

Red-tail News

Issue 35 September 2012

WELCOME TO THE 'NEW LOOK' WINTER EDITION OF RED-TAIL NEWS

I am happy to report I am back from maternity leave and in the Project Coordinator seat once again.

I would like to say a big thank you to Tim Burnard for his fantastic effort over the past year, while I was on maternity leave, in keeping the project on track and set up for another year of funding. The project didn't miss a beat and certainly benefited from Tim's wealth of knowledge of all things Red-tail. Fortunately, Tim will be staying on one day per week with the project to concentrate on securing funding for the program in Victoria and SA while seeking additional funding sources (corporate sponsorships and philanthropic) to ensure the project continues to operate effectively and efficiently.

Some of you may have noticed recently an advertisement for the Red-tail Project Officer Position in local, state and web media in late June. Unfortunately the position, which was previously a shared position hosted and managed by the Department for Sustainability and Environment (DSE), was one of many jobs within DSE that were made redundant earlier this year. Given the circumstances, the Project Officer position has now moved to BirdLife Australia, where a new job and position description have been created and formally advertised. The management team is now in the process of selecting a suitable candidate for the role, with the successful applicant to be revealed in the next edition of Red-tail News.

For now, I look forward to catching up with everyone once again and hope you continue to enjoy reading all about our iconic Red-tails.

Cheers,

Bronwyn Perryman



A male Red-tail photographed on count day by Melanie Plummer.

CONTENTS

- 1 2012 Cocky Counters Count the Most Cockatoos so far
- 2 A generous gift to Red-tails
- 3 Results of 2012 Flock Counts
- 4 Go West! Victorian Cockies Helping Our Cockies
- 5 Nature Foundation continues to fund Nest Incentive Scheme for 2012-13
- 6 New Draft Recovery Plan for Red-tails Available for Comment
- 7 CVA Continues to Improve Habitat for Red-tails
- 8 Bird Week 22-28 October 2012 — Who's Nesting Where?
- 9 Red-tail Kites Now Available

2012 COCKY COUNTERS COUNT THE MOST COCKATOOS SO FAR

On 5 May 2012, a team of 160 volunteers set out to search for the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in stringybark habitat across the species' range in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria. Scouring more than 2700 kilometres of stringybark forest and spending over 240 hours searching for these elusive birds, our volunteers created history by counting the highest number of cockies since surveys commenced back in 1996.

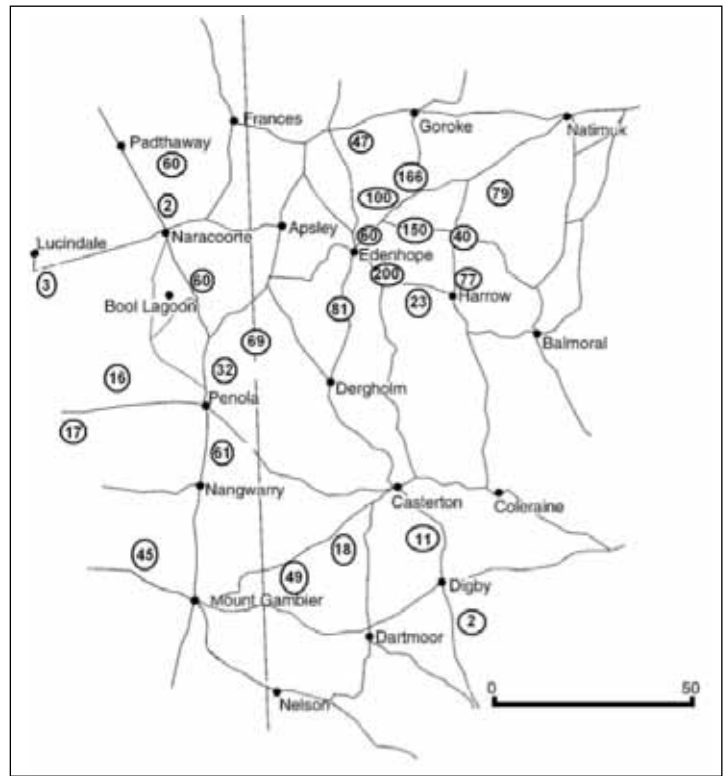
A total of 1468 birds were recorded on the day, which is 64 more than our previous best tally of 1404 birds, recorded in 2008. These results are very encouraging, especially given the low numbers of birds (<850 birds) counted in the previous three years. The population appears to have remained relatively stable over the last 4 years, despite poor count results since 2009. This year's result confirms our suspicions that birds were missed in previous years, rather than the population suffering any further significant population decline. Good weather conditions, the accessibility of the birds, many experienced counters and phone-in sightings from landholders and members of the public all contributed to the success of this year's count.

Pairs of birds and flocks of seven to 200 birds were observed on both private and public land, with the main hotspots in and around Edenhope, Dergholm, Powers Creek, Nangwarry, Padthaway, Harrow, Rennick and Wandilo. Of the 1468 birds counted, over 60% were recorded within a 30-kilometre radius of Edenhope. This is likely to be attributed to the heavy seed crop and recent fruiting of the Desert Stringybark in the area, and the good seed crop observed in the Buloke this year. Red-tails feed almost exclusively on Desert and Brown Stringybark, and seasonally on Buloke. Buloke fruiting can be highly variable from year to year, but in the event of a good seeding year (as observed this year) hundreds of Red-tails will flock to the northern parts of their range to exploit this food resource. This highlights the importance of protecting and restoring stringybark and buloke feeding habitat.

The Annual Count helps us to determine habitat movements and the location of large flocks, which in turn allows us, through our annual flock counts, to analyse flock composition and determine last year's breeding success (see below). As well as assisting research into the Red-tail, the Annual Count promotes awareness of the conservation needs of this local flagship species, and provides a great activity, enjoyed by young and old. This year there was a fantastic turnout at the annual Bailey's Rock Dinner and Campout with 25-30 volunteers attending the night. There was a real buzz of excitement around the camp as each new person arrived with more birds to add to the tally. Jenny Rolland and Euan Moore topped the tally this year for spotting the most birds, with the two observing a total of 269 birds on the day. They were closely followed by Gloria Freeman and Geraldine Ryan who were fortunate enough to observe a flock of around 200 birds come into drink at a dam near Yallakar State Forest.

We would like to thank everyone involved and acknowledge that this event would not be possible without the help and support of our terrific group of volunteers.

For more information on past annual count results please visit our website www.redtail.com.au



Observations of Red-tails as part of the 2012 Annual Count held on 5 May 2012 across the species' range in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria. Note the figures above have taken into account possible double counts of birds.



A group of happy campers who braved the wintery condition to campout at Bailey's Rocks after participating in this year's Annual Count for Red-tails. Photo: Tim Burnard.

A GENEROUS GIFT TO RED-TAILS

BirdLife Australia and the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team acknowledge and sincerely thank both Susan Gibson and Peter Hewett for their recent generous donation to the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project. Both Sue and Peter have recently made significant financial contributions to the Recovery Project in memory of the late Alma and Tom Gibson for their love, work

and enthusiasm for Australian bird conservation. We are very appreciative of this generous gesture, and would like to wish them all the very best. The gifts will go towards the delivery of high priority actions for the recovery of the Red-tail, so that both current and future generations can continue to hear the sound of Red-tails ring out.

RESULTS OF 2012 FLOCK COUNTS

Each year we undertake an annual count for Red-tails across the species' range to determine where the birds are feeding (providing an indication of movements and habitat use) and, more importantly, the location of large flocks. From this, we are able to undertake what we call our 'flock counts', which involves counting the proportion of adult males to adult females/juveniles (adult females and juveniles look alike). The purpose of these counts is to gain information on flock composition, including the proportion of juveniles, which provides us with an indication of last year's breeding success.

Because adult females cannot be differentiated from juveniles when undertaking our flock counts we must assume a 50:50 ratio of males to females when analysing the results to determine the proportion of juveniles in the flock. This is consistent with other species of cockatoos, where the ratio between the sexes is roughly 50:50. Therefore, if a flock has 39% adult males, then it is assumed that the flock also has 39% adult females. Hence, the flock is assumed to comprise 78% adults and 22% juveniles (birds less than four years old — males assume the adult plumage at 4 years of age). The lower the proportion of males counted, the better the breeding outcome.

This year a total of 584 birds were counted in four flocks across the Red-tails' range in Victoria and South

Australia. Of those birds, 42% were adult males. Assuming an even sex ratio, around 16% of the birds counted this year were juveniles. Unfortunately, results from the latest flock counts have not improved upon 2011, with the proportion of males counted the same as last year. Our best flock count years have been in 1998-99 and 2004-05, with an average of 37% adult male.

Let's hope the coming breeding season is more successful.



A group of Red-tails enjoying a drink at a water trough near Casterton.

Photo: Charlotte Davis

GO WEST! VICTORIAN COCKIES HELPING OUR COCKIES

Vicki-Jo Russell
Zoos SA (co-chair of the SERTBC Recovery Team)

At the heart of Zoos SA's 'Cockies helping Cockies helping Cockies' project (Cockies3) is a genuine intent to support and collaborate with local landholders and community members to protect and return stringybark feeding trees to SA's South East. To demonstrate this we committed to a number of principles, among them a commitment to support landholders and local community members to become experts in their own right to provide long-term drive and independent skills. To this end, all project contractors have been local, including Kerry Gilkes, the extension contractor, who is a fourth generation farmer who has been mentored to take on the role. The project has begun to invest in an outstanding group of landholders as potential future mentors.

Braving a long drive and "lazy breezes", members of this landholder group recently visited a farmer-based group in the Otways in Victoria which has adopted a peer-mentor approach with great results. Set up by local farmers in 1993, the Otway Agroforestry Network (OAN) is a not-for-profit community organisation striving to encourage the wider adoption of commercial vegetation management as an integral component of more productive and environmentally sustainable farming. Critical to its activities, the OAN has developed a Peer Group Mentor Service (PGMS) to facilitate support to its members from other experienced farmers who live and work in the region.

Over two days our group enjoyed a unique opportunity to take a step back from their own enterprises to talk openly with several OAN landholders about applying their group's approach. Everyone learned something useful, but for me the power of peer support to help local people to act and share what they have learned, the benefits of synergistically planning for both biodiversity and production outcomes and the importance of

using vegetation to solve an array of land management issues were both startling and inspiring. We have now set ourselves the challenge of applying our learning to stringybark, buloke and our local Red-tails. The project will be running a tour of demonstration sites in late August and future events will be organised for the potential mentor group.

Kerry and I would like to extend our warmest gratitude to the South Australian landholders for their time and participation, and to our OAN hosts, in particular Andrew Stewart of Yan Yan Gurt, for being so generous with their information, experience, time and hospitality.

To register your interest for the upcoming site tour or to find out more about the Cockies3 project, contact Kerry Gilkes at bullisland@bigpond.com.



Local SE Landholders involved in the Otway Agroforestry Network (OAN) tour on 17-18 July 2012. Photo: J Woodlands

NATURE FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO FUND NEST INCENTIVE SCHEME FOR 2012-13

In July 2011 we launched an innovative new Nest Incentive Scheme from a grant obtained from the Nature Foundation of South Australia to pay landholders and members of the public for the discovery of new Red-tail nests. The scheme has proved to be a great success, with a total of six new nests located since July 2011. While this doesn't sound like many, it is much better than in previous years, when sometimes not a single nest was found.

The scheme, which pays an incentive of \$500 for each 'new' nest found, is again being offered to landholders and members of the public during the 2012-13 breeding season. The Recovery Team believes there are still more active nests out there to be found, and hope that the scheme will encourage locals to help us continue to look for more nests again this year. 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.

Although it is more common to find Red-tails nesting in spring and early summer, over the years we have found that they can successfully produce young in every season. With this in mind, we strongly encourage everyone to watch out for nesting activity all year round, even in the middle of winter.

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. 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 www.redtail.com.au where you can find out more about the

project, the guidelines (terms and conditions) for payment and nesting behaviour of Red-tails. Alternatively, you can contact the Project Coordinator who will provide you with the necessary information. 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.

When a Red-tail nest is discovered, the Project Team is called in to place a collar on the nest tree to protect it from predators, like Brush-tailed Possums. The location of the nest and various nest-tree parameters are recorded to help us to understand more about ideal nesting sites for Red-tails, including the distance of a nest from a preferred food source, which in turn helps us to prioritise habitat to protect and restore.

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

Thanks once again to those landholders and members of the public who assisted the Project Team to locate new Red-tail nests during 2011-12. We look forward to hearing from anyone that has any information in relation to Red-tail nesting and hope that we can top last season's tally in 2012-13.

NEW DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN FOR RED-TAILS AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

You might recall in our January Edition of Red-tail News a short article requesting your input and feedback in relation to the Recovery Plan Review. I can now report that the review of the current Recovery Plan has been completed and is waiting formal approval from DSE before being released. Thank you to everyone that provided comments and assisted with this process.

Following on from this, over the last few months, Tim Burnard and Rachel Pritchard have been working tirelessly with the Red-tail Recovery Team to develop and prepare a new Draft 5-year Recovery Plan (2012-17) for Red-tails, which is now available for comment. Guided by review, the new draft plan outlines the objectives and actions needed for the recovery of Red-tails over the next five years. The plan is the fourth Recovery Plan for the species, and will commence 2012-13.

The plan sets out a long-term, 50-year objective for recovery of the sub-species, and two short-term, 5 year objectives to meet the short-term needs of Red-tails while attending to long-term rehabilitation of essential habitats.

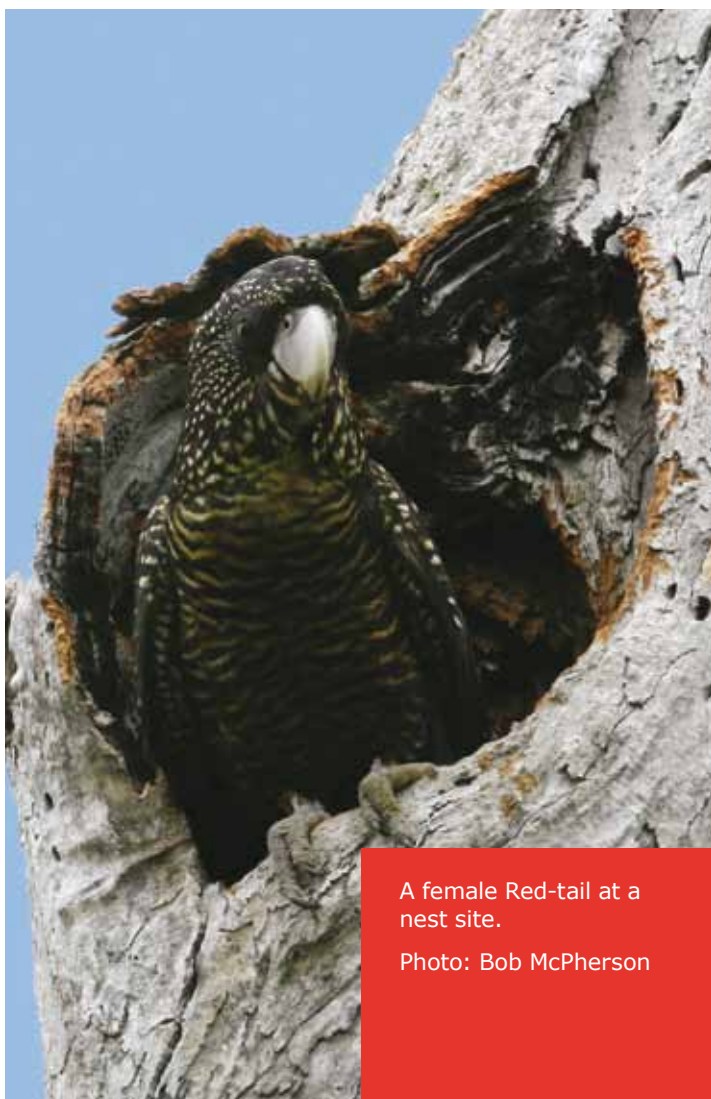
This 5-year plan has two primary objectives to progress recovery. They are:

- Objective 1. To achieve sufficient gains in the extent of feeding and nesting habitats to support the long-term recovery objective.
- Objective 2. To effectively manage the most significant short-term threats to recruitment of South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

The Draft Recovery Plan attempts to identify all stakeholders that may play a role in the recovery of the species. If you or your organisation believes you can contribute to this process we would love to hear from you.

All interested parties wishing to make comment can do so by emailing all comments to Tim Burnard (timb@skymesh.com.au). To obtain a copy of the draft, please contact the Project Coordinator or head to the website www.redtail.com.au to download a copy directly from the web. The draft is in a word document so that you can make comments directly on the document via track changes, or alternatively email Tim directly with your feedback.

We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions.



A female Red-tail at a nest site.

Photo: Bob McPherson

CVA CONTINUES TO IMPROVE HABITAT FOR RED-TAILS

Over the last two years, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has been actively involved in on-ground habitat protection and restoration activities for the Red-tails across Victoria and South Australia as part of the CVA Wild Futures Project. Approximately \$150,000 has been set aside to protect and restore the species' critical stringybark and buloke habitat in south-western Victoria over a 3-year period.

CVA groups have worked hard with the Project Team and various partners over the last year to undertake a variety of restoration activities including:

- 20-hectare weed removal and stringybark tree planting at Bahgallah with the Project Team.
- Maintenance of nest trees and collection of nest-tree parameter data on private properties around Casterton with the Project Officer, Dave Williams. Approximately 30 nest trees were maintained (i.e. existing collars removed and replaced, collaring of new nest trees, and nest-tree parameter data collected) and/or added to the register.
- 93 hectares of pine wildling removal in the Lower Glenelg National Park with Parks Victoria.
- Seed collection and propagation of stringybark seedlings for revegetation on private property in south-western Victoria with the Project Officer.
- Assisted with planting 4,500 Bulokes across two projects with Kerry Gilkes and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources on private land near Frances.
- Pine wildling removal in Wilkin Flora Fauna Reserve; and
- Thousands of Buloke seedlings planted in and around the Edenhope area with Andrew Bradey and the Kowree Farm Tree Group.

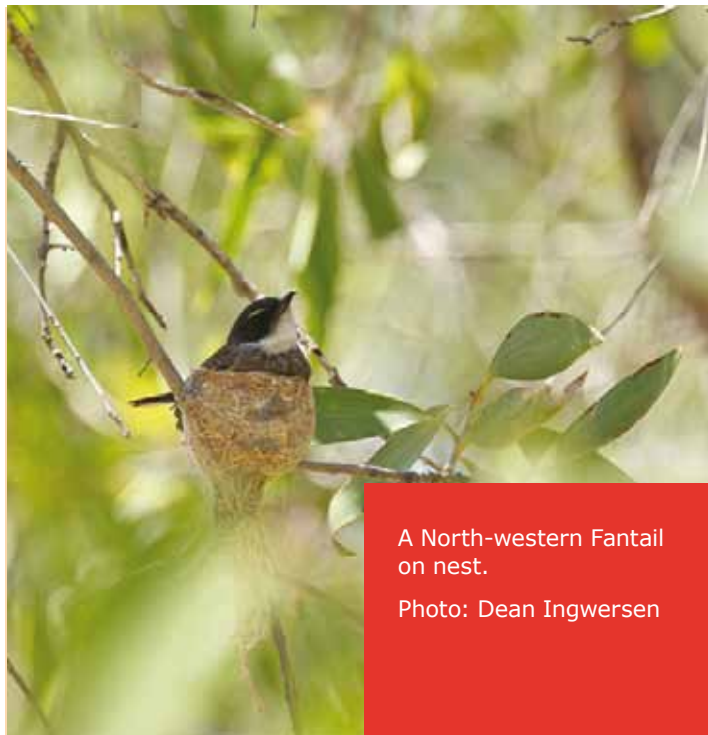
Our ongoing partnership with CVA has resulted in some very positive outcomes for Red-tail habitat protection and restoration, with thousands of seedlings, both stringybark and Buloke, planted across the range over the past year and over 100 hectares of land managed for weeds. CVA's commitment to Red-tails will extend well into the 2012-13 financial year, with 10 weeks' work in the Lower Glenelg National Park already confirmed to continue the removal of pine wildlings. CVA has also secured a number of sites for planting of stringybark seedlings next year.

If you would like to find out how you can help protect Red-tail habitat on your property, please contact us on 1800 262 062 or email redtail@birdlife.org.au.



A group of CVA volunteers from Taiwan and South Korea who braved the cold weather to pull weeds and plant stringybarks over 10 hectares of private land near Casterton.

Photo: Tim Burnard.



A North-western Fantail on nest.

Photo: Dean Ingwersen

BIRD WEEK 22-28 OCTOBER 2012 — WHO'S NESTING WHERE?

Annette Cook
Education Manager, BirdLife Australia

Every October, BirdLife Australia organises and promotes Bird Week with the goal of inspiring Australians to take action and get involved in bird conservation. For almost 100 years, 28 October has been designated 'Bird Day' across Australia.

Spring in Australia is the peak nesting and breeding time for many birds, so October is a great time to get out and see birds in action and learn about how you can help them. This year, our focus is on the needs of nesting birds and the variety of nesting styles birds adopt as we celebrate 'Who's Nesting Where?'

During October and November, BirdLife Branches and Centres around Australia will host activities in their local region. Why not try a bushwalk, give a talk in your school or conduct a workshop, get involved with habitat restoration or organise a display in your tourist centre, library or community centre?

Free information kits, including a poster, will be available in September, and there will be prizes for winning participants in the 'Best Nest Competition' — more details will be available soon.

If you would like to know more, hold an activity or order your free Bird Week Kit, contact BirdLife's Education Manager, Annette Cook annette.cook@birdlife.org.au.

RED-TAIL KITES NOW AVAILABLE

The Recovery Project has recently acquired a bunch of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo children's kites thanks to Rob King, the 'Kiteman'. The kites, which will be available for sale through the website, will help raise funds to undertake core Red-tail recovery activities across the species' range. Rob, who is based in Deniliquin, NSW, has been making kites and conducting kite-making and painting workshops for children and adults for over 6 years. His recent Red-tail designed kite has a wing span of 100 centimetres and is one of the easiest kites to fly for young children and adults.

The Red-tail kites will be available for sale for \$20 each through the website or by contacting the Project Coordinator on 1800 262 062, or emailing redtail@birdlife.org.au.

For more information on Rob's kite-making and painting workshops and his other products, visit his website at www.kiteman.com.au or email kiteman_kite@yahoo.com.au.



Available for sale: Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo children's kites. Photo: Rob King

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



Australian Government

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

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA