

# Red-tail NEWS

January 2012 • Issue 33



## Nest Incentive Scheme

In July this year we launched the Nest Incentive Scheme using funding from Nature Foundation of South Australia to pay members of the public (especially landholders) for finding Red-tail nests. We were all a bit nervous when the scheme was launched not knowing if the \$500 payment would attract any or even too many calls. As it turned out the scheme has proved to be a success in locating three new nests found in the first nesting season. Three new nests may not sound much but in some years past we haven't located any.

The three nests were found on two properties. The first discovery came from a student, George, who spent most of the September school holidays searching the bush far and wide and eventually came across a nest not far from home. We hope the \$500 paid to George will act as an incentive for other young people to get involved during the school holidays. The Recovery Team are sure there are more active nests out there and hope that the Nest Incentive Scheme encourages locals to help us find more each year.

As the new year unfolds, we are moving away from the main breeding season around spring. But this doesn't mean you can't still find a Red-tail nest. Over the years we have found Red-tails breeding in every

season, so the scheme is still operating and we strongly encourage anyone who thinks they know of a Red-tail nest to look at the Nest Incentive Scheme on our website [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au). It's important to look at this information because it outlines the tricks of the trade when looking for nests; things like the time of day to look and where nests are most likely to be found. Remember that the scheme also offers a reward of \$100 to sightings for known nest sites, so even if the nest has been reported in previous years, you may still be eligible for a payment.

Next May, well away from the main nesting season, CVA will send a team to put a collar around the base of the new nest trees to protect them from predators like Brush-tailed Possums. The nest location is recorded and helps us understand more about ideal nesting sites for Red-tails. This data uncovers the distance of a nest from a preferred food source, which in turn helps us prioritise habitat to protect and restore.

Please keep in mind that while reporting of all Red-tail nesting activity is encouraged, interference or physical disturbance to nest trees is prohibited. All observation should be done from a safe distance as disturbed birds may abandon their nest, which will result in no payment being awarded.

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### Contact details:

#### Tim Burnard

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

PO Box 25, Casterton, VIC 3311  
Telephone: 1800 262 062  
Email: [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au)



## Cup Moth Caterpillars

Dick Cooper, one of our long term Red-tail volunteers, was recently alarmed to find a large patch of stringybark forest south west of Casterton that looked really sick. It turned out that it was due to Cup Moth caterpillars. We found the following information on the PIRSA website.

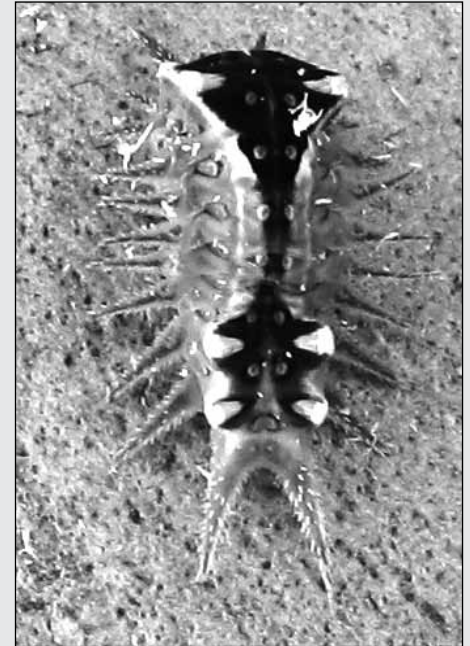
Cup moths belong to a small group of moths that have unusual slug-like caterpillars which are often beautifully marked and coloured. There are several different species of Cup Moth which feed on eucalypts and other native plants. The caterpillars differ in colour, pattern and size but they all have the characteristic slug-like appearance with clusters of spines on their bodies. The spines can inflict a sharp and painful sting, rather like a nettle and the caterpillars are often known as 'stingers'.

Cup Moths are forest insects and at times have been responsible for severe damage to eucalypts. Young caterpillars

feed by skeletonising the leaves while older caterpillars eat the whole leaf, often leaving only the midrib. Caterpillars are usually present in small numbers but sporadic outbreaks may cause severe damage with trees completely defoliated over a large area. However, unless attacks occur over 3-4 successive years the trees usually recover.

Cup Moth caterpillars are very susceptible to viral diseases and sometimes entire populations are killed. Viral disease is the most common natural control of Cup Moth caterpillars. Outbreaks of disease usually occur when weather conditions are warm and humid and when there is overcrowding and shortage of food. Because virus diseases are so common, chemical control is rarely necessary.

For further information contact PIRSA Forestry (08) 8735 1232



*Cup-Moth Caterpillar.*

## Annual Count 5th May 2012

Each year, soon after the Annual Count, we start getting offers from enthusiastic volunteers to take part in the next count. The trouble is that we are constantly reviewing the best time to run the count and so we don't decide on the date until our November meeting. We've recently held that meeting and can finally announce that the 2012 count will be on Saturday 5th May.

You can register for the Annual count by contacting us on 1800 262 062 or [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au).

We continue to take registrations up to two weeks before the count. Then we allocate all of the sites and mail out (or email) a package of instructions, including a map of your area, in the fortnight leading up to the count. You can request a particular area to search when you register. Many farmers nominate stringybark scrub on their own land.

We will have a training session on the morning of the count to help those who haven't participated in the count before

or feel they need a little more hands on experience in searching for our colourful cockies. It's also a time for older hands to share their experience as well. Everyone is welcome.

Following the count, we will have another Bailey's Rock Campout planned to close a big day of counting and compare tales. More information will be given in the next edition of Red-tail News (due out in April).

Many readers will be interested to know that we are continuing to improve the scientific value of the annual count. We have never been able to use the annual count as an estimate of population but the count is still important (and fun). In the past one of the main things we learnt from the count is where the birds are congregating in larger numbers. This is important for our flock counts which do give us some measureable data in terms of breeding success from previous years.

This year Martine Maron, co-chair of our Recovery Team, went on a study tour to Cambridge University and spoke to other

scientists to see if we could make more use of our annual count data. It turns out that we might be able to!

If we include accurate data not just on the number of birds found but how many kilometres were travelled in Red-tail habitat by volunteers, we may be able to make estimates on total population size based on a percentage of the total habitat area searched compared to total habitat area. The upshot is that this year we will be asking all counters to accurately record their kms travelled in stringybark forests.

The Recovery Team hope we have record-breaking involvement in the 2012 Annual Count that will be fun for participants and gather some important data for us. Register now!

*e glossy black plumage with stunning, bright red tail panels. Females are quite different*

## Kalangadoo Primary School

Kalangadoo Primary School students have continued their fantastic support of the Red-tail project throughout 2011. Earlier in the year students and teachers planted Red-tail habitat trees on a private property near Lucindale and have recently completed renovations to the school shade house so they can grow stringybark seedlings for the Red-tails.

The school has been using a grant from South Australian NRM Community Grants program to renovate the old shade house including new stands (at a comfortable height for the students), refurbishing the shade cloth and installing a crushed rock base. Principal, Graham Slarks was very pleased with the final product which provides a safer and more comfortable workspace for students.

In 2012 Kalangadoo school students will plant their own seedlings at the Reedy Lagoon Reserve near Nangwarry. They believe that they may have more seedlings than needed for Reedy Lagoon and are also looking for farmers who want to help restore Red-tail habitat with stringybark trees.

The Red-tail project team encourages these types of programs. By involving school students in the whole process of revegetation, from collecting the seed to raising seedlings in the greenhouse and finally planting the trees we hope that not only do we expand Red-tail habitat, but that students learn about and grow their concern for Red-tails and their habitat.



## CVA continue support

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has continued to support the Red-tails by planting thousands of trees at the Casterton water treatment works in the past few months. In Spring, CVA planted 1000 Buloke seedlings at Clear Lake and 1500 at Bringalbert with another five weeks work booked in for 2012 in areas including Edenhope, Casterton and Apsley.

The Red-tail Recovery Team is fortunate to have received the backing of CVA for over a year now, resulting in the planting of many thousands of trees. We are particularly impressed and grateful to the international volunteers who give up a week of their time to help the Red-tails, especially as a lot of the work was done under gloomy weather conditions (note the weather proof gear). Many thanks to the volunteers and CVA for their ongoing support.



...but equally spectacular...

## Birds Australia becomes BirdLife Australia

BirdLife Australia was created in January 2012 from the merger of Birds Australia and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA). For more than 100 years Birds Australia and BOCA have been powerful advocates for native birds and the conservation of their habitats. We have come together to create BirdLife Australia, an independent, not-for-profit organisation with one aim: creating a bright future for Australian birds.

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats. With specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of members, volunteers and supporters, BirdLife Australia is creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

Today, BirdLife Australia is the voice for over 200 species of threatened birds and all actions work towards better conservation outcomes.



## Recovery Plan review, your thoughts?

The Recovery Plan is due for a review and we are looking for your thoughts.

All endangered species in Australia are covered by their own Recovery Plan; you can find the Red-tail Recovery Plan on the 'Recovery Team' page at [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

Our Recovery Plan describes the actions we will take over a five year period to save the Red-tails. Another important function of the Plan is to identify what the Australian Government should consider as threatening actions (like habitat clearing) when looking at the EPBC Act. As can be expected for such an important document, there are guidelines and rules about what recovery plans should contain.

Within those guidelines, we want a simple and streamlined plan that sets objectives over the next five years, but allows flexibility to ensure it is always relevant to issues of the day.

The Recovery Team meeting at the end of November 2011 started the review process with a discussion of the main areas to focus on and how we will carry out the review. We will start by seeking input from many stakeholders, and this is where you can take part. If you have any thoughts on how the Recovery Plan can be improved to help save Red-tails we invite you to pass them on. You can do this easily by contacting us on 1800 262 062 or [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au)

## Interesting sightings

The Recovery Team is always keen to hear of sightings of Red-tails across their range in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria.

There have been a number of interesting sightings since the last newsletter. Interesting because they are either near or beyond what we consider the normal range of the Red-tails or because they have been absent for a while. They include sightings at Princess Margaret Rose Caves and the Millicent Golf Course at the extreme south and south west of their range. In the north Red-tails have been seen at Nurcoung Flora Reserve near Mitre, Kiata (between Dimboola and Nhill) and the western edge of the Little Desert. Red-tails have returned to Henty for the first time in many years and also Morgan Plains Road near Digby.

There are a number of other sites where Red-tails have continued to be seen for a long time (eg near Casterton and Lucindale) but numbers seem to have dwindled. The general observation is that the birds seem to have dispersed in small groups all over the range. This might have something to do with the wet year we've just had but at this stage we still can't be sure.

All sightings are recorded and used to help us increase our knowledge and understanding of the bird's habitat use and movement across the range from month to month and year to year. We encourage everyone to report all sightings big or small. When reporting a sighting, please include: date and time, place (CFS/CFA map reference is appreciated), how many birds and your phone number. It's very easy to record a sighting: simply call 1800 262 062, fill in a form at [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au) or email [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au).

## Funding

You may recall an article in our last newsletter about a shortage of funding. Thankfully we received news on 5th September that the South Australian Minister for Environment and Conservation, Paul Caica, announced a grant of \$30,000 for Birds Australia to support

community activities aimed at protecting the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. This was great news and coupled with ongoing funding from Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Wimmera CMA has enabled us to continue our normal operations for 2011-12.

We are still keen to establish a partnership with private enterprise that will contribute to funding stability. If you have any suggestions for corporate sponsorship we are always keen to hear them; call 1800 262 062.

# Red-tail NEWS

## Information Boards

The Recovery Team is continuing to update our older information boards throughout the Red-tail range. In the last few months, new boards have been installed at Casterton Primary School, Edenhope College, Princess Margaret Rose Caves and Kalangadoo Primary School. The old signs were made of steel with a sticker attached and were prone to fade and easily scratched. The new signs are printed on hard wearing plastic and constructed of recycled materials. This makes them longer lasting and better for the environment.



Students from Casterton Primary School with their new information board.

## Red-tail banners on the road

The Red-tail banners have been getting about the place over the past few months making appearances at the Wimmera Biodiversity Day then to Mt Gambier Library for a week and then to the Naracoorte Caves 'Threatened Species Day'.



Barry Clugstone, one of the speakers at the Wimmera Biodiversity Day, was the first Extension Officer for the Red-tails and organised the first few annual counts



Becky McCann works with DENR, Mt Gambier and organised the library display for Threatened Species Month



Evan Roberts is a long term member of the Red-tail Recovery Team and well known local farmer. He often lends a hand with Red-tail displays at Lucindale Field Days and helped us at the Naracoorte Caves Family Day.



If you would like to use the banners at your own event, contact us to see if they are available on 1800 262 062.

# Red-tail NEWS

## Volunteers

We have a new member of the volunteer team in Felicity Lord. Felicity and husband John are farmers from near Penola and, as is often the case, they are also keen birdwatchers. Felicity is helping by responding to enquiries we get from the web so you may notice a new name next time you report a sighting at [www.redtail.com.au](http://www.redtail.com.au).

Welcome Felicity and thanks for the assistance!

## Contact Us ...

1800 262 062 or [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au)

## Electronic Newsletter ...

we encourage you to receive the newsletter electronically, as this lightens our workload and saves our precious resources. Please email [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au) if you are keen to receive the electronic version.



PO Box 25, Casterton, VIC 3311



Australian Government



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