



Annual Count Postponed

In the last Red Tail News, we gave the date for the annual count as Feb 3rd. Unfortunately this has been changed, we do apologise for any disappointment, but it is for a good reason!

The Recovery Team is considering a new method of conducting the annual count, to produce more valuable information. The current method comes up with highly variable figures on the total population counted because it is easy to miss whole flocks of birds, and accessibility into the dozens of Stringybark blocks where cockatoos might be, is difficult in many years, or impossible without a 4WD. We think it might be more sensible to hold the count late in Spring when the birds are more dispersed, the sandy tracks into the Stringybark are likely to be easier to drive on because they are still damp, and because the numbers using Buloke vary so much each year, we might get more reliable counts when all birds are in Stringybark. There's also the question of the safety of people driving through the bush in the middle of the fire season, on what is quite likely to be a day of high fire risk.

As yet we haven't settled on a new date for the count and apologise for that, but we will let you know in the next Red Tail news.

New Recovery Plan

The Recovery Team is currently re-writing the Recovery Plan for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo as our bird is known. The overall aim of our work is to shift the Red Tail from an 'Endangered' to 'Conservation dependent'. For this to happen the Red Tail would need to have a population of 1000 adults - currently we estimate there is between 650-1000 total, or 500-770 adult birds. At this stage it looks as if one of the main emphasis will be increasing food availability by improving the production of existing habitat, rehabilitating remnants, and some planting of Stringybark and Buloke. Paul Koch will be continuing his Phd study into Stringybark and will give us a better understanding of how to best manage remnant bush for food production in Stringybark. This is likely to include fire management guidelines.

Of course the most important way of improving seed production in any existing Stringy or Buloke is to fence out stock. This will increase the health of the trees and allow regeneration to occur. In most cases the loss of income from areas which benefit Red Tails is minimal as their food source grows mostly on the poorer sandy soils. In many cases fencing costs of up to \$2.00/m (up to \$4.00/m if covenanted in Victoria through Trust for Nature) are available for fencing off Red Tail habitat. Call Tim on 1800 262 062 if you would like further information.

Extreme Nest Sites

In the past few months we have received sightings of several Red Tail nests, but two have stretched the past recorded boundaries in both the South and East.

In Oct 2000 we received an email from Andrew Freer and Jo Brekalo (two keen Red Tail spotters) reporting a suspected nest site. One evening as they were camped in the Lower Glenelg National Park, they heard and then saw a single Red Tail male flying and calling - typical



Barry Grigg holds the ladder, while Richard Hill peers into a very unusual Red-Tail nest.

nest attending behaviour. We were particularly interested when Jo and Andrew notified us of their sighting as this would be the most southerly nest on record.

We went out the next week and were very lucky to locate the nest on the first afternoons looking. It also appears that at least one other couple (of birds!) may have been nesting in the area. The nest tree itself was interesting as it was on a roadside in dense bush and in a dead Stringybark. Most recorded Red Tail nests are in dead Red Gums in farmed paddocks.

John Pollack from near Toolondo is also a keen recorder of Red Tail movements and phoned up with a report of a nest in a stringybark on his property. When we inspected



the nest a week or two later it had failed, predated by a Brushtail Possum. Adding more importance to the collaring of the nest trees which we have been busy with this season. We still don't have records of birds nesting anywhere south or west of Penola or west of Naracoorte, or north of the Little Desert, even though we suspect they must. If you see what you suspect is nesting behaviour by Red Tails in any of these areas we are very keen to hear from you.

Governor Landie to launch Management Plan

The new Governor of Victoria, John Landie, will visit the West Wimmera Shire, Victoria in March and launch the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Management Plan. The Management Plan details the targets and actions required to remove the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo from the Endangered species list. It will identify in detail areas where protection of existing nesting and feeding habitat is a priority, and areas where replanting of nesting and feeding habitats would benefit the cockatoo most. The plan will comprise a series of maps and accompanying notes which will be used to target fencing grants and rehabilitation grants for use by landholders, landcare groups, and local and state government agencies. Details of the visit, which will take place on the 6th to 9th of March, will be published in local papers.

Birds on Farms

Birds Australia has recently published 'Birds on Farms', the result of a survey commenced in 1995, which gives "... 10 simple guidelines for attracting birds back to farms, and so improving the natural resource base on which agriculture depends."

The booklet is scientifically based and presents the landholder with the enough detail to make informed decisions that benefit both the farm and the birds. The ten main points are;

- Local native vegetation should cover at least 30 per cent of the total farm area.
- Re-create local conditions ie. Similar habitats to what were originally there.
- Exclude high-impact land uses from at least 30 per cent of the farm area.
- Maintain native pastures and avoid heavy grazing
- Native vegetation cover should be in patches of at least 10 ha and linked by strips at least 50 m wide.
- Manage at least 10 per cent of the farm area for wildlife.
- Maintain a range of trees
- Leave fallen trees to break down naturally
- Maintain shrub cover over at least one-third of the area within a patch of farm trees
- Maintain native vegetation around water.

It really is worthwhile reading the detail attached to each of the ten guidelines. To get a copy call Birds Australia on 03 98822622.

If you have any sightings of Red Tails or you want to find out more you can contact:

Tim Burnard, Extension Officer
Telephone 03 55 812250 or 1800 262 062
Email tburnard@iconnect.net.au
PO Box 25, CASTERTON, 3311

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