

Red-tail News

Issue 37 July 2013

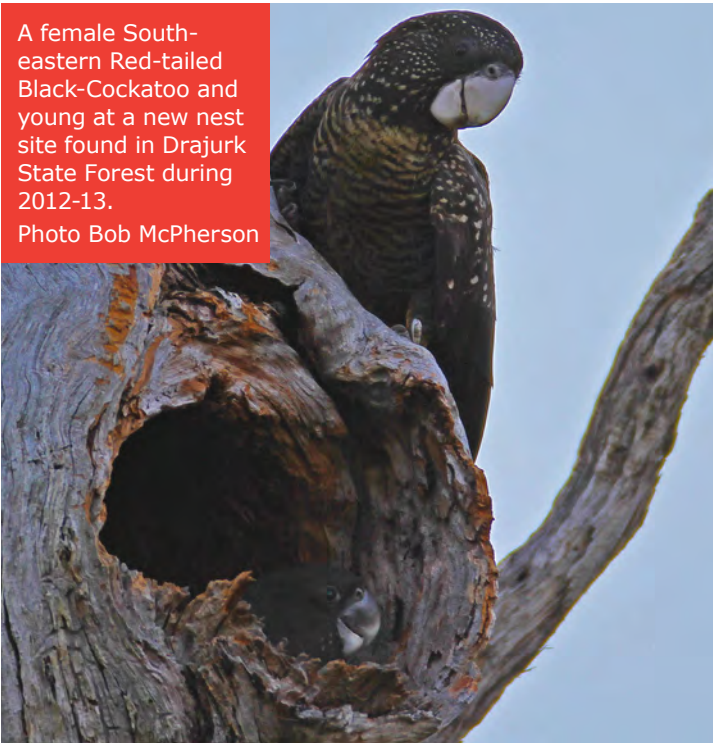
WELCOME

Welcome to the 2013 winter edition of Red-tail News. It's been a very busy first half of the year for our project staff and volunteers, with the South-East Field Days, 'Kids helping Cockies' school visits, Nest Incentive Scheme, Flock Counts and undoubtedly the biggest event on the Red-tail Calendar, the 2013 Annual Count, all taking place. Our latest newsletter will fill you in on all the results and news from these and other projects that we are involved in as part of the Recovery Project.

Bronwyn Perryman

A female South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and young at a new nest site found in Drajurk State Forest during 2012-13.

Photo Bob McPherson



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NEST INCENTIVE SCHEME: SUMMARY 2012-13

The Nest Incentive Scheme has continued to be a great way to locate new nests of the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, with a further 6 new nests located over the 2012-13 breeding season. This brings the total number of new nests found since the scheme's launch in July 2011 to 12. While this doesn't sound like a huge number, it is much better than that recorded in years prior to the scheme in which sometimes not a single nest was located.

A total of fifteen nests were reported to the project team over the latest breeding season (Sept12-Jan13), with 6 confirmed new nests (unknown to the recovery Team), 6 re-use of existing or known nests, and 3 nests not found to be active when inspected. New nests were found near Benayeo (4 nests), Powers Creek (1 nest) and Drajurk State Forest (1 nest). Of the 12 active nests found this season, eight were discovered on a landholder's property near Benayeo thanks to nest inspections undertaken by Evan Roberts, Tim Burnard and Martine Maron.

The scheme, which has generated much community interest, will continue this breeding season thanks to an extension in funding from the Nature Foundation of SA.

Landholders and members of the public will again be eligible to claim a \$500 reward for each 'new' nest site (unknown to the Recovery Team) reported to the Team. The scheme also offers a reward of \$100 for known nests found to be active and in-use again.

Although it is more common to find Red-tails nesting over Spring and early Summer, the cockatoos can successfully produce young in every season. With this in mind, we strongly encourage everyone to keep watch for nesting activity all year round.

There are a number of conditions required when applying for the scheme, with incentive payments only made once the sighting has been confirmed by the project team. Anyone who observes nesting behaviour or thinks they know of a Red-tail nest that is unknown to the Recovery Team is encouraged to head to the Nest Incentive Scheme page on our website www.redtail.com.au to find out more about the project, the guidelines (terms and conditions) for payment and nesting behaviour of Red-tails. Alternatively, they can contact the Project Coordinator who will provide them with the necessary information.



COCKY COUNT RESULTS FOR 2013



Count volunteers who braved the cold to attend the annual Bailey's Rocks campout to close-out a big day's counting.

Photo Tim Burnard

More than 130 volunteers participated on Saturday 4 May as part of the 2013 Annual Count for the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. The weather conditions on the day were favourable for counting birds, with many volunteers spending hours upon hours scouring the stringybark tracks in hope of spotting a few cockatoos.

Covering more than 2500 kms of stringybark forest and spending around 236 hours searching, this year our wonderful team of volunteers counted 1118 birds (excluding double counts) in stringybark forest across the species range in South East of SA and South West Victoria.

Despite a good number of reports in the lead up to the count, the final tally was down by 350 birds on last year's record-breaking tally of 1468 birds. Although we had hoped to better last year's result, 1118 birds is still a reasonable tally of cockatoos, especially when compared to that counted in 2010 and 2011, when only 680 and 837 birds were counted, respectively. It's likely that birds were just missed on the day, rather than the population suffering a significant decline over the last year.

Red-tails are highly nomadic, roaming from Natimuk to Nelson in south-western Victoria and from Mount Gambier to Keith in the South East of South Australia. Finding them can be quite a challenge, especially if they are making little noise or are feeding in areas inaccessible to counters.

This year, large flocks were recorded near Edenhope, Casterton, Benayeo, Natimuk and Naracoorte. There were a large number of birds in the Edenhope area, with a flock of 277 found in Yallakar State Forest by locals Gloria Freeman and Geraldine Ryan. Both women have had a long interest in the birds and participating in the Annual Count, with Gloria having taken part in every count since they began more than 18 years ago.

"We care so much about Red-tails, and enjoy participating in the count and educating kids about the importance of conserving these birds for future generations to come," said Gloria.

Most of the birds were found feeding in Desert Stringybark forest, which typically occurs in and around Casterton, Edenhope and Naracoorte. Interestingly, few birds were recorded south of Strathdownie, with none found in the Lower Glenelg National Park. Low numbers of birds have been recorded in this area since 2010. This is thought to be due to the fruiting patterns of the Brown Stringybark, and more recently, as the result of large wildfires which have scorched more than 7000 ha of stringybark habitat in the Kentbruck area alone.

This year we had 20 people attend the annual Bailey's Rock BBQ and Campout. As usual there was much good-hearted banter about who counted the most cockies, with Geraldine and Gloria claiming victory this year with their huge flock of 277 birds. They were closely followed by Richard Hill, Dick Cooper, Kay

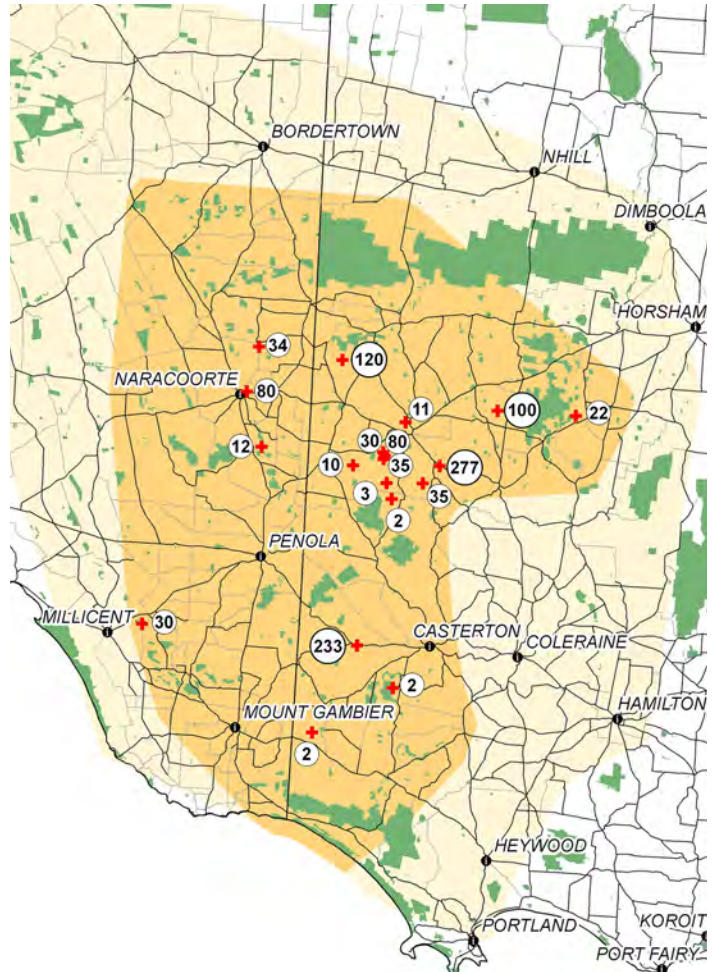
and Noel Stratman and myself (lucky enough), who teamed up to count 233 birds coming to drink near Casterton.

So what next? The annual count not only provides us with the minimum number of birds, but also helps us determine patterns of habitat use and, more importantly, the location of large flocks. This information helps us to undertake our annual flock counts, which provide us with an indication of last year's breeding success, and an overall snapshot of how the population is faring. To find out more about this year's flock count results please refer to the 'Flock Counts 2013' article below.

Importantly, the annual count provides a great opportunity for the community to become involved in the recovery program and learn about the conservation of this endangered bird. We again had a good turnout of volunteers, ranging from locals, including farmers who chose to search their own properties on the day, to those who have travelled from afar, including Adelaide and Melbourne. Furthermore, many of our volunteers who participated on the day have continued to return year after year to help search for cockatoos, with some, including Gloria Freeman and Bill Scutchings having participated in all 18 counts.

On behalf of BirdLife Australia and the Red-tail Recovery Team I would like to express many thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who have helped out yet again to make this event so successful, including those who were called upon last minute. Without your incredible effort, this event would not be possible – so a big thanks to all.

I'd also like to say special thanks to Dick Cooper and Tim Burnard for locating and keeping tabs on the Casterton birds in the lead up to the count; Evan Roberts for all his work in organising local landholders to search their own properties on the day; and Kerry Gilkes for her time spent trying to locate birds north of Kingston.



FLOCK COUNTS 2013

One of the important bits of information we get from the Annual Count is the location of the larger flocks around the range so we can record the ratio of the males to the bar-tailed birds (this includes females and all juveniles). This is what we call the Flock Counts.

From the Flock Counts we can reasonably estimate the breeding success for a given year. Eg if there are 50 male birds and 60 bar-tailed (female/juvenile) birds that means we have about 10 juveniles (most species maintain a roughly 50:50 male/female ratio). The ratio in this example would be 45%.

A lower percentage of males indicates a higher number of juveniles, which means a better breeding outcome in the last year.

We do the Flock Counts at watering sites because it's easier to pick the difference between males and bar-tailed (female/juvenile) birds as they land to drink with tail spread. This is the only time our Red-tails come to the ground (northern subspecies often feed on the ground). We can also be pretty sure that they will come in at an allotted time as they tend to drink just before dusk.

It all sounds pretty straight forward but it can be very time consuming and often frustrating.

The Annual Count found four good sized mobs of Red-tails and we started with the flock at Heathfield. After just two nights, with the aid of volunteers Dick Cooper, Felicity and John Lord and Richard Hill, we got a really good count of 177 birds. Then within another two nights Evan Roberts and I counted a further 45 from the flock found by Gloria Freeman and Geraldine Ryan (as mentioned in the earlier story). Note that the big mob of 277 had dwindled considerably and although we could hear a mob drinking somewhere to the south they didn't come to our troughs.

We try to count at least 300 birds in the Flock Counts and with 222 already under my belt in just 5 days since the Annual Count, it was all looking good. Then our luck changed and although we spent many nights over the next 3 weeks, at sites from Benayeo and Konnepra it took until the 9th of June for a major

breakthrough with a fantastic count of 266 birds at Meereek. This mob had been identified by another of our long term annual counters Bill Scutchings who was travelling with mate Phillip James. Bill is another of our annual count people who has attended since the very first year.

The big problem with the counting came with those good rains in late May. Red-tails had been drinking at stock troughs up until then but the rains gave them many more options with puddles appearing all over the place.

So, with a total of 488 birds counted....how does this year's ratio look? Not too bad actually with an average across all the flocks of 40%. An improvement on the last two years (42%) but not as good as our better years of 37% in 2004-05 and 1998-1999.

Tim Burnard



Male tail-feather (top) and female/juvenile barred tail-feather .

REPORTING SIGHTINGS



A pair of South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

Photo: Bob McPherson.

Have you seen any Red-tails lately? The Red-tail Recovery Team is always keen to hear of sightings of Red-tails, no matter how big or small they might be, across their range in south-eastern SA and south-western Victoria.

We accept all credible sightings and are particularly interested in sightings of single adult males and any uncommon sightings,

such as those either close to or beyond what we consider their normal range, or where the birds have not been sighted for some time. Reports of adult males may help us to locate nest sites, and will provide very useful data for a current research project looking to identify and model nesting hotspots.

Over the last 12 months there have been several reports of Red-tails south of Salt Creek. While it's not unheard of for birds to vagrant this area, sightings of Red-tails north of Kingston and around Keith are not so common and are very rarely reported to the Recovery Team. As such, we would love to hear from anyone who sees birds or finds feeding signs in this area, as well as other locations throughout the range where birds are not commonly encountered.

All sightings are recorded in a sightings database, and are used to help us increase our knowledge and understanding of the bird's habitat use, range extent and movement across the range from month to month and year to year.

While it is often difficult to find Red-tails, it's easy to record a sighting. Simply phone 1800 262 062, email redtail@birdlife.org.au or report your sighting via the Red-tail website www.redtail.com.au. When reporting a sighting please remember to include: date and time, place (CFS/CFA map reference is appreciated), how many birds, what they were doing (i.e feeding, drinking, flying), and your name and phone number/email.

'COCKIES HELPING COCKIES' PROJECT UPDATE



1100 seedlings planted out at David Crawford's property, as part of the 'Cockies helping cockies' project. Photo Kerry Gilkes.

Our Cockies popularity continues to expand across its range.

Even though the 30 June 2013 will see the winding up of one of our major funders through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Program the future for this project is still looking positive as landholders continue to take up funding opportunities for on-ground works supported through a grant from the South Australian Native Vegetation Council.

A case study is currently being written to provide valuable information and feedback on what has worked well and lessons learnt to date. Overall it will celebrate and highlight how well a community can embrace a project when given ownership throughout the process. The 'Cockies' project has provided a future model for other projects in the region due to its strong scientific research, modelling, social survey work and local

delivery, leading to a huge interest and uptake by landholders to either revegetate areas on their property or fence off remnant stringybark habitat since the project commenced in 2009.

One of the main areas the project focused on was making the project flexible at every stage so there were many ways the landholders could get involved and succeed. It was very much about listening to the landholders needs and understanding where they were at, and starting from there.

Another highlight has been the mentoring program which enabled landholders to gain further knowledge and expertise. This will ensure that the project will continue even when this phase of the funding ceases.

The project has encouraged knowledge to be brought in from other regions and for landholders to visit other sites outside our region to assist with remnant stringybark management and revegetation.

The 'Cockie' project will host a visit from David Taylor, former Threatened Species Officer and co-ordinator for the Eastern Plains Fire Trial Project on Monday 5 August in Lucindale. David will meet with local landholders throughout the day followed by a casual BBQ at the Lucindale Country Club where David will share his experiences with ecological fire-management and large scale revegetation on Kangaroo Island. David has led a highly collaborative and successful project in a different region and his experiences will provide some food for thought for our own practices and approaches.

Further details of the Zoos SA 'Cockies Helping Cockies' project case study will follow in the next edition.

For further information on David Taylor's visit, please contact Kerry Gilkes m: 0429 660 027

Kerry Gilkes

'KIDS HELPING COCKIES' PROJECT

Over the last four months, Project Staff from the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program have been on the road visiting schools and students across the South east of SA to talk about the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, as part of the 'Kids helping Cockies helping Cockies Project'.

Funded through the 2012-13 SA NRM Community NRM Grants Program, the project has had a strong focus on educating students about the conservation needs of Red-tails, and the propagation of the cockatoo's key stringybark food trees, with the aim of establishing five school nurseries to grow stringybark seedlings for SERTBC habitat restoration projects throughout the region.

Presentations have been made to over 1270 students from fifteen schools across the South East, including Glenburnie Primary School, Newberry Park Primary School, St Martins Lutheran College, Kangaroo Inn Area School, Nangwarry Primary School, Naracoorte Primary School, Naracoorte South Primary School, Padthaway Primary School, Allendale East Area School, Lucindale Area School, Meleuca Park K-7 School, Reidy Park Primary School, Mt Gambier North R-7 School, Penola Primary School and Mil Lel Primary School. Students participating in the session ranged from Reception to Year 9.

At each school students have learnt about what the cockatoo looks and sounds like, its habitat, diet, breeding, threats to and recovery actions implemented as part of the recovery program. Students have also learnt about the propagation and revegetation of stringybark trees, and the connection between this and the long-term survival of the cockatoo. At each school, a small amount of stringybark seed, seed tray and potting mix was left with the school/class teacher for the students to plant and observe germination. Where time permitted this was completed with the students during the session.

Teachers and students alike have shown a high level of interest in the presentations, which is particularly evident by the number of questions during and after each session. The students have also continued to impress staff with their existing knowledge and often detailed questions about the cockatoo and propagation of stringybark. The sessions have proved to be very successful in engaging and capturing the interest of many students and teachers involved, many of which have indicated their interest in establishing an ongoing stringybark growing program for Red-tails.

Six schools have shown interest in establishing a school nursery to grow stringybark for SERTBC habitat restoration projects in the future. Over the last month, Tim Burnard has been assisting five schools in the preparation of grant applications through the latest round of SA NRM community grants. Announcements regarding these applications are expected later this year, with successful schools to begin establishment of nurseries in October 2013.

Many thanks to all the students and teachers involved in this project, and to the project staff, Tim Burnard, Kerry Gilkes, and Bronwyn Perryman for the many hours spent preparing and contacting schools, delivering presentations, undertaking follow-up visits and preparing grant applications, to make this project such a success.



St Martin's Lutheran College Students participating in one of the 'Kids helping Cockies' presentations about Red-tails.

WINNERS ANNOUNCED: RED-TAIL ART AND STORY COMPETITION

Thanks to all the wonderful entries in our Red-tail Art and Story Competition as promoted on the website and in the last edition of 'Red-tail News'. The competition offered our readers and supporters the chance to win one of four beautifully crafted Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Commemorative Coins, kindly donated by The Perth Mint. The competition closed on Friday 5 April, with winner and runner-up entries selected from four age group categories.

We had a great response of entries in the 7-12 years age group category, but unfortunately no entries in the under 6 years group. Hence, due to the large number of entries we decided to split the 7-12 years age group category into two groups; these being 7-9 year olds and 10-12 year olds.

Entries were judged by the Red-tail Project Coordinator, Bronwyn Perryman, and Jacinta deBrie-Delaney, who is the Art Director at St Martins Lutheran College. Jacinta has been in her role at St Martins for seven years now, and is an accomplished artist in her own right.

One winner and two runners-up were selected from each of the children's categories, while one winner and one runner-up from the adult category.

Age group winners will receive an impressive ½ ounce silver proof Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Commemorative Coin presented in a beautifully designed Red-tail keepsake box, thanks to The Perth Mint.

Our runner's-up in the children's categories will receive a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Kite, while our runner-up in the adult category will receive a lovely bottle of 2010 Coonawarra Cabernet Black-Cocky Wine, kindly donated by Max Arney.

Congratulations to all our winners (listed below), and many thanks again to all those who submitted entries as part of this competition. To view all winning artwork please visit our website at www.redtail.com.au. To find out more information about the coin or how to purchase please visit The Perth Mint at www.theperthmint.com.au.

7-9 Year Old Category

Winner: Imogen Hollis, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 9.

Runner-Up: Lachlan Matheson, Glenburnie Primary School, SA. Age 9 and Jera Olurendain, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 9.

10-12 Year Old Category

Winner: Caitlin Kilmister, Gladstone, QLD. Age 11.

Runner-Up: Emily Michelmores, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 12 and Jesse Iese, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 12.

13-17 Year Old Category

Winner: Molly Michell, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 13.

Runner-Up: Connor Dearden, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 13 and Miranda Rose, Edenhope College, VIC. Age 13.

Adult category (over 18years)

Winner: Charlotte Davis, Carapook, VIC.

Runner-Up: Gloria Freeman, Edenhope, VIC.



Tenison Woods College Year 3 students helping to grow a better future for our Red-tails.

TENISON WOODS COLLEGE STRINGYBARK PROPAGATION PROJECT

Over the last few months, students at Tenison Woods College have been learning all about Red-tails and the propagation of their stringybark food trees. Last year I visited the school to work with the kids to grow some stringybark in their community garden. Unfortunately, germination success was very poor, mainly due to the extended period of hot weather we experienced over summer. However, we had much better success with some seed planted in February this year.

Being a new year, the students involved in last year's planting moved up a grade, so it meant this year I had a whole new group of kids to talk to, and work with on this small scale propagation project. A class visit in May saw 75 Year 3 students introduced to the colourful world of Red-tails, with students learning about the ecology and conservation needs of one of the region's most endangered species.

The high level of interest from both the teachers and students to build on the work of previous propagation efforts saw students participating in an afternoon of transferring 400 stringybark seedlings to tubes. Around 40 Year 3 students took part in the planting, and all thoroughly enjoyed an afternoon of getting their hands dirty to grow a better future for our Red-tails! It was fantastic to see so much enthusiasm and interest from the kids, with many reporting 'how much fun they had' and asking 'when do they get to do this again!' Tube stock will continue to be cared for and grown by the students over the coming months, until the seedlings are big enough to plant out later this year.

Both teachers and students are very keen to pursue and build on the small-scale germination project so that they can establish a fully functional school nursery and ongoing educational program to grow seedlings for Red-tail habitat restoration projects into the future. The project fits neatly under their sustainability and environment stream, and provides students with a hands on approach to conservation efforts for threatened species.

Last month, the school together with support and assistance from myself, prepared and submitted a SA NRM Community Grant to fund the development of the school nursery to grow stringybark. Announcements regarding this application are expected later this year, with the school, if successful, to begin establishment of its nursery in October 2013.

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 myself, Bronwyn Perryman, on 1800 262 062 or by emailing redtail@birdlife.org.au.



Imogen Hollis's winning collage and sculpture in the 7-9 year old age category.

2013 LUCINDALE FIELD DAYS

Volunteers from the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project once again assisted staff at the 2013 Lucindale Field Days back on the 15 and 16 March.

This year we had around 150 people visit the Red-tail site, with volunteers and staff kept busy most of the two days attending to visitor queries, sighting information, and information regarding the 2013 annual count. Everyone that entered the site this year went into the draw to win a

beautiful bottle of 2010 Coonawarra Cabernet Black-Cocky Wine, kindly donated by Max Arney. The lucky winner was Arthur Tucker from Bordertown.

A big thank you to all our wonderful volunteers including Evan Roberts, Kerry Gilkes, Ros and Andrew Bradey, Bindy Lees and Iestyn Hosking, for all their help with the site over the two days – it's much appreciated!

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.

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Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats

Bronwyn Perryman

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

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