

# Red-tail NEWS



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## Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of Red-tail News for 2010. Although it's only been three months since our last edition this issue is jam packed with updates from the annual count to the introduction of our new Red-tail Project Officer, David Williams.

Yes, we again welcome a new face to the Red-tail Recovery Program and sadly say good bye to our previous Project Officer, Rachel Sims who has recently left the position to pursue and coordinate the urgent recovery effort for the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. During Rachel's time in the role she has made a fantastic contribution to the Red-tail Recovery Program, particularly in the areas of fire management and protection of feeding habitat in the West Wimmera Shire. We wish Rachel all the very best and look forward to catching up with her at our Recovery Team meetings.

The Recovery Team also sadly said goodbye to David Baker-Gabb, Chair of the

Red-tail Recovery Team for 15 years. David has made an outstanding contribution to the recovery and conservation of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo during his time as Chair of the Recovery Team and has been instrumental in the facilitation and implementation of the Red-tail Recovery Program. We would like to wish David all the very best for the future and look forward to his involvement with the Recovery Program through continued participation in Recovery Team Meetings. With David's departure we would like to congratulate and welcome Vicki-Jo Russell and Martine Maron to the role of co-chairs of the Recovery Team.

*Bronwyn Perryman*

## Flock Count Spotting

There are several reasons the Annual Count is important. One of them is to help us get an idea of recent breeding success of Red-tails. The annual count tells us where the birds are, then we can go out to those sites with the biggest flock size and record the ratio of all-red tail birds (the males) to the bar-tailed birds (this includes females and all juveniles). We do this mostly at watering sites because they are most easily observed as they land in the open with tail spread (it's hell trying to tell male and barred apart in dense stringy scrub!). We also can be pretty sure that they will come at an allotted time (before dusk).

From these flock counts we can reasonably estimate the breeding success for a given year. E.g., if there are 50 male birds and 60 barred 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%.

The lower the percentage of males, the better the breeding outcome. Past flock counts have shown us that the breeding seasons of 2004-05 and 1998-1999 produced far more young birds than any intervening years. In those two years flocks contained an average of 37% adult males in autumn.

So what's the outcome this year? Well first we have to mention that this year's annual count only came up with two sites with significant numbers for counting; Tallageira site had a

mob of about 72 (as counted by long term volunteer, Dick Cooper) and the Heathfield site varied from as little as 80 birds one night to 306 the next (we had to return several times to get the big mob). This site was a little tricky

because it had three troughs they had been seen drinking from, but we got it right in the end.

OK, here it is the outcome for this year was a ratio of 45%. Not a very good outcome really considering all the effort we humans had put in

with the annual count and the flock counts!

*Tim Burnard*

**"There are several reasons the Annual Count is important. One of them is to help us get an idea of recent breeding success of Red-tails."**

# Red-tail NEWS



## Introducing David Williams

Project Officer – South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program

Hello, I'm David Williams and have been employed by Department of Sustainability and Environment as a Biodiversity Officer located in Heywood, Victoria. As part of that role I am excited to be the Red-Tailed Black-Cockatoo Project Officer and look forward to meeting you in the coming months as I get settled in.

I have an Environmental Science Degree from Deakin University and moved to the south west originally to study at the Warrnambool Campus. It seems the south west agrees with me as I am still here and loving it. For someone who loves to work in the natural environment it makes sense to live somewhere that has so many beautiful places left to experience.

I love to get out and about in the great outdoors and enjoy camping, fishing and scuba diving. I'm also

pretty keen on dogs and have a smelly, hairy companion called Rufus. I can occasionally be found playing music around the traps when time and circumstance permits.

For the past couple of years I have been employed by the Warrnambool City Council as an Environmental Officer. Part of that role was looking after the Middle Island Maremma Project which is actually a penguin project although the name doesn't reflect that! I have also been involved in pest plant and animal programs for the council and revegetation projects. I had a varied and interesting role with council that allowed me to work with many community groups and volunteers to achieve environmental outcomes.

Maremma flock guardian dogs are used to prevent fox predation on the Little Penguin colony on Middle Island off

Warrnambool. I started the project off as a Coastcare volunteer and after a while they decided to employ me. The project has been running since 2006 and during that time the colony has recovered from 4 penguins to about 140 penguins returning nightly during the height of the breeding season. While there is still a ways to go before the colony is back to full strength I'm confident that the Middle Island colony will be there for future generations to enjoy.

I'm now busy learning all about the Red-Tail Black-Cockatoo and the recovery progress so far and look forward to hearing about your experiences and catching your pearls of wisdom to assist me in this new role. Luckily I have Rachel Sims sitting in the adjacent desk and Richard Hill as my supervisor so I intend to pick their brains on a regular basis!



*A landholder submitted this photo of Red-tails watching the fencing contractor fence a remnant patch of Stringybark on his property a few weeks ago as part of the Cockies helping Cockies Project'.*

## 2010 RtBC Annual Count

### Cocky counters left wondering?

On the 1st May 2010 a team of 159 enthusiastic volunteers set off throughout the stringybark forests in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria in the hope of spotting the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Geared up with binoculars, 4WDs, mountain bikes and a keen sense of hearing, our Red-tail enthusiasts scoured more than 2,800 kilometres of stringybark forest in search of our colourful cockies.

Despite a large number of pre-count sightings including 300 birds seen in the Casterton area only days before the count, the total number counted by sunset by those camping out at Bailey's Rocks was grim. With less than 200 birds counted in an area where only days before 300 birds had been observed in a single flock, our Red-tail enthusiasts were left wondering where had all the birds gone?

Fortunately, follow-up field work by long time Casterton volunteer, Dick Cooper and past Extension Officer, Tim Burnard, resulted in the missing Casterton birds being found, with an additional 165 birds added to the tally. After receiving the full quota of volunteers' record sheets and including several sighting reports either side of count day, the total number of birds recorded over the count period increased to a final tally of 680 birds.

The total number of birds counted this year is down on last year's tally of 750 birds. Despite a reduction in the number of birds counted over the last two years from 2008, it is unlikely that the population has suffered a severe decline, but rather just that birds were missed on the day. This year's count provides a great example of how birds can easily be missed on the day.

This year 300+ birds were observed in the Casterton District feeding in Desert

Stringybark (*Eucalyptus arenacea*). Other hotspots for Red-tails on count day included Repeater Station Road North of Naracoorte, Three Chain Road at Wandilo, Tallageira State Forest, and in and around the Dergholm district. Conversely, last year birds were concentrated around the Mumbanner, Rennick and Lower Glenelg region, however this year only 10 birds were recorded within this area. The birds

appear to be feeding predominantly in tracts of Desert Stringybark forest, which occur in and around the Casterton, Edenhope and Naracoorte districts. This year's results confirm yet again just how dramatically the use of areas by

Red-tails across the range change from year to year depending on the availability of their feeding resource.

While it's very unlikely that we will ever be able to count every Red-tail across the range given their high mobility and their unique ability to camouflage within the stringybark, the annual count allows us to estimate a minimum population size and provides us with an indication of habitat use and where we can focus habitat protection and restoration works in the future. More importantly, it promotes awareness of the conservation needs of this local flagship species and provides a fantastic activity, enjoyed by the young and old.

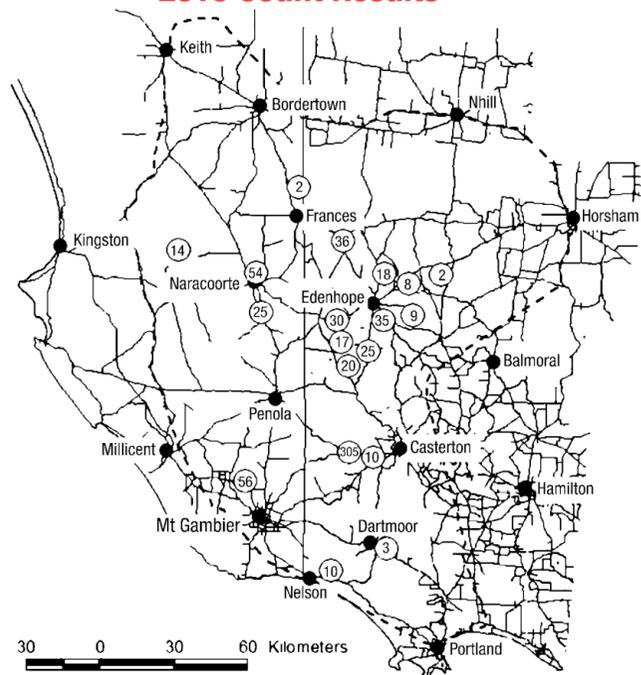
This event would not be possible without the help and support of our fantastic network of volunteers. A big thank you to all those involved - we couldn't do it without you! If you haven't been involved in the Annual Count before, but would like to join in next year, please contact Bronwyn Perryman on freecall 1800 262 062 or via email [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au).

## Reporting a sighting



Female Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo  
Photo courtesy Rob Drummond

### 2010 Count Results



The Recovery Team is always keen to hear of sightings of Red-tails across the range in south-eastern South Australia and south-western Victoria (not the ones up north!). And it's so easy to do! If you see Red-tails, simply call Bronwyn on 1800 262 062 or email at [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au).

All sightings are recorded and used to help us increase our knowledge and understanding of the bird's habitat use and movement across the range from month to month and year to year. We encourage people to report all sightings big or small. Of particular importance are some of the more unusual sightings from areas such as the Little Desert National Park and in the southern areas, near Lower Glenelg National Park. When reporting a sighting, please include: date and time, place (CFS/CFA map reference is appreciated), how many birds and your phone number.

If you need more bumper stickers for friends or interested observers please call Bronwyn.

## Cockatoo Collaboration

It is a rare thing for a charity to donate to a corporate, but that is how mecu acquired the second property in its award winning Conservation Landbank, the Judith Eardley Reserve, at Ozenkadnook in Victoria's West Wimmera. The Judith Eardley Wildlife Association gave mecu \$250,000 to purchase the 236 hectare block to protect the critically endangered South-Eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, which has only 1400 individuals remaining.

mecu, The Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association, partners and guests celebrated the acquisition at the Melbourne Museum on May 25 where the property was launched by Professor Ian Lowe President of the Australian Conservation Foundation. Head of the Judith Eardley Association, Peter Hannaford, said 'Our goal is to do the very best we can for wildlife. Giving mecu the money to continue its excellent work protecting and replanting prime cockatoo feeding and nesting habitat is the best way we can help the species.'

'This demonstrates how the finance sector, NGOs and the community can work together to address the serious problems of biodiversity loss and climate change', Rowan Dowland, mecu's General Manager Development said.

mecu's Conservation Landbank is a world leading initiative which provides biodiversity and carbon offsets for its banking business. This acquisition will add to the work already completed on Minimay (201 ha), the first Landbank property, a short distance away.

'mecu plans to acquire other prime conservation land to help it become carbon neutral by 2011', Mr. Dowland said. Our vision is to develop the biodiversity of the Landbank to support wildlife while building and protecting native bushland.'

Landbank properties are protected against future development by Trust for Nature Conservation Covenants and are managed by Landcare Australia.

Crucial to the success of the initiative has been the involvement of the local community - through the Kowree Farm Tree Group - and key corporate partners. Computershare's eTree program and Target Australia have funded tree planting, while CitiPower Powercor are paying to build an interpretive centre.

The Healesville based Judith Eardley Wildlife Association was founded in 2000 and is run by ten volunteers. Funds are generated through their charity shop, The Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Centre, as well as trading books on the internet. Over the decade they have raised almost \$2million averaging around \$200,000 per annum.

If you'd like to help save wildlife and you have quality books or second hand items to donate contact the Judith Eardley Centre at [www.jesavewildlife.org](http://www.jesavewildlife.org) and for more information on sustainable banking visit [www.mecu.com.au](http://www.mecu.com.au).

Alexandra de Blas

## Update: Cockies helping Cockies

The South East Red-tailed Black Cockatoo Habitat Project continues to gain momentum. Due to the high level of interest, further funding has been sought to continue the implementation of on-ground habitat protection and restoration works on landholders' properties in the Lucindale- Naracoorte Districts as part of the Cockies helping Cockies Project. Participating landholders continue to utilise the project to protect and restore critical stringybark and Buloke habitat for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo through targeted property planning. The farm planning process involves defining and mapping remnant and scattered stringybark and Buloke habitat, and assisting the landholder to identify on-ground activities that can be undertaken to improve and protect habitat. Common on-ground activities funded as part of this project include fencing of remnant and isolated patches of stringybark and Buloke habitat, fencing and protection of isolated scattered paddock trees, and the creation of wildlife corridors/shelter belts through revegetation. A

property management plan is prepared for the landholder and actions identified as part of this plan are funded through the project.

Kerry Gilkes, Extension Contractor for the project said "Much of the work to-date has involved working with interested landholders who regularly see Red-tails on or near their property. Neighbouring landholders, who have been inspired by the work achieved to date, are protecting remnant stringybark habitat and looking into revegetating patches after visiting demonstration sites or talking to their neighbour over the fence. From the Red-tails' point of view this will create quite an impact in the landscape over time, linking many sites and providing that much needed long term food resource".

A large proportion of the work undertaken by landholders to date has focused primarily on the exclusion of stock from remnant patches of habitat and areas set aside for revegetation through fencing. Over the coming months those sites identified for

targeted revegetation works will be direct seeded or planted out with tube stock and guarded. We will eagerly await follow up rains after planting!

Kerry is always keen to talk to landholders in the Naracoorte-Lucindale area about the project and what can be achieved through targeted property planning. Please contact Kerry on 08 8766 0027 for further information as to how you can help protect and restore Red-tail habitat on your property.

The project is coordinated through Conservation SA, with support from local partners, the SE Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board and is funded by the South Australian Government. The Central NRM Group of the SE Board provide valuable assistance and support.

Kerry Gilkes

Red-tails nest in deep hollows that have formed in very large, old eucalypts.

# Red-tail NEWS

## New SeRtBC Poster

The Recovery Team has prepared a new and exciting poster for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo thanks to funds administered by Birds Australia from partner agencies including the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, and Conservation Council of SA with support from the South East Natural Resources Management Board. The new poster aims to raise awareness about the ecology and threats to Red-tails and promote how you the community can help to assist the recovery team to secure and maintain our colourful cockies for many decades to come. The new poster will be distributed over the coming months to schools, local governments and shires, government agencies and community groups across the Red-tail range in South Australia and Victoria. If you would like to receive a copy for your organisation please contact Bronwyn Perryman on 1800 262 062 or email [rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:rtbc@birdsaustralia.com.au)



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