

Red-tail NEWS

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Welcome to 2009

Well, as 2009 rolls on it is a good time to reflect on all the happenings in the Red Tail world. Late last year I received a couple of calls reporting sightings of adult pairs in the company of a newly fledged young bird which is heartening. How do you know they're newly fledged? Well, one observer feared that as this particular bird took off it was going to crash land into an adjacent paddock. I'm happy to report that it didn't, and things improve on the flying front although they can be very erratic as they hit what must be the equivalent of a human adolescence.

In this issue there's more information on the nest search work we undertook in Spring 2008.

The Environmental Significance Overlay which is being prepared as an amendment to the West Wimmera Shire Planning Scheme appears to be drawing closer to being released for public comment. This has great potential to impact on Red Tail habitat, particularly paddock trees, and I'd encourage everyone with an interest in protecting Red Tail habitat to respond once it is released for public comment.

The Recovery Program has had one big change with Richard Hill leaving his role as Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Project Officer. Richard has been with the program since it commenced in 1996, establishing the research and monitoring programs that have helped to inform our current understanding of Red Tail biology. Richard has always been a great advocate for habitat protection and has worked hard to reduce the legislative gaps that have the potential to negatively impact Red Tails. I'm happy to report that Richard will remain in the Region and on the recovery team so we can still access his experience and expertise. We wish

him all the best in his continuing role as Biodiversity Officer with Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Rachel Sims has commenced in the Project Officer role – read on to find out more.

2009 Annual Count

It is time to pencil in Saturday 2nd May 2009 for cocky counting activities. If you'd like to nominate yourself to cover a favourite search area, register or just want to find out more please contact Tania Rajic on 1800 262 062 or email rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au. We recommend that you travel in a 4WD vehicle although there are a few sites that are suitable for 2WD vehicles. A social campout is once again planned to be held at Bailey's Rocks. Note that we will find a quieter spot if the campground is as busy as it was last year. Not that I have anything against bagpipe dawn choruses!

Hope to see you there!

Sightings

Birds are moving back into Brown Stringybark areas now that they are carrying a new seed crop. After a period of no records from the Lower Glenelg National Park, Mumbannar and Rennick area I'm getting an increase in the number of birds seen through here. Landholders in the Lake Mundi and Meereek area are also happy to see Red Tails again after a couple of year's absence. Mapping these shifts in distribution of the birds in relation to their feeding habitat is only possible if we get your sightings data, so keep them rolling in!

Freecall 1800 262 062 or email rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au. You can download a record sheet from the www.redtail.com.au site if you'd prefer to keep a record of observations and mail them in later.

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Hello Red-tail Watchers!

The Recovery Team participated in I write this introduction while I'm sitting in a car by the edge of a block of stringybark, windows wound down, listening out for the tell tale screech that will get me excited, binos in hand, hoping to spot a male who might lead us to his nest. I'm still figuring out how to fill the well-worn hiking boots of Richard Hill as he starts to spend less time with Red-tails and I take over the role of RtBC Project Officer. So by way of introduction...

Who Am I?

I'm Rachel Sims, Biodiversity Officer with the Department of Sustainability and Environment in Portland, Victoria. I love the bush, and conservation, and birds, though do note I'm not a 'proper birder' so don't expect too much! I'm very passionate about bringing good science to conservation, and helping people to find the special experiences that come from actively participating in threatened species conservation.

Where did I come from?

I've been with DSE in Victoria for 18 months now after moving down from Canberra, where I studied Ecology and Environmental Science before specialising in bird breeding behaviour – Superb Fairy-wrens for my Honours year, and Dusky Woodswallows for my PhD. Consequently, I can tell you all sorts of sordid Fairy-wren stories and get very distracted anytime there are Woodswallows flying overhead. At the start of 2008 I started coordinating conservation efforts for the Orange-bellied Parrot in south west Victoria, which was a dream job opportunity for me. Not only did we find some parrots, control some major weeds and restore roosting habitat, but

we got 800 school kids involved in the project and created the growing phenomenon of Team OBP! I get very excited about OBPs now too.

Where am I going?

I don't have much experience with Red-tails, but I'm looking forward to learning about them and growing as passionate about them as my other birdy obsessions. I hope to be able to continue Richard's excellent work and bring a bit of my own flavour to the project as time goes on. I look forward to meeting some of you, and learning from your experiences with these wonderful creatures.

I'm still sitting in the car with no peep of a bird yet, so right now not technically going anywhere. I think that might be part of the chase too.



Rachel Sims with Dusky Woodswallow friend

Contact Rachel on telephone 03 55223445, mobile 0418 382 465 or email rachel.sims@dse.vic.gov.au

Revegetation for Red Tails

Stonehaven Winery's Wrattenbully vineyard is gradually being transformed by revegetation works coordinated by their Environmental Manager, Brian Witford. Stonehaven operates according to an Environmental Management System accredited to ISO 14001 standard. Over 15 years, the winery has established thousands of trees by direct seeding.

Brian has a specific interest in Red Tails which he regularly sees in and around the vineyard. He is keen to encourage more Red Tails by planting feeding and nesting habitat. Over the last 8 years they have planted 800 seedlings, mainly Red Gums and Buloke for Red Tails, and small bushes and shrubs for small birds and mammals. Every project has its hiccups – in this case the Buloke seedlings he purchased have done incredibly well but unfortunately were incorrectly labelled and have morphed into Dwarf Sheoak (*Casuarina muellerana*)! All's good though because Dwarf Sheoak is local to the area.

Brian is linking remnant vegetation on the property through a series of linear corridors and has created a small wetland refuge. This area has provided habitat for quail, Yellow-footed Antechinus, Blue-winged Parrots, wrens and several species of waterbird. Brian is looking forward to the day he spots some Sugar Gliders and Bush-stone Curlew.



Brian Witford with new and old revegetation.

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Nest Quest

Red Tails led us on a mystery tour this Spring on our quest to discover more nests in South Australia. Deniliquin based ornithologist Rick Webster was employed by the recovery team to spend 20 days searching for new nests. While he hadn't worked with Red Tails before he has had extensive experience with other bird research, in particular Regent and Superb Parrots.

In the lead up to the nest search activity we ran quite a few radio interviews and promoted the project through regional newspapers. We had a great response and located flocks ranging from 12 to 50 birds in the Wandilo, Penola Conservation Park and Glen Roy area. Penola was chosen primarily because we have little understanding of where birds nest in this area. While birds had been observed nesting in Victoria, late September seemed to be too early for the Penola birds. After 10 days of observing birds feeding, drinking and roosting with no signs of nesting we decided that Rick would take a break and return in a couple of weeks when there would hopefully be more sign of nesting activity.

Things looked a little more promising when Rick returned - Cockies were observed in smaller flocks but tracking them across private land with scattered nest trees over a 2-3km radius proved challenging. Rick decided to venture into the Nangwarry area, locating his first nest in a dead stringybark within hours of arriving. He spent seven days in this area and with the assistance of several volunteers tracked single birds and pairs coming in to drink in the late afternoon. Another nest was located before Rick left and with at least one other Houdini pair disappearing into a stringybark block we are following up on at least two more nests in this area.

In summary, the low number of nests located doesn't indicate that the birds weren't nesting, instead it reflects the difficulty we experienced keeping track of birds as they disappeared from view across private land. While we anticipated locating more nests by conducting this intensive search over 20 days the result will guide how we undertake future nest searches. Stay tuned for more information.

Thanks to Rick Webster for all his hard work and in particular to Rob Farnes who spent several days helping Rick together with Barrie Grigg, Angela Paltridge, Peter McKenzie, Angela Jones, Dick Cooper and Dragos Moise. Many thanks also to landholders in the Penola area that assisted us by allowing access to their properties and providing information on feeding and drinking sites.



Rick Webster inspects a suspected stringybark nesting hollow. Thanks to Barrie Grigg who confirmed our suspicions after he observed the nest over 2 evenings. A female emerged on both nights returning about an hour and a half later or close to dark. After having a quick look around to check that all was well she backed down into the nest in the characteristic manner.

Threatened Species Network Funds opportunity for Red Tail habitat protection and restoration

Landholders in specific areas could benefit from funding for Red tails secured by the Threatened Species Network (TSN). \$240,000 will be available across South Australia and Victoria for the following:

- To provide additional support to landholders increasing their involvement in land management activities aimed at conservation of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo;
 - To provide additional support to landholders increasing their capacity to uptake existing incentives programs available;
 - To provide additional support to landholders increasing their capacity to become involved in land management actions by addressing the identified barriers to landholder involvement (lack of knowledge, funding access and extension support);
 - To provide additional support to the regional community increasing their capacity in the long term
- Which areas?

Habitat Modelling work carried out in 2007 showed that while preventing loss of existing Red Tail habitat was important across the entire range, conservation and restoration of *Eucalyptus arenacea* (Desert Stringybark) should be particularly targeted within South Australia, and Buloke in Victoria. In Victoria the Kowree Farm Tree Group have been contracted to undertake activities in the priority region for buloke while the Central NRM Group, TSN, SA Department for Environment and Heritage and Red Tail Recovery Team will work in partnership to deliver activities in SA.

continued over....

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Australian Government



Birds Australia

Threatened Species continued...

Summary of project activities:

Victorian activities:

The Kowree Farm Tree Group has been contracted to provide extension to landholders and deliver an incentives package to protect and rehabilitate buloke habitat including:

- Identifying patches of remnant buloke to fence and rehabilitate and approaching landholders to work with the program.
- Trialling the planting of individual trees in guards to attempt to increase the level of engagement of landholders.
- Working with volunteer organisations such as Greencorp or the local football club to assist with tree planting and fence construction.
- Supporting and linking landholders to other sources of funding such as incentives available through the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority where relevant.

In South Australia activities will be centred on the Naracoorte-Lucindale area with the following objectives:

- To work with landholders to develop site plans for fencing and/or replanting and subsequently assist them to access existing and emerging sources of funds to implement these plans.
- Fund at least one demonstration project, and
- Survey landholders to find out what training/development they would like to have access to. Fund at least one training opportunity and work with the NRM Board and Groups to encourage further targeting of priorities in ongoing NRM capacity building activities.

If you're interested in finding out more and live in the West Wimmera Buloke areas please contact the Kowree Farm Tree Group on (03) 55851133.

If you live in the Lucindale-Naracoorte area contact Tania Rajic on 1800 262 626.

Glenelg Hopkins



CMA



Government of South Australia
South East Natural Resources
Management Board



Wimmera
Catchment Management
Authority

Waterways for Life.

To report any suspicious activity please telephone:

In South Australia:

1300 650 411 and quote

465 393 (24 hour pager number)

In Victoria:

**13 6186 and choose wildlife permit
option.**

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