

Red-tail NEWS

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Welcome to 2010

Welcome to a new year and some new faces in the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program. Some of you would be aware that I left the recovery program in June 2009 (well, pretty much but I'm putting together this newsletter and hope to continue my involvement through volunteering for the annual count and continuing as a recovery team member). I enjoyed my time with the team, saw and learnt a lot about Red Tails and their habitat, met many inspiring people and have been impressed by how good science can lead to better protection of our threatened flora and fauna. The hard work of many individuals including our great team of volunteers is what makes the Red Tail recovery program the success it is. Thanks for the opportunity to be part of it, and welcome to the new project coordinator, Bronwyn Perryman (nee: Stratman).

Tania Rajic

Introducing

Bronwyn Perryman (nee: Stratman) Project Coordinator

South-Eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program



In November 2009, I stepped into Tania's old role as South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Coordinator with the Birds Australia Team. In doing so, I hope to continue in the fantastic footsteps of Tania,

who has really set a precedent to live up to in this position. Tania's fantastic effort and involvement in the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo Project over the past 5 years should be highly commended. I'm sure she will be sadly missed!

For those of you that don't know me or may have forgotten me through my previous

employment with the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH), this is my first position back from starting a family in August 2008, when my partner and I were suddenly plunged into the wonderful world of parenting! ! To add to the confusion, Adam and I finally tied the knot in January 2010, hence the name change!

Having grown up and worked on my parent's dairy farm near Port MacDonnell, I bring both a rural and ecological perspective to the position and look forward to working together with the community to educate, manage and conserve the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. I completed a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree at the University of Ballarat in 2003 and then went on to complete my honours research with Deakin University on the use of pine plantations and native vegetation remnants by microbats in 2005.

During my two and half years with DEH I was employed in a number of short term roles in both the South East and Coorong districts including SE Threatened Fauna Ecologist, SE Wetland Ecologist, Coorong and Lakes Ranger Ecologist, and Mosquito Creek Threatened Species Project Officer, to name a few!! I also spent some time working as the SE Field Assistant for DEH's Kangaroo Island Koala Translocation Program. Whilst in these roles I have gained valuable experience in the management and conservation of threatened fauna and their associated habitats, and look forward to working yet again with one of the region's iconic threatened bird species.

Over the coming months I will be focused on organising the RtBC annual count, assisting community groups with RtBC Projects, promoting awareness and educating the community about the species, maintaining the recovery team and assisting and supporting Rachel Sims, our RtBC Project Officer. I will be working two days a week on the project based at my home near Port MacDonnell.

If you would like to find out how you could become involved in Recovery Projects for the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, assist in the annual count, or just want further information on the species please feel free to contact me at rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au. I look forward to working together with the community to ensure the recovery and ongoing survival of this beautiful bird.

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Desert Stringybark boost for Naracoorte-Lucindale landholders



Lantara (Westphal Nominees) manager Ken Banning stands before the largest revegetation site where 2000 Desert Stringybark and associated species were planted in Winter 2009.

During 2009 many landholders in the Naracoorte-Lucindale area benefited from funds received through the 'Conservation on Country' SE Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and woodlands project, supported by the Threatened Species Network (TSN), WWF Australia and the Australian Government.

The project aimed at working with landholders to develop site plans for fencing off and/or replanting Desert Stringybark (*Eucalyptus arenacea*) to provide a viable long-term food resource for the South Eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Why Desert Stringybark? Modelling undertaken in partnership with the SERTBC Recovery Team showed that while preventing loss of existing habitat was important across the entire range, conservation and restoration of Desert Stringybark should be particularly targeted within South Australia and the Naracoorte-Lucindale area where most Desert Stringybark occurs. A similar project is underway in Victoria with a focus on Buloke.

Approximately \$45,000 was provided for landholders in the Naracoorte-Lucindale area to put these property plans into

action; protecting remnant patches of Desert Stringybark, fencing individual paddock trees/clusters in paddocks and revegetating areas on their property. This money has been spent assisting landholders with purchase of fencing materials, tube stock, tree guards and labour. The project was flexible, working to meet landholder goals while achieving positive environmental outcomes.

Three demonstration sites have been established around Lucindale to showcase protecting remnant habitat, protection of paddock trees and the establishment of a revegetation site. 3,376 Desert Stringybark trees and associated understorey species have been planted in revegetation sites ranging in number from 20 to 2000 trees at each site. With the protection of existing remnant habitat, a further 88ha is now being managed for the SE Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo as well as providing shelter and shade and aesthetic values for properties.

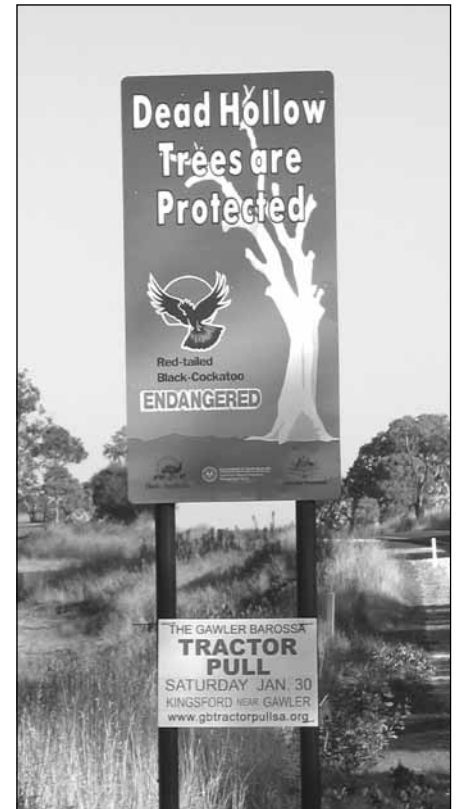
Another component of the project was surveying local landholders to find out what training/development they would like access to and again this will provide valuable information for future projects.

We are now in the process of applying for money to fund projects for 2010 and would be keen to hear from landholders who may be interested.

For further details contact:

Kerry Gilkes phone: (08) 8766 0027
e-mail: bullisland@bigpond.com

Roadsign reminders for South Australians



Crow-eaters may have noticed roadsigns promoting the protection of dead trees with hollows at various locations across the SA range. 5 new signs were installed by the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure. The roadsigns were funded by the Australian Government and South East Natural Management Board.

2010 Annual Count

This year's annual count has been set for Saturday 1st May 2010.

If you'd like to register please contact Bronwyn Perryman (nee: Stratman) via email: rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au or phone: 1800 262 626.

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2009 Annual Count results

Apologies for the belated feedback on the 2009 annual count which was held way back on May 2nd. In stark contrast to 2008 when over 1400 birds were recorded, the 2009 count lead-up started with very patchy information on the bird's movements and ended with a significantly lower count total. Despite a grim tally at sunset, some follow-up field work and an almost full quota of record sheets resulted in a total count of 750 birds. On the Saturday night those camping at Bailey's Rocks only managed a combined tally of 40 birds. Last year those converging on Bailey's Rocks notched up over 800 birds by sunset!

Despite extensive pre-count media we suspected a much lower count this year based on sightings information that was coming in from members of the public. Red Tails have really demonstrated just how broadly they range in response to their feeding resource and how dramatically their

use of an area can change from season to season. Last year 869 birds were located in a relatively small area south-west of Casterton feeding in a new seed crop in *E. arenacea* or Desert Stringybark. This year only 12 birds were recorded in the Casterton area. Conversely, Lower Glenelg National Park recorded no birds last year and this year over 300 birds were recorded in the Mumbannar, Rennick, Lower Glenelg area which is a Brown Stringybark area.

Significantly, 3 independent sightings have been made of Red Tails feeding on a new eucalypt seed in and beyond the north-west of the cocky's range in South Australia. In the past Red Tails have been observed feeding on other trees but these have been incidental sightings of what has been almost experimental behaviour. The birds haven't seriously tucked into these alternatives. However, over April and May, Red Tails spent extended periods feeding in *Eucalyptus diversifolia*, commonly known as Coastal or Soap Mallee. Large quantities of chewings

were left under the trees and the behaviour continued for weeks. This eucalypt has a similar sized seed capsule to the stringybark normally utilised by Red tails. One observer who has lived on the property in question for 40 years has never observed Red Tails in his area before suggesting that the birds may be foraging more widely in search of food this year. More significantly, have they incorporated another seed into their highly specialised diet? We will be watching the behaviour of birds in this area and in other coastal or soap mallee areas with interest over the coming months and years.

Thanks again to the 146 volunteers who headed off on the day and to those that took time to report sightings in the lead up and following the count. We couldn't do it without you!

Tania Rajic

Hiding in Paddocks and Old Sheds: the 2009 Red Tail Flock Count

Last year saw me attempting my first Red Tail flock counts. To those new to the world of Red Tails, this is our primary tool for measuring recruitment of young into the population. Following the annual count, when we have a good idea of where the birds are, the Project Officer (me) runs around counting how many adult males and not adult males are in the flocks. Now, it's really the 'not adult males', or 'barred birds' we're interested in, specifically the juveniles. But because they look similar to adult females, the only birds we can be sure about the age and sex of are the adult males. It works as a reasonable proxy though. Because the 'barred' birds will be a mix of females and juveniles, if there are a lot of them, we can assume there's been recruitment of juveniles, if they are close to the number of adult males, we can assume there has been less recruitment.

We usually do the flock counts near popular watering points, where we can get a good view of good numbers of birds. My initiation into the method was one of my most memorable Red Tail days yet. Richard Hill

and I were hiding in an old shed on a property in the Rennick area. There were six water troughs all around us. We waited. I snacked. We waited. We fiddled with our spotting scopes. Then, quietly at first, we picked up the call of Red Tails flying in from the forests to the west of the paddocks. Tiny black shapes in the sky above the treeline. Then more. And more. The sound grew and waves of birds were flying in, in groups of about 20 or so. We were both busy observing our troughs, speaking softly into voice recorders. Richard's "male, barred, male, barred, barred..." can be heard in the background of my own recordings "not, male, not, not, male, there's so many!, male, not..." As one group finished and flew away another would quickly take their place. These are truly majestic birds. I felt very lucky to have found myself working with them. In all we saw around 300 birds that day. As I write this and recall the event, I'm looking forward to next May when I can do it again.

To the results then; as I am paid to be the Field Biologist. This year I counted over

500 birds and found 46% of them to be adult males. This is a high figure, but not dissimilar to the 45% counted the two years previously. If sex ratios of adult birds are similar, these numbers suggest that there aren't a lot of juveniles in the population at the moment. While this is something the Recovery Team is keeping a close eye on, it may not be unusual. In 2003 and 2004 the numbers reached 43% and 44%, but were followed by a much more favourable figure of 37% in 2005. Such fluctuations may result from the birds' responding to variation in their food supply. Neither Brown or Desert Stringybark set seed every year, so some years have more fresh food than others. Drought may also influence the productivity of the trees. I'll be hoping to find better signs in the 2010 flock counts. And of course I'll keep you all posted.

Rachel Sims

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Australian Government



Birds Australia

Update: the West Wimmera Environmental Significance Overlay

In Victoria, Planning Schemes administered by our local governments provide the main tools for balancing proposals to develop land against controls meant to protect the environment. When someone wants to remove native vegetation, for example, they may be required to apply for a permit under their council's Planning Scheme. Where a species requires special protection, the Planning Scheme can provide very specific guidance as to how development should be managed.

The West Wimmera Shire has included an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) to protect Nesting Habitat of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos for some years now. It failed, however, to provide special protection to the birds' feeding habitat. A lengthy process including many hours of work by staff from the Shire, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE),

and the Department of Planning and Community Development, has finally seen this short-fall addressed.

In December 2009 the Victorian Planning Minister gave approval to an amended ESO designed to give greater clarity in the protection of all Red Tail habitats in the West Wimmera Shire. This was a significant event, as the final overlay submitted to the Minister met the approval of the West Wimmera Council, DSE, and almost all of the requests made by the Recovery Team. The new Overlay includes specific mention of the ecological needs of Red Tails, including the importance of protecting Buloke and Stringybark feed trees. Now, when a landholder wishes to remove feeding habitat, the ESO requires Shire and DSE officers to carefully weigh up the potential impacts on Red Tails.

To view the overlay go to: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/westwimmera/home.html> and select from the Overlays dropdown menu Schedule 2 to the Environmental Significance Overlay.

Glenelg Hopkins



CMA



Government of South Australia

South East Natural Resources Management Board



Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

Waterways for Life.



Conservation Council SA

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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