

Red-tail NEWS

April 2012 • Issue 34



In this issue:

- Zoos SA support for Red-tails
- Red-tails at the SE Field Days
- Annual count
- Paddock, trees and cockies
- Bulokes being used
- Trust for Nature focus
- Glenelg Hopkins CMA field trip
- CVA continue support
- Recovery Plan review

Contact details:

Tim Burnard

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

PO Box 25, Casterton, VIC 3311
Telephone: 1800 262 062
Email: rtbc@birdlife.org.au

Zoos SA increases Red-tail support

Zoos SA recently announced their continued support of Red-tails with Caring for Our Country funding that will continue the planting of stringybarks in the Lucindale/Naracoorte area.

Vicki-Jo Russell, Conservation Policy Manager at Zoos SA (and co-chair of our Recovery Team), was extremely pleased to see the project work in Lucindale now being extended to the Naracoorte area through the scope of the grant. Over the past three years the project has seen thousands of Red-tail habitat trees planted and many hectares of existing stringybark forest fenced and protected. Zoos SA will also be assisting with financial support for our Recovery Team's activities in South Australia.

If you have land in the Lucindale-Naracoorte area and would like to plant stringybark or buloke (and other associated native plants) to help Red-tails please contact Kerry Gilkes on 08 8766 0027.



Red-tails go to the South east Field Days

The Red-tail team had a very busy time at Lucindale, with many volunteers lending a helping hand to staff the tent. The event proved to be a great success with a constant flow of interested Red-tailers stopping by for a chat about their sightings and to register for the Annual Count.

Red-tail volunteers (from left) Evan Roberts, Kerry Gilkes & Felicity Lord talk to long time Red-tail spotter Jim Childs at the Red-tail stand.

Red-tail NEWS

2012 Annual Count: Saturday 5th May

The 2012 Annual Count will be held on Saturday 5th May in south-east South Australia and south-west Victoria. Volunteers are encouraged to grab their binoculars, start their 4WD and join in the search for the region's most colourful local, the endangered South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo.

Registering for the count is easy: via our website, email rtbc@birdlife.org.au or phone 1800 262 062. After you have registered, we will send you a Volunteer OH&S form (if you haven't registered before). Two weeks before the Count we will send you full details of how to take part, including a map of the area you will be searching.

We wait until just before the Count to send out details as we try to give volunteers an area as near as possible to their personal preference. So register early to ensure you get your preferred search area.

All volunteers will be allocated one of sixty sites in stringybark woodland that they will cover by vehicle. Participants are encouraged to organise their own search group (i.e. family, friends etc) and if possible a 4WD, as many of the tracks to be searched are in sandy soil.

The Annual Count helps us to determine where the birds are feeding across the range from year to year, and enables us to locate large flocks so that we can conduct our all important annual flock counts, which provide us with an indication of breeding success. It also promotes awareness of the specialised needs of Red-tails within the surrounding local communities.

This year we will be holding an Annual Count training session on the morning of the count in the Casterton and Naracoorte areas at 10.00am local time. This is particularly useful for those who want to learn more about the visual and vocal identification of Red-tails, and what is required on the day. The session will include a field-based activity in which participants will go into stringybark woodland to search for Red-tails. We won't know exactly where the sessions will be held until closer to the day as we hope to hold them at a place recently

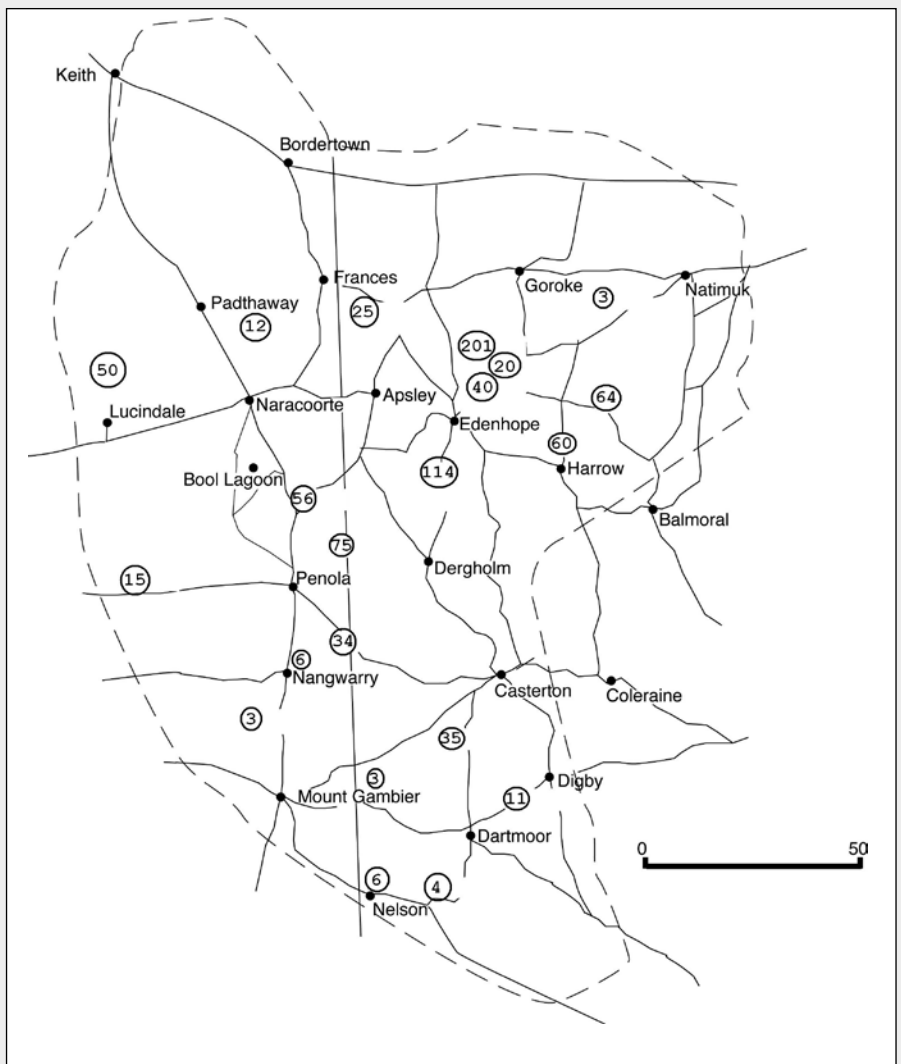
visited by Red-tails. Details will be included when we send out search-area maps two weeks before the Count.

There is also a social campout at Bailey's Rocks (Dergholm State Park) after the count, and we hope you can join us. The campout is very informal (byo camping gear, food and drinks) and provides a great opportunity to catch up with other volunteers.

If you know of anyone that has an interest in birds, conservation or spending time in stringybark woodland, please pass this information on. We are always on the lookout for volunteers, young and old, to participate on the day.

The success of the Count relies partially on sighting information received in the weeks leading up to the Count. **If you see Red-tails from now on please** report all sightings to freecall 1800 262 062 or at www.redtail.com.au.

Join in the fun and register for the 2012 Annual Count by contacting us on freecall 1800 262 062 or rtbc@birdlife.org.au. Although we cannot guarantee you'll see a Red-tail, we know you'll enjoy a fantastic day out in the bush.



Where the Red-tails were found in last years count.

Paddock, trees and cockies

What do Red-tails need most to survive? Trees. While the Red-tail diet is quite selective, they are generally pretty laid back as long as Brown or Desert Stringybark or Buloke trees are available for them to feed on. These trees can be in a woodland, a paddock, or on a roadside: all are good habitat for Red-tails.

But we also know that some Red-tail feed trees are particularly important for the birds – especially paddock trees. Although paddock trees are disproportionately important to the species, they are sometimes considered to be ‘in the way’ of land uses, such as cropping. As machinery gets bigger and precision farming increases in popularity, there have been calls for farmers to be freer to remove mature paddock trees, and replace them with young trees planted in more convenient locations.

It is a genuine conflict and an understandable reaction. But it is important to also consider what we lose when paddock trees disappear.

1) Paddock trees are bigger and more productive. A tree in a paddock is actually worth more to a cockatoo than one in a forest or woodland! How can this be? First, these trees are typically larger. They have large canopies and produce lots of fruit for cockies. Second, they are spaced away from other trees – so less competition. Third, they often occur on better soils. A paddock tree can provide 26 times more Red-tail food than a tree in the scrub!

2) Replacing paddock trees takes ages: a few decades at least for stringybarks, and many more for Bulokes. It is not surprising though, as most of the big paddock trees we see today were alive before Europeans arrived. To lose them and wait for newly planted trees to replace them means a very big gap. It's like asking someone to give up their savings now, for the promise of getting the money back in 100 years. How would they live in the meantime?

3) Paddock trees transform paddocks to habitat. With just a few scattered trees, the whole paddock is useful not only to Red-tails, but diamond firetails, restless flycatchers, spiny-cheeked honeyeaters, robins, whistlers, thornbills – a whole suite of woodland birds which are also in decline in southern Australia. The birds perform pest

control and pollination, and are generally nice to have around. Productive farming and great biodiversity can both happen in the same paddock, thanks to paddock trees!

4) Paddocks are among the last places some tree species still occur. Buloke is a good example of this – preferring heavier soils, most of the remaining trees are now in paddocks. We're down to just a few percent of Buloke woodland left. Importantly, most of the areas where they grow well are also in paddocks, so it can be hard to find enough land to plant ‘replacement’ trees of this species. And packing them into small areas doesn't work, because to grow into the large, productive trees that Red-tails (and many other birds) need, they need to be well spaced out.

Recent media coverage claimed that paddock trees reduced farm profits by \$350 per tree. The President of the Environmental Farmer's Network, Andrew Bradey, pointed out that would mean that a farm such as his, with 1,000 paddock trees, could be earning an extra \$350,000 in profit, simply by knocking the trees down.... this doesn't add up. Mr. Bradey, a local farmer who is also President of the Kowree Farm Tree Group, pointed out the benefits that the trees provide, and states his paddock trees provide net economic benefit through shade, shelter, and indirect ecological services like pest control.

We agree that it is important to balance production and maintaining biodiversity – indeed, the two are often interdependent. But when only a few percent of a particular habitat type remain, pressure to accelerate the loss of the last few elements remaining does not seem a way to achieve that balance.

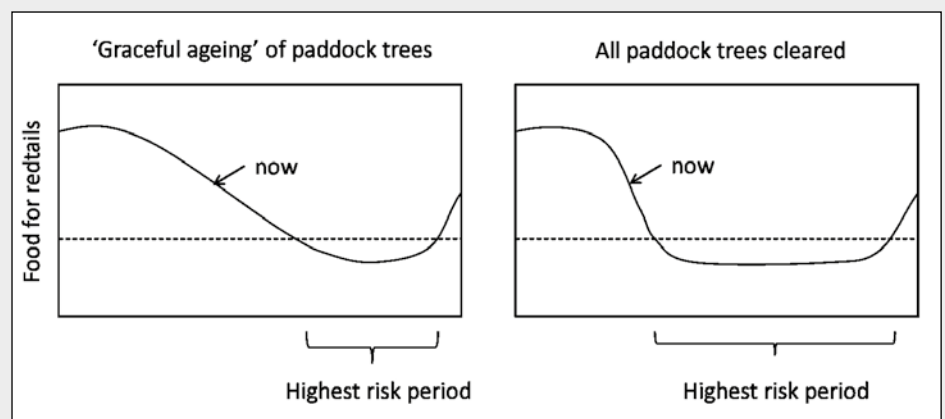
Of course, paddock trees ARE disappearing. But just because they will eventually be rarer in our landscapes does not seem a very good reason to accelerate their loss. The problem is illustrated in the two graphs below.

The most critical threat facing the Red-tail is linked to the period of time between the loss of paddock trees and the maturation of the amazing restoration and replanting work being done by individuals and community groups across their range. The longer this period extends, the greater the chance we will lose the Red-tail before it can take advantage of our hard work. The best course of action is to look after our existing mature trees, including paddock trees, and ensure they have as long a life as possible.

There is an even more important reason to keep our paddock trees. They are iconic; they have seen the centuries pass; they give our Australian landscapes a unique character. For many of us, our properties and our region just wouldn't be the same without them.

You can read the VFFs media statement at http://www.vff.org.au/media_centre/detail.php?id=1210&order=0 and the Environmental Farmers Group's response http://www.environmentalfarmersnetwork.net.au/media_1112_paddock-trees.php.

Martine Maron Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team Co-Chair



glossy black plumage with stunning, bright red tail panels. Females are quite different

Bulokes already being used!

In the first weeks of January this year, despite it being very early in the season, there had already been a couple of sightings of Red-tails in Buloke. Normally we might expect Red-tails to turn up in Buloke around February or March. Sightings in early January of Red-tails investigating Buloke in the Bringalbert area and soon after actually seen feeding just a bit further west near Benayeo, were very encouraging.

Several reports that Buloke appears to have produced a very bountiful crop this year were confirmed with many Red-tail sightings in Buloke. Perhaps a bit on the edge of the range were those near Natimuk. To find out more about Buloke go to our Media/Publication page at www.redtail.com.au. Keep your eye out for Red-tails and please report sightings to 1800 262 062.



A healthy crop of Buloke

Trust for Nature focus on Red-tail habitat

Trust For Nature has developed four key mechanisms to achieve real conservation gains:

- Conservation covenants - providing permanent protection with more than 1,115 conservation covenants in effect, which protect 47,000 hectares.
- Stewardship - supporting landowners who have a conservation covenant on their properties.
- Revolving Fund - purchasing environmentally significant land, which is then on-sold with a conservation covenant attached.
- Land Acquisition - buying back the bush to protect native plants and wildlife.

The contribution from Trust for Nature (Wimmera and Glenelg Hopkins regions) towards Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo conservation and protection of their habitat from July 2010 to January 2012

includes some very impressive results: protection of 493ha of habitat supporting Stringybark, 167ha old growth Buloke and a massive total of 2362ha habitat protection within the Red-tail range. Other achievements are the purchase of a 202ha Goroke property by the Revolving Fund with old growth and long unburnt Stringybark, and the purchase of 100ha by bankmecu 'Landbank' at Ozenkadnook to connect areas of publicly owned Stringybark.

The Recovery Team is very grateful for the partnership with Trust For Nature that has seen so much protection of native habitat vital to Red-tails and very many other local species.

To find out more about Trust For Nature go to www.trustfornature.org.au or contact

Adam Blake, Wimmera Regional Manager 03 5389 2046

Sue Mudford, Glenelg-Hopkins Regional Manager 03 5599 5223

t but equally spectacular...

Glenelg Hopkins CMA field trip

The Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority is a major financial contributor to our Recovery Team and has extended that support by attending a field trip to raise awareness of Red-tail needs.

Red-tail Team staffing equates to less than one full time staff member, which limits our ability to get in touch with landholders and inform them of our Red-tail recovery efforts. To assist us with this, we inform as many on-ground staff as possible in the Red-tail range of the importance of stringybark and buloke bushland. This includes CMA staff responsible for assisting landholders to protect and enhance native habitat.

A group of 10 staff from Glenelg Hopkins CMA inspected stringybark habitat in Henty (just south of Casterton VIC) and learned how to identify and protect Red-tail habitat. Unfortunately, no Red-tails were sighted on the day, despite the hard work of long time Red-tail spotter, Dick Cooper. Dick said that even though we knew by the feeding signs that the birds were nearby, it's still a hit and miss game trying to locate the Red-tails whenever you want to. Better luck next time Dick.

Anyone in the Glenelg Hopkins area wanting assistance to protect native habitat should contact the Glenelg Hopkins CMA on 03 5571 2526



Glenelg Hopkins staff on Red-tail field trip.

CVA continue support

Yet another group from Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) have been out working to help Red-tails.

CVA has made a major commitment to Red-tails over the past few years, having obtained external funding to cover costs of volunteer involvement in Red-tail projects.

The group of volunteers, from Japan, Taiwan, England, Scotland and Australia, were busy with fencing, seedling propagation and measuring stringybark fruit crops around the Red-tail range.

Please contact us (rtbc@birdlife.org.au) if you would like help protecting Red-tail habitat on your land.



Another group of international students helping the Red-tails

Red-tail NEWS

Recovery Plan review, your thoughts?

All endangered species in Australia are covered by their own Recovery Plan. The Red-tail Recovery Plan is up for review. You can find our Recovery Plan on the 'Recovery Team' page at www.redtail.com.au.

Our Recovery Plan describes the actions we will take over a five year period to save and protect Red-tails and their habitat. Another important function of the Plan is to identify what the Australian Government should consider as threatening actions (like habitat clearing) in relation to the EPBC (Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation) Act.

We are seeking input from a wide range of stakeholders-- this is where you can take part. If you have any thoughts on how the Recovery Plan can be improved, we invite you to pass them on. You can do this easily by contacting us on 1800 262 062 or rtbc@birdlife.org.au

Contact Us ...

1800 262 062 or rtbc@birdlife.org.au

Electronic Newsletter ...

we encourage you to receive the newsletter electronically, as this lightens our workload and saves our precious resources. Please email rtbc@birdlife.org.au if you are keen to receive the electronic version.



PO Box 25, Casterton, VIC 3311



birdlife
AUSTRALIA

Glenelg Hopkins



CMA



Wimmera
Catchment Management
Authority



Government
of South Australia



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



Australian Government

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA