: living in a house, and not a bus, starting at a 'real' school, and the chance to make some friends. Ruthie also gets involved in many activities with her parents to save the Red-tails, and tries to solve some of the problems which come up along the way.



Child's book – Red-tail Recovery Photo: Emma Homes

### What inspired you?

In 2015 I was lucky enough to take part in the annual count of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and I got to see and hear these beautiful birds in the wild. I also spoke with volunteers and staff involved in the recovery project and I was able to mix up some of what they told me with my own imaginings to create Ruthie's adventure.

### Where do we get a copy?

The story is published on Amazon as an ebook. You can find it at [www.amazon.com.au/dp/B01MSZ8FOG](http://www.amazon.com.au/dp/B01MSZ8FOG) (or just search for 'Red-Tail Recovery' on Amazon). You can download it onto a kindle, or another device such as an ipad. You just need to download free 'kindle for ipad' software first.

It is priced at \$3.99, but I also have free promotions from time to time. Contact me via my author web page [emmajhomes.weebly.com](http://emmajhomes.weebly.com) to find out upcoming dates.

If you read it and like it, please leave a review on Amazon. This helps me to promote the book and raise awareness of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo recovery project.

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Author – Emma Homes



## A NEW METHOD OF NEST MONITORING — AND WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Red-tails are difficult to monitor and especially their breeding behaviour. Finding the nests is a challenge, they change nest sites regularly moving around their range and they are hard to observe at the nest. For this reason, we usually don't know whether a nestling survives to fledging nor do we always understand the reason for a nest's failure. This means it is challenging to make informed decisions about the most effective means to improving breeding success rates - which is critical given recent flock count data suggests disappointing breeding results over the last few seasons. PhD student Daniella Teixeira, with the support of the Recovery Team, is investigating whether bioacoustic monitoring can help.

To do this, Daniella is beginning by collecting sound recordings at nests. During the 2016-17 peak breeding season, she found and monitored nine nests. This involved installing autonomous sound recorders at nest trees (near the ground, not near the hollow) to record the calling behaviour of the parents and the nestling for the entire nesting period. This method of monitoring requires very limited human involvement, apart from replacing batteries and SD cards.

Once breeding-related calling behaviour is understood, Daniella will test bioacoustic methods in the field, to investigate important questions about breeding location, nest survival rates, hunger, and the relationship to feeding habitat. If this proves successful, bioacoustic monitoring could be used as a method for the long-term monitoring of Red-tails' breeding.

### Daniella needs your help!

If you find nesting birds, or suspect nesting behaviour, please contact the Recovery Team or Daniella directly, so that the nest can be followed up. Daniella is also seeking public input through videos or sound recordings of Red-tails at nests, or of breeding pairs or trios when they're not at the nest. This extra information will be of great help to Daniella's project – the more acoustic data, the better! The easiest way to contact Daniella is via email at [d.teixeira@uq.edu.au](mailto:d.teixeira@uq.edu.au).



*Daniella attaching a bioacoustic recorder to a nesting tree*  
Photo: Daniella Teixeira



Female Red-tail  
sitting in stringybark  
tree

Photo:  
Daniella Teixeira





Eight year old stringybark seedlings starting to produce nuts

Photo: Kerry Gilkes

## FEED TREES FOR COCKIES

Since 2009 the "Cockies Helping Cockies" program has been assisting landholders to fence off remnants and revegetate Desert Stringybark habitat to help feed our Red-tails in the future.

The two species, Brown and Desert Stringybark, flower on different cycles making nuts or fruit available in different places in different years. The ranges or sandy rises stretching from Naracoorte to Lucindale were mapped as priority areas for revegetation of Desert Stringybark to increase the ratio of Desert Stringybark to Brown Stringybark and ensure a more even availability of food each year.

The project has been well supported by local landholders over the eight years and with over 95 sites on private land stretching across the ranges from Lucindale to Naracoorte we are starting to observe real change in our local landscape.

It is interesting going back to visit some of these sites which are starting to take on a life of their own. We are excited when landholders phone in to report birds flying over some of the revegetation sites or report the birds feeding in remnant habitat which we have assisted landholders to fence off.

Although it takes 12-15 years for the seed from these trees to be on the menu for Red-tails it is encouraging to see the prolific flowering and fruiting on trees some of which are only seven years old. This past season has been favourable with many new seedlings thriving after good spring rains and our older plantings showing good flowering and fruiting.

We want to share with our Red-tail readers some photos of the great work landholders are doing on their land to ensure our Red-tails remain in the landscape for future generations.



Prolific flowering in our stringybark sites this year

Photo: Kerry Gilkes





Stringybark  
revegetation site  
taking on a life of its  
own

Photo: Kerry Gilkes



Not just for  
Red-tails! - Abigail  
Goodman reported  
a Koala in her  
Stringybark which  
was planted in 2010.

Photo: A Goodman



## VISIT US AT THE 2017 LUCINDALE FIELD DAYS

The Red-tail Recovery Project will again be attending the South East Field Days, which will be held in Lucindale 17-18 March 2017.

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 sightings and how people can become involved with recovery efforts for the cockatoo. The Team will also be taking registrations for participation in the 2017 annual count and any sighting information that may not yet have been reported to the Team. Visitors to

the site will also have the opportunity to view our interpretative displays including our flock count video. We have both a female and male cockie on display this year, thanks to Jack and Pat Bourne and Craig and Marion Patterson for kindly loaning us the pair for the Lucindale event. We will also be part of the popular Blue Yakka Trail with pens, tattoos and stickers on offer for the kids.

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 the Team at the Lucindale Field Days we look forward to seeing you!



Come visit the Recovery Team at the 2017 South East Field Days. Photo: Bron Perryman

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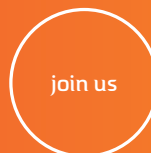
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Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats

Kerry Gilkes

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

PO Box 37, Avenue Range, SA 5273 | T 1800 262 062 | [redtail@birdlife.org.au](mailto:redtail@birdlife.org.au) | [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au)



PO Box 37, Avenue Range, SA 5273

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