

Red-tail News

Issue 36 February 2013

WELCOME

Welcome to the New Year and the 2013 summer edition of Red-tail News. We hope you all had a wonderful, relaxing Christmas and festive New Year. We look forward to bringing you all the latest news regarding all things Red-tail for 2013.

Bronwyn Perryman

COCKIES GAIN CURRENCY

With its vividly coloured tail feathers, prodigious size and charismatic nature, the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo has long captured people's imagination. Long before the arrival of Europeans, this cockatoo was a totemic species for many Indigenous Australians across the continent, and today they are still regarded as an 'iconic' species by many people of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds.

First formally described after being collected at the Endeavour River in North Queensland during Captain Cook's first Pacific voyage of discovery, the species is the most widespread of the black-cockatoos, occurring across many regions of Australia's mainland, where there are five different subspecies.

In some areas the species is readily seen and may even seem rather common, but in other parts of Australia the numbers of these black-cockatoos have declined to disturbingly low levels. For example, the subspecies that straddles the border between south-western Victoria and south-eastern South Australia is currently regarded as Endangered, while the birds that occur in the South West of Western Australia are considered Vulnerable.

BirdLife Australia is working hard to protect these threatened cockatoos, with the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project active in engaging local communities and protecting and regenerating suitable habitat, and BirdLife Australia's conservation program in Western Australia is expanding to include the threatened birds in the South West.

Recognising the charm of the species, The Perth Mint has produced an impressive commemorative 1/2 ounce silver proof coin which features a beautiful image of a male Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo surrounded by sprays of native flora. The image highlights the bird's vivid blood-red tail feathers contrasting with its otherwise sooty plumage.

An extremely limited number of these 99.9% pure silver coins have been produced (just 10,000 were minted), with each housed in a customised presentation box with a certificate of authenticity. They are sure to be popular with coin collectors and bird lovers alike. The cost is \$67.50. Other species due to be featured in future releases in this series include the Budgerigar, Regent Bowerbird, Rainbow Lorikeet and Superb Fairy-wren.

What a great way to spread the word about the plight of these charismatic Australians.

John Peters,
Senior Writer & Editor, BirdLife Australia



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo 1/2 ounce silver Commemorative Coin produced by The Perth Mint.

Photo: The Perth Mint.

CONTENTS

1. Cockies gain currency
2. Win a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Commemorative Coin
3. Brush-tails and Red-tails
4. 2013 Annual Count for Red-tails
5. 2013 South East Field Days
6. Seven Red-tail nests discovered
7. Karak visits the Edenhope Show
8. Fire Management Strategy for Red-tails in SA
9. Growing food for Red-tails



WIN A RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO COMMEMORATIVE COIN

BirdLife Australia and the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team are very excited to offer our readers the opportunity to win one of four beautifully crafted Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Commemorative Coins, all thanks to The Perth Mint.

For our younger readers, all you need to do to win one of these fabulous coins is to create your own unique piece of 'Red-tail Artwork'. This could be a painting, drawing, collage or sculpture. Let your imagination run wild! The possibilities are endless — as long as it features our iconic Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo it will be accepted. The winner of each category will receive a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Coin presented in a beautifully designed Red-tail keepsake box, while our runner up will receive one of our Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Kites.

There will be three categories of entry; 6 years and under, 7–12 years and 13–17 years. Your artwork, along with your name, age, full mailing address and email address will need to be sent to the Project Coordinator at PO Box 392, Port MacDonnell SA 5291. For large artwork (large paintings or sculptures) that cannot be easily posted, please contact the Project Coordinator to discuss/arrange options for previewing/collecting work. Submissions close Friday 5 April, with winners to be announced and artwork featured in the next edition of Red-tail News and on our website. Winning artwork will be placed on display at all of our field day events for the first year after winners are announced. All artwork received will be kept as part of the Recovery Program unless otherwise negotiated. If you would like your artwork returned you will need to include a self-addressed envelope with your submission. Alternatively you can contact the Project Coordinator to negotiate pick up.

For our adult audience, all you need to do is to describe your favourite 'Red-tail' moment or experience and/or what the iconic Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo means to you. This may be in written form, or for those with you with a creative flair, in the form of a poem or art (i.e drawing, photography). The winner will receive a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Commemorative Coin presented in a beautifully designed Red-tail keepsake box, while our runner up will receive a lovely bottle of 2010 Coonawarra Cabernet Black-Cocky Wine, kindly donated by Max Arney.

All entries will need to be sent to the Project Coordinator at either PO Box 392, Port MacDonnell SA 5291, or via email redtail@birdlife.org.au. Submissions close Friday 5 April, with the winner and runner up to be announced and submission published in the next edition of Red-tail News and on our website.

If you have any questions, please contact the Project Coordinator on 1800 262 062 or email redtail@birdlife.org.au.

We would sincerely like to thank The Perth Mint for donating five of these magnificent coins to the Recovery Program, and for helping to further raise the profile of this charismatic endangered sub-species of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo across Australia. To find out more about this coin and/or how to purchase other coins in the 'Birds of Australia' series, visit The Perth Mint's website at www.perthmint.com.au or call Tollfree 1300 663 991.

We look forward to receiving your submissions.



Winners will receive a beautifully crafted Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo ½ ounce silver Commemorative Coin produced by The Perth Mint, packaged in this lovely Red-tail designed keepsake box.

BRUSH-TAILS AND RED-TAILS

Over the past year, the Recovery Team has prepared the latest five-year plan for the Red-tails (the 2013–2018 Recovery Plan). This involved much public consultation, and there was some interesting input regarding Brush-tailed Possums. Many people know that Brushies have been seen stealing Red-tail eggs. That's why we put collars on all known Red-tail nest trees (it stops Brushies and other critters climbing the tree).

One comment we received was that Brushie numbers were on the decline generally and they are thought to have declined in many drier regions of South Australia, maybe due to general drought conditions over past 15 years. While we couldn't find any proof that the Brushies had suffered a population decline, we heard from one farmer in Binnum that there was a big decline about 20 years ago, maybe due to chlamydia, but that numbers have been recovering slowly since then. He went on to say that he's started noticing the occasional road kill for the first time in years, so maybe they are bouncing back.

Another farmer reported that "there is most definitely a decline in the wild population of the Brush-tail Possum because they have all moved into the roof of our house!"

In the end we decided that there is insufficient evidence that the risk of possum predation will be reduced in the foreseeable future, and in any case, any nest predation by possums is significant for Red-tails.

Out of interest, the Recovery Plan states "Predation of nests by Brush-tailed Possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) is known to occur,

and is likely to be particularly prevalent where nests occur in scattered trees rather than in woodlands (Jarmyn 2000). Ravens (*Corvus* spp.) are also known nest predators (R.Hill in prep.) and the Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*) is a likely nest predator."

Tim Burnard



A South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo nest tree with corrugated tin collar to prevent Brush-tails raiding nests.

Photo Tim Burnard

2013 ANNUAL COUNT FOR RED-TAILS

The date has been set for the 2013 Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Annual Count, with the count set to take place on Saturday 4 May across the cockatoo's range in the South East of South Australia and south-western Victoria.

The Recovery Team values the incredible effort of all volunteers to help search for these colourful cockatoos, including the many local farmers who also contribute by searching their own stringybark scrub blocks. To register your interest or secure your search area for 2013, please contact us on 1800 262 062 or email redtail@birdlife.org.au.

We continue to take registrations up to two weeks before 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, or nominate to search your own property. Almost all of our search sites (except for those searching their own properties) will be located on public land. While the Recovery Team encourages volunteers to search all freely accessible habitat for cockatoos, it emphasises that care must be taken not to trespass on private property when searching for birds.

We will be again running an annual count 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 Red-tails. It's also a time for older hands to share their experience as well. Everyone is welcome.

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

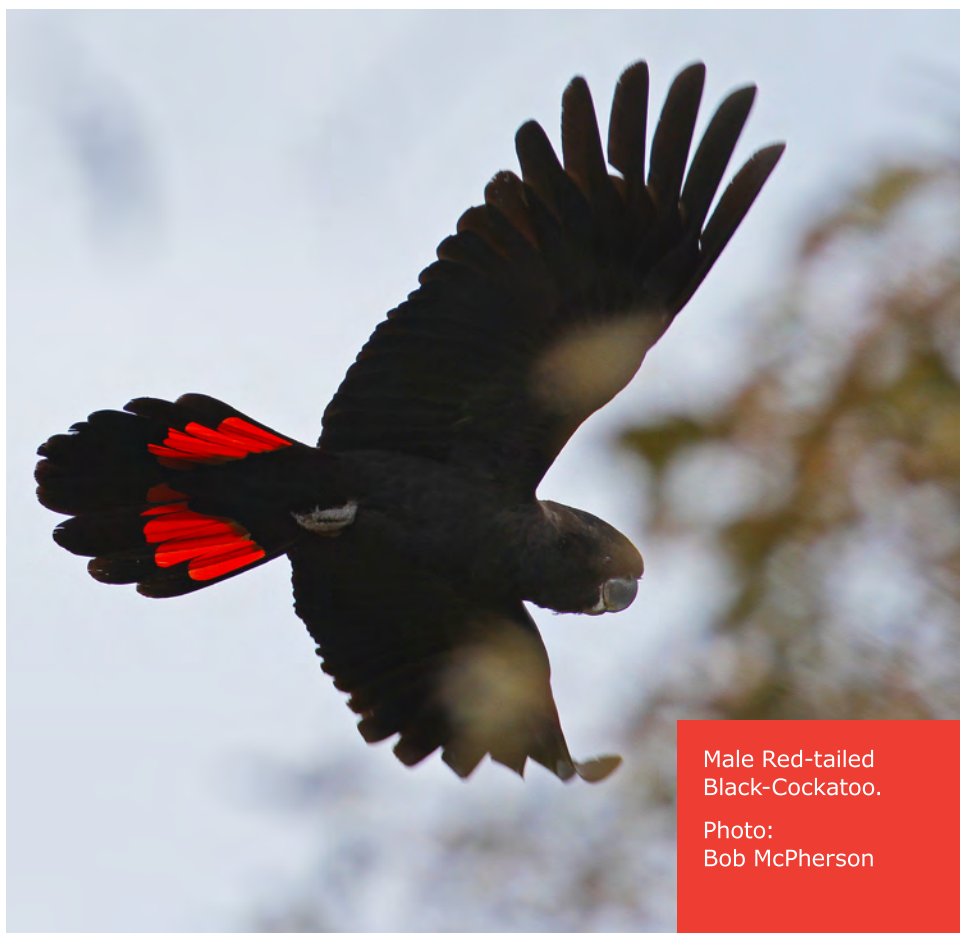
Last year we gave participants the option of choosing one of two different search methods to locate birds. There was a fairly mixed response, with more participants opting to use 'the drive in the park' method over the 'scientific method'. This year we will be again offering the different methods and asking that all participants continue to accurately record the number of kilometres travelled in Red-tail habitat and the route taken (to be marked on the map) while searching for birds.

Ideally, for continuity of data it would be great if returning participants, where possible, are able to search the same area and route travelled as per last year,

using the same methodology. Repeat measures using a standard methodology, if adopted by enough users, would enable us to determine density estimates which could then be used to estimate population size (something we have not been able to do in the past from this data). While this is important, we recognise that this is sometimes not possible and will always do our best to accommodate our volunteers' needs.

To ensure the safety and well-being of our volunteers while searching for cockatoos, we will be again asking that all our volunteers complete a declaration form to ensure that they are aware of and understand the risks involved in participating in this activity. This will be sent upon registration.

The Recovery Team looks forward to hearing from both returning and new participants and hope that we can top last year's record-breaking tally of 1468 birds. Most of all, we hope our volunteers have an enjoyable day out searching for our cockatoos, all while helping us to gain important information on the location of large flocks, patterns of habitat use and the minimum number of birds. Register now!



Male Red-tailed
Black-Cockatoo.

Photo:
Bob McPherson

2013 SOUTH EAST FIELD DAYS

Staff and Volunteers from the Red-tail Recovery Team will again be available to talk to at the 35th annual South East (Lucindale) Field Days, which will be held on 15-16 March. Visitors to the site will have the opportunity to learn more about Red-tails through our interpretative displays, and the chance to talk to staff and volunteers about all things Red-tail, including how they can become involved in the 2013 Red-tail Annual Count and on-ground habitat protection and restoration projects.

This year you'll find us at site 383 on Wilson Street. Just look for our Red-tail Kites and flying logo on our new Red-tail flags. Red-tail kites will be available for purchase for a cost of \$20 each. All visitors to the site will go into the draw to win a beautiful bottle of 2010 Coonawarra Cabernet Black-Cocky Wine, kindly donated by Max Arney. Visitors will also have the opportunity to take away a free stringybark tree to grow in their backyard.

We look forward to seeing you there.

SEVEN RED-TAIL NESTS DISCOVERED IN SOUTH-WESTERN VICTORIA

Seven nests of the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo have been found on a landholder's property in south-western Victoria. Of the seven nests found, four have been confirmed as new (previously unknown) nest sites of the cockatoo, and so are able to be claimed under the Red-tail Nest Incentive Scheme for 2012-13.

The exciting discovery comes as a result of the second year of the Red-tail Nest Incentive Scheme — a trial to locate 'new' nest sites of the species across the bird's range in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria. The scheme was launched in July 2011, and is supported by the Nature Foundation of South Australia (NFSA).

BirdLife Australia and the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team are once again offering the incentive payment of \$500 to landholders and members of the public for the discovery of new nest sites over the 2012-13 breeding season. A reward of \$100 is also available for existing or known nest sites that have been found to be active again.

The scheme has proved to be a great success, with a total of 10 new nest sites located since its launch. This year's discovery of seven nests on the one property demonstrates just how successful this scheme has been, not only in locating new nest sites of this endangered cockatoo, but also in obtaining important information about the cockatoo's nesting preferences and patterns of use.

Interestingly, of the four new nests found on the property this year, three were located in artificial nests (mounted natural hollows) that had been installed on the property many years ago.

The Red-tail Project Team believes that there are still more active nests to be found and is continuing to encourage locals to look for signs of nesting activity. All new nests discovered, including those found this year, will be protected from predators, such as Brush-tailed Possums, by placing a plastic collar around the nest tree. Information about the nest trees used will also continue to be recorded to help the Recovery Team understand more about ideal nesting sites, including the distance of a nest from feeding habitat, which in turn helps us to prioritise which habitat to protect and restore.

While reporting of all Red-tail nesting activity is encouraged, interference or physical disturbance to nest trees is prohibited. All observations should be done from a safe distance. Disturbed birds may abandon their nest, which will result in no payment being awarded.

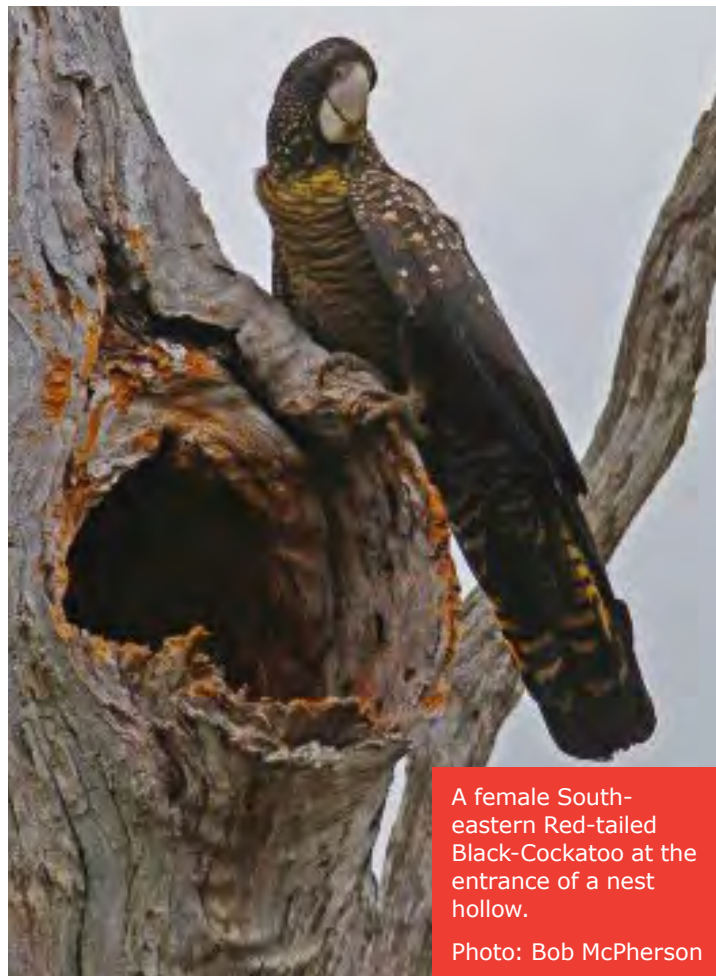
There are a number of conditions to be met when applying for the scheme, with incentive payments only made once the sighting has been confirmed by the Project Team. Please note,

any nest found on private land can only be claimed by the landholder. While the Recovery Team encourages members of the public to search for nests on freely accessible public land, it emphasises care must be taken not to trespass on private land while searching.

If you think you know of a Red-tail nest that is unknown to the Recovery Team, head to the Nest Incentive Scheme page on our website or contact the Project Coordinator on 1800 262 062 or by emailing redtail@birdlife.org.au for more information.

A big thank you to Evan Roberts and Tim Burnard for the many hours they have spent nest watching to confirm new nests as part of this scheme.

Happy nest spotting!



A female South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo at the entrance of a nest hollow.

Photo: Bob McPherson

KARAK VISITS THE EDENHOPE SHOW

Karak, the famous South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, made his way to the 150th Edenhope Show on 9 November 2012 to promote the conservation of his species as part of the Kowree Farm Tree Group Junior Landcare Display. Kids of all ages enjoyed a cuddle with Karak and the opportunity to participate in a range of fun art activities offered as part of the display, including planting stringybark seeds, painting Australian animal plaster casts, and creating feet and hand moulds. Thank you to Rachel Farran, Bindi Lees, Gloria Freeman and Adele Booth for allowing us to participate in their display and helping to plant stringybark seeds with the kids.



Kids planting stringybark seeds as part of the Junior Landcare Display. (above)

Nash Perryman (right) enjoyed a cuddle with Karak at the 150th Edenhope Show.



FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR RED-TAILS IN SA

Last year, the Department of Water, Environment and Natural Resources SA (DEWNR) (formerly DENR), in consultation with the Red-tail Recovery Team, developed an Ecological Fire Management Strategy (EFMS) for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in South Australia. This strategy, which focuses on identifying fire-management considerations and procedures when burning in Red-tail habitat within SA, is just one of a series of EFMS developed by DEWNR for a number of threatened or pest species in which fire is considered a threat or management tool.

Wildfire and inappropriate fire regimes, which result in excessive canopy scorch, can substantially reduce food availability for Red-tails in stringybark habitat for 9–11 years after the fire. When fire scorches the crown of stringybark trees (causing leaf death), it takes an average of 10 years for the trees to return to their previous level of seed production (Koch 2003). To maintain the current food supply for Red-tails it's important that most of their stringybark feeding habitat remains unburnt for at least 10 years.

The South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team has endorsed the EFMS and continues to provide expert advice on how best to manage fire in Red-tail habitat. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that at least 85% of Red-tail stringybark habitat across the species' range in South Australia and Victoria remains unburnt in any 10-year period.

It has been estimated that the long-term average extent of canopy scorch in any 10-year period across the cockatoo's range is 15%. Because the Red-tail is limited by food availability, an increase in canopy scorch extent beyond this long-term average is likely to result in further reductions in the Red-tail population.

Improved fire management of Red-tail habitat continues to be a key focus of the Recovery Program and Team, which continues to work with the various fire management agencies to strategically manage the impacts of fire on Red-tails through:

- monitoring habitat burnt and scorched each year to ensure that no more than 15% of SeRtBC feeding habitat suffers crown scorch within in any 10-year period;
- application of low-scorch burning principles which reduce fire intensity and canopy scorch to allow for a much quicker recovery of trees to full seed production;
- seed crop assessments to identify and protect the most exceptional food crops from burns for 12 months;
- not burning areas where there are more than 20 birds currently feeding; and
- provision of expert advice to fire management agencies on best-practice fire management procedures to ensure and maintain a sustainable long-term food supply for the cockatoos.

To download a copy of the EFMS for Red-tails, visit our website and follow the link on our news page. You will be redirected to the SA Department of Water, Environment and Natural Resources Fire Management page.

For more information on fire management in Red-tail habitat, please contact the Project Coordinator on 1800 262 062 or by emailing redtail@birdlife.org.au.



A group of Year 3 Tenison Woods College Students planting stringybark seeds.

Photo: Tina Opperman.

GROWING FOOD FOR RED-TAILS

Students from Tenison Woods College in Mount Gambier have been involved in a small-scale habitat propagation project to grow food trees for the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Last term, the Year 3 students and their teachers were introduced to the colourful world of Red-tails through a short presentation about the ecology and conservation needs of this nationally endangered cockatoo. Fantastically, the kids were very 'in touch' with the concerns for and needs of this regionally iconic species and what could be done to aid their recovery, including the importance of re-creating critical feeding habitat.

Using the Kalangadoo Primary School Red-tail propagation and restoration project as a model, the students and teachers were given the opportunity to participate in a small-scale propagation project to germinate and later plant-out food trees to help restore important feeding habitat for Red-tails.

On 9 November 2012, around 35 students helped to plant locally collected stringybark seeds into propagation trays, which were then transferred to the school's 'community garden' to be grown and maintained. Between 500 and 1000 Red-tail food trees are expected to germinate as a result of the students' work. Seedlings will then be transferred to tubes and planted out next winter in various locations in the Lower South East of South Australia.

Over the coming months, the Project Coordinator will continue to work with teachers at Tenison Woods College to obtain a grant to establish a school nursery/propagation area within the existing community garden. This will enable students to continue to grow food trees each year for existing and new habitat restoration projects for Red-tails within South Australia.

Apart from growing much-needed food for Red-tails, this project provides a fun and interactive way for students to learn and gain an appreciation for not only Red-tails and their habitat, but for conservation as a whole.

If your school is interested in learning more about Red-tails or would like to be involved in a similar project please feel free to contact the Project Coordinator, Bronwyn Perryman, on 1800 262 062 or by emailing redtail@birdlife.org.au.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

We encourage you to receive Red-tail News electronically, as this lightens our workload and saves precious resources. Please email redtail@birdlife.org.au if you are keen to receive the electronic version.

Partners and sponsors of the Red-tail Recovery Project



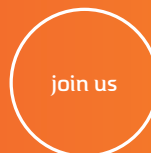
Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

birdlife.org.au

Add your voice



Enjoy the rewards of membership, making a real difference for our native birds



Contributing your time is one of the most effective ways to help



Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats

Bronwyn Perryman

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

PO Box 392, Port MacDonnell, SA 5291 | T 1800 262 062 | redtail@birdlife.org.au | www.redtail.com.au



PO Box 392, Port MacDonnell, SA 5291

