

Red-tail News

Issue 59 December 2024

WELCOME TO EDITION 59 OF RED-TAIL NEWS

Welcome back to Red-tail News, our Christmas edition for 2024. Along with the Christmas spirit this is a newsletter for celebrations. There is a lot of good news packed into this latest update. I'd like to begin with a thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter by supplying articles, helping with fact checking or assisting with proofreading and editing.

There is great news of a further 4 years of funding for the program, an update on some exciting new research and program updates on what has been happening in recent months for Red-tail recovery.

Finally, I think the biggest celebration is the team behind Red-tail recovery. What a team we have! Having just stepped into the role of Program coordinator I have been blown away by the skill, dedication and passion in the team behind our beloved birds.

This past year has not been an easy one for Red-tail conservation with funding cuts, delays and uncertainty. An incredible team has guided the program through this, and

they couldn't have done it without the on-ground support of the Red-tail community. We thank you.

I am thrilled to be onboard and recognise that this is only possible due to the fierce determination of many people towards the conservation of our birds. An especially big thank you goes to Bronwyn Perryman and Vicki-Jo Russell, who have done an enormous amount of work in keeping things ticking behind the scenes and introducing me to the role.

Finally, I'd like to make our readers aware of a potential sponsorship opportunity. Due to reduction in funding the extremely successful Kids helping Cockies (KHC) program is now only operating in the Wimmera CMA region. It is a program with a lot of community and school support and is a unique opportunity for the right sponsor who could extend this work across the region.

Merry Christmas and I look forward to meeting many of you at our annual count in the new year.

Rachel

RACHEL FARRAN, NEW SOUTH-EASTERN RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO PROJECT COORDINATOR

Rachel started working as the South-east Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator, employed by BirdLife Australia in November. She will work closely alongside the SeRtBC Recovery Team and program partners and is managed by Tegan Douglas, Manager of Black-Cockatoos at BirdLife.

Rachel is a local to Edenhope in Victoria, where she lives with her partner Nic and their three girls on a small sheep property. Rachel has worked with Melbourne Water and the Amphibian Research Centre coordinating the Melbourne

Water Frog Census and Alcoa Frogwatch programs. She has been involved with local projects for many years as a Local Landcare Facilitator with the Kowree Farm Tree Group, assisting with projects focussed on community education and the protection of stringybark and buloke habitats. Rachel is very honoured to be given the opportunity to work with such a knowledgeable and dedicated team.

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Completing the bioacoustics monitoring.
Photo - Bronwyn Perryman.



RECOVERY PLAN PROGRESS

It is with great delight that we can announce that the draft of our newest National Recovery Plan for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus banksia graptogyne*, has been discussed at the Threatened Species Scientific Committee. The draft was returned with relatively minor changes which have been completed and the draft plan re-submitted to the committee. We are hoping the next phase, a three-month public consultation, will happen soon. We would like to make our readers aware that this may happen before our next edition of Red-tail news. We will send out an email notification when the plan is available for consultation. You can also keep an eye out for plans open for public consultation here <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/recovery-plans/comment>

The Team would like to thank Paul Koch, Bronwyn Perryman, Vicki-Jo Russell and all the contributing authors for their work in getting the plan to this stage. We would like to especially thank the Kowree Farm Tree Group for their financial support towards finalising the Plan.



A pair of Red-tails near a potential nesting hollow

Photo Credit - Bob McPherson

NATIONAL HERITAGE TRUST FUNDING SECURED FOR RECOVERY PLAN OUTCOMES

We are very pleased to announce our regional partners' success in securing funding for South-eastern Red-tail Black-Cockatoo recovery outcomes. This funding has been made possible through the National Heritage Trust, to help protect threatened species and priority landscapes across Australia. The funding will be delivered by the Limestone Coast Landscape Board, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, members of the Regional Delivery Partners panel. In partnership with the recovery team and Birdlife Australia, this funding will enable the continuation of recovery actions outlined in the draft Recovery Plan for the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus banksia graptogyne*, which include:

- maintaining the role of the program coordinator to support the recovery team, deliver core monitoring activities against the plan and undertake community engagement activities,
- coordinating the annual 'Cocky Count',
- working closely with fire management agencies across the range to manage the threat from fire to the SeRtBC food resource and breeding habitat,
- monitoring breeding sites to help determine breeding success and understanding causes of nest failure,
- maintenance and recruitment of new nesting habitat through the nest box program,
- collecting and recording data about sightings reported by the public to inform conservation activities,
- annual monitoring of stringybark seed crops to gain an understanding of the relative productivity of stringybarks (or food supply for cockatoos),
- undertaking flock counts to determine the yearly ratio of males/females and juveniles,
- providing technical advice and support to partners and regional stakeholders, and
- working in partnership with First Nations people to inform recovery actions.

These activities will be supported by on-ground enhancement of SeRtBC habitat reported in the following project reports by each of our regional partnership organisations.



A female Red-tail flying over stringybark feeding habitat. Photo: Wayne Bigg

MOSAIC TRAIL TO HIGHLIGHT THE BEAUTY OF RED-TAIL HABITAT

On 15 September, Bronwyn Perryman acting SeRtBC recovery team coordinator, attended the opening of two new mosaic art nature trails in Edenhope and Apsley. The trails were created as the result of a four-year long community collaboration between conservation volunteers Friends of Newlands and the Edenhope Flora and Fauna Reserve Committee of Management with strong involvement from local schools and community arts groups. Red-tails are frequently observed feeding within both reserves and the trails wind their way through some areas of picturesque SeRtBC habitat.

The opening began with a smoking ceremony led by local elder Uncle Ron Marks, who led both groups in a walk through the reserves. The significance of the SeRtBC to these reserves was highlighted in a presentation about local conservation efforts for Red-tails.

The opening was a fantastic community celebration and was attended by over 100 people. The groups feel the real success has been in generating local pride in reserves that were previously considered 'that block next to the tip'.

To find out more about the project visit Sol Media's youtube page to see the video made with the local community: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GBb2PNbO7o> or visit Edenhope College's clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq3enAu1MEk>

The walking trails are beautiful so visit at any time to the year and can be accessed from Federation corner in Apsley, and Moss St, Edenhope.

*Jess Sambell,
Edenhope Flora and Fauna Reserve Committee of Management*



Retail Mosaic.

Photo - Bronwyn Perryman



Smoking ceremony. Photo - Gloria Freeman

COCKIES CREATE COMMUNITIES ON SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S LIMESTONE COAST

The Limestone Coast Landscape Board (LCLB) has worked hard to secure funding to maintain key recovery coordination actions in the region and continue to deliver Red-tail habitat restoration, albeit at a smaller scale than the last five years. Reduced funding has also meant a pause on running the Kids helping Cockies program in South Australia, though the region is keen to investigate other funding options for this activity.

Over the next four years LCLB will continue to support project partner Zoos SA to deliver the very successful 'Cockies helping Cockies' project with 64ha of revegetation work planned over the next three years. They will also continue their partnership with Trees For Life through a subsidised tree scheme program for landholders who plant habitat trees and by supporting a tree planting/weed removal community event each year.



'Cockies helping Cockies helping Cockies' involves establishment of new feeding habitat in the Limestone coast region. Photo - Kelsey Bennett

SECURING GIRRAN (SOUTH-EASTERN RED-TAIL BLACK COCKATOO) HABITAT

In addition to funding the core program activities, the Wimmera CMA has secured funding to carry out the following on-ground work through their 'Securing Girran (South-eastern Red-tail Black Cockatoo) habitat – now and for the future' project. Over the next four years the WCMA will work with partnership organisations to deliver the following:

- continuation of the Kids Helping Cockies program through working with school partners and their communities in the Wimmera range of the SeRtBC and achieving 3ha per year of new stringybark and buloke habitat,
- long-term (10 year) management agreements with private land-owners for the protection of 50ha of habitat,
- revegetation of 400 ha revegetation of infill stringybark habitat and 20ha of Buloke habitat in partnership with Greening Australia,

- permanent protection of 58ha of habitat area under Trust for Nature Covenants, and
- broad scale land management measures in partnership with Department of Environment Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) to improve the condition of the forests in the South-west Wimmera, including:
 - o 10,000 ha of predator control,
 - o 12,000 ha of herbivore control,
 - o 10,000 ha of weed control work, and
 - o monitoring by WCMA staff to determine the outcome of this work.



Buloke revegetation on private property with guarding to protect against Kangaroo browsing.



Seed collecting from Brown Stringybark trees through the Kids Helping Cockies program

'RED-TAIL RECOVERY' AROUND THE GLENELG HOPKINS

The Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (GHCMA) will continue its commitment to Red-tail recovery through it's 'Red-tail Recovery' project. In addition to maintaining the core coordinating activities, Glenelg Hopkins has secured funding to enhance and restore vital habitat for the region's Red-tails. Over the next four years the GHCMA will work with partnership organisations to carry out the following work, some of which has already been completed in 2024:

- Pine control works (completed) including:
 - o 482 ha of pine removal by DEECA from the Drajurk State Forest, and
 - o 120 ha of pine removal by the Burrendies Aboriginal Corporation from a stringybark remnant owned by Nature Glenelg Trust, in Roseneath State Forest, and
- Working with Dave Warne to revegetate 40 ha of stringybark habitat. Potential sites will be assessed sites early next year with the intention to start planting in winter 2025.



Pine wildlings impact the quality of red-tail habitat. Photo: Kelsey Bennett



Photo: Brian Whitford

KIDS HELPING COCKIES IN THE WIMMERA

A new stream of funding through the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority has seen the program return to Victorian schools in the SeRtBC range.

Bronwyn Perryman, Kids Helping Cockies Coordinator, has been busy over the last six months setting up the program. Wimmera schools have jumped at the opportunity with Apsley Primary School, Edenhope College and St Malachy's School in Edenhope committing to the four-year long program.

Bronwyn started visiting schools in August and her presentations have enthused a new generation of Wimmera children. The program begins with presentations to learn about the habitat requirements and conservation of the cockatoos, before the students go into the field to do stringybark seed collection. After seed has time to dry students then take part in the sowing and maintenance of seedlings before planting grown seedlings at local revegetation sites.

Through participating in the program students gain important habitat propagation and revegetation skills and help to establish more food trees for Red-tails.

A key part of the program is the establishment of successful revegetation. The 2025 sites selection process is underway with sites being evaluated in key priority revegetation areas for the cockatoos. Some sites being considered have the added value of belonging to the families of children at the schools involved in the program giving them an added personal connection. Remaining stringybark seedlings grown by the students are distributed to other habitat restoration activities for Red-tails. Students also help to guard seedlings to protect from grazing herbivores.

Bronwyn worked alongside local Wergia elder Uncle Ron Marks in some combined school seed collecting days with Edenhope College and St Malachy's school. Uncle Ron shared lots of interesting stories about the bush and took the students for a walk through the reserve to discover what different plants were used in the past. The cultural learning session were possible through funding contributed by Friends of Newlands and the Edenhope Flora and Fauna Reserve Management Committee as part of their Parks Victoria Volunteering Innovation Grant.

To find out more about the Kids helping Cockies Program, or if you are aware of any potential sponsors to expand the program, please contact Bronwyn on 0438 317 024 or email bronwyn.perryman@birdlife.org.au.

A short report from St Malachy's Grade 4 student Elena Dillon: *We went to the Flora Park and learned about Red-tail Black Cockatoos. It was very interesting. We learned that the Red-tail Black Cockatoo is a fussy eater, only eating stringybark and buloke seeds. When we went to the Flora Park, Uncle Ron taught us about all sorts of rocks and spirit animals. We also collected stringybark seeds.*

The BirdLife Australia Kids helping Cockies Project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.



Bronwyn showing the students the age of the seed pods.
Photo - Rachel Farren



(Above_ Seed collecting.
Photo - Rachel Farren



Discovering stringybark seed.
Photo - Rachel Farren

MAINTAINING THE REAL ESTATE

Every few years we undertake routine maintenance of our Red-tail nest boxes which are located on private land across the cockatoo's range. These boxes provide an alternate solution for nesting pairs where the availability of natural hollows is limited or where competition for hollows is high.

As with all home real estate, nest boxes require regular maintenance to ensure they are both safe and useable for Red-tails. Maintenance generally involves:

- replenishing wood chips inside boxes (wood chips provide a nesting substrate for breeding pairs and are often removed by the birds after use),
- checking mounts, strapping, internal ladders and bases to ensure all are secure,
- undertaking any repairs to the internal or external components of the box including strengthening mounts or replacing/fixing bases, internal ladders of old boxes and/or metal flashing,
- replacing chewing posts, and
- removing any old eggshells, carcasses or other unwanted materials left from nesting.

The level of maintenance required depends on the age of the box and whether it has been used. Some boxes have been in the landscape for 25+ years and understandably require more upkeep than newer boxes. Irrespective of age, boxes that have been used over the recent breeding season will generally need their wood chips and/or chewing posts replaced and any leftover contents removed.

Maintenance is undertaken outside the core breeding season (April-July), to reduce/avoid the likelihood of encountering nesting birds. An elevated platform (cherry picker) is used to complete maintenance activities as boxes are installed at heights above 8m.

Trees or poles with boxes are tapped prior to maintenance to check for nesting birds – nesting females will usually emerge from the box if present. A nest pole camera is sometimes used to check for nestlings or signs of activity before deploying the cherry picker.

Earlier this year we completed nest maintenance on 29 boxes in the Wimmera across thirteen properties. This included a combination of new and old boxes including Cockatubes, PVC and wooden boxes.

Of those maintained, 65.5% had been used recently by hollow-dependent fauna including, cockatoos, parrots, owls, possums and gliders. The remaining boxes were found to have little evidence of use – ie those with few to no chewings or any other evidence to indicate use.

Eight boxes (27.5%) were found to be used by cockatoos (either red-tails, sulphur crested cockatoos, corellas, yellow-tails or galahs) based on the presence of significant chewings

and/or contents found inside boxes during maintenance. Unfortunately, it's difficult to tell from the post chewings alone which species of cockatoo has utilised the box. We rely on other evidence (if available – ie presence of eggs or feathers) and/or bioacoustic data to determine use/occupancy by Red-tails.

A brush-tailed possum and small family of sugar gliders were also found to be using our boxes, and owl pellets were found in another. Although most nest trees are collared, some can still be accessed occasionally by daring possums from adjacent trees. Brush-tailed possums are known nest predators, consuming both eggs and young chicks.

This information coupled with our bioacoustic monitoring data is helping us better understand nest box use by Red-tails and their competitors. It also helps to identify boxes for redeployment (those with no signs of use or those being used by non-target species).

Next year we will continue to undertake maintenance of boxes located in the South-East of South Australia and Glenelg Hopkins regions.

Bron Perryman



Regular maintenance is carried out on the nest boxes

Photo - Skye McPherson

DO YOU HAVE A SOUTH-EASTERN RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO FEATHER?

The recovery team is investigating the genetic health of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo due to its small population size. To do this we can use the tip of feathers which hold genetic material suitable for analysis. A small sample of the tip of a feather is all that is needed to provide a sample of an individual bird. This won't ruin the feather and will help answer important questions about genetic diversity and evolution in the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. If you have a Red-tail feather from within the range of the South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in Victoria, and would like to help with this study, please call Richard Hill on 0428 812469 or email him on richard.hill@deeca.vic.gov.au.



Feather collection. Photo credit - Credit: Gloria Freeman

KADNOOK BUSHFIRE IMPACTS SIGNIFICANT STRINGYBARK HABITAT IN GANOO GANOO RESERVE

Saturday 16 November saw an early start to the bushfire season with a fast-moving bushfire at Kadnook, near Edenhope. The burn started on a private property and quickly spread into nearby Blue Gum plantations. One house was lost in the blaze and another was impacted. The recovery team's thoughts are with all those affected by the fire.

Fuelled by a dry spring and an unseasonably hot and windy day, the fire spotted 4 to 5km ahead and into Ganoo Ganoo reserve which is recognised as significant stringybark habitat for the SeRtBC.

The total area burnt was 1245ha, including 450ha of plantation. Excellent teamwork from crews across both districts, who worked quickly to stop the spread, minimised the total impact of the blaze. Unfortunately, hazards remain in the area and will pose a continuous fire threat throughout the summer.

The impact of the blaze on SeRtBC habitat is still being assessed, and we are aware that important habitat areas have been affected. Part of the area burnt was subject to a planned burn in 2017 with reasonably good canopy being retained in comparison to surrounding forests. DEECA will undertake a scorch analysis to help the recovery team to assess the long-term impacts on the population and to assist with planning for mitigation measures.

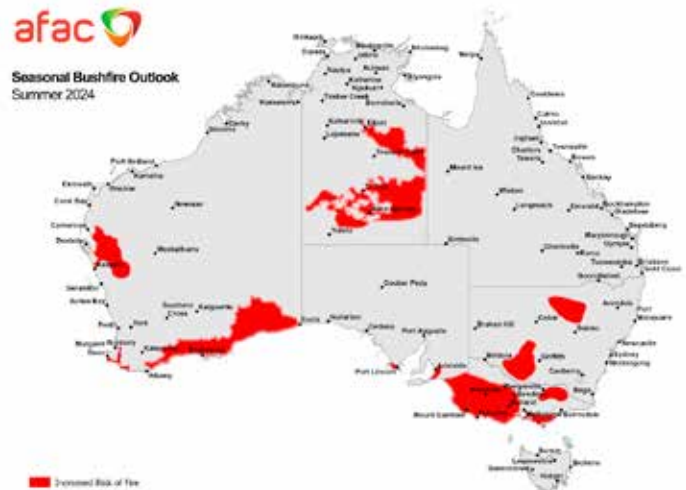


Fire affected area in Ganoo Ganoo Bush Reserve
Photo - Rachel Farran

HIGH FIRE RISK IN SERTBC RANGE PREDICTED IN THE AFAC SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK

The AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for Spring 2024 shows increased risk of fire in the far west and south western Victoria, and the south east corner of SA. Following a noticeable dry autumn and winter period and a forecast for a warmer than average spring with average rainfall, a stronger than average drying pattern across the SeRtBC range has elevated fire risk in the region.

Fire crews across the range are focusing efforts on access and response preparedness. The teams closely follow fire management guidelines developed in partnership with the SeRtBC recovery team to manage a key threat to stringybark feeding habitats, in both Victoria and South Australia. The SeRtBC recovery team is continuing to work closely with crews to monitor and respond to the high risk posed over this fire season. You can access the National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) seasonal bushfire outlook here <https://www.igem.vic.gov.au/publications/media-releases/afac-seasonal-bushfire-outlook-spring-2024>



The AFAC Seasonal Bushfire Outlook Map for Spring 2024
Credit: National Council for Fire and Emergency services <https://www.afac.com.au/>

A CALL FOR SIGHTINGS

Reports have been regularly coming in through the www.redtail.com.au website lately to share Red-tail sightings. Sightings have been reported from across the range, with a recent sighting of eight birds near Dimboola.

Sighting reports are critical to monitoring the population and in particular breeding activity at this time of the year. For example, a sighting of two birds during the day could suggest there is a chick in a nearby nest. A single male bird observed during the day is a good indication that a female is sitting somewhere on a nest.

The more sightings reported, the better conservation efforts are informed.

The Recovery Team encourages the public to report sightings via their dedicated website, www.redtail.com.au, or the hotline 1800 262 062. The BirdLife Australia BirData app also allows easy reporting on mobile devices.



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER UPDATE

In our last edition we announced a proposed transition to a digital newsletter format due to funding constraints. Since then we have received feedback requesting we continue to provide a hard copy version, at least for some recipients, so we are investigating our options to offer both. In the meantime, if you are in a position to receive our newsletters and updates as a digital version, to assist with reducing costs, please contact us either via the website www.redtail.com.au or email redtail@birdlife.org.au with your preferred contact email address. Thank you for your understanding and support.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Limestone Coast Landscape Board and Wimmera CMA, members of the Regional Delivery Partners panel.

Red-tails drinking from a trough. Photo - Kelsey Bennett

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Rachel Farran

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