

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC SA

MAGAZINE

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C/- Conservation Centre
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Young Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*)
photo S Caballero, Victor Harbor, SA

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BCCS book, T-shirt and cap



Bulletin Board

Diary dates

*Saturday October 8 and Sunday October 9 2005
Australian Plants Society Spring Flower Show and
Plant Sale at the Wayville Showgrounds. 10am -
5pm on the Saturday and 10am - 4pm on the
Sunday. An ideal time to purchase local indigenous
plants for your bird friendly garden.*

*Friday July 29 2005, 7-9pm, Norwood Town Hall,
Bob Brown will speak on the Tasmanian Forest
Campaign and outline the current developments in
the legal action with Gunns Ltd. Tickets \$10. For
further information, phone The Wilderness Society
(08) 8212 4888.*

Wombaroo and Baby Cereal

*Wombaroo is still available at cost for non-releasable
birds and no cost for releasable birds. Baby cereal is
also available for \$4.50/kgm.
Please contact Roy ph 8379 1258*

Digital BCCS Magazine by Email

*To receive the BCCS Magazine as coloured pdf file
instead of b&w hardcopy, email bccs@birdcare.asn.au*

New Members

The Bird Care and Conservation Society welcomes the following new member:

Belinda Battersby Scott Creek

President's Report AGM 2005

As the newly elected president of the Society I have found my role to be an interesting and enjoyable one. Thanks to the hard work of the committee members, my position has been far less daunting and time consuming than for previous presidents. The restructuring of the Society and its changing form have led to a number of challenges for the group and I am sure that it will continue to evolve to try and best suit the needs of its members and will maintain our service to the community.

Personally, as a Bird Care member for about fifteen years, I am disappointed that we have had to 'down size' our activities in many ways, but I do believe that circumstances beyond our control have led us to the best compromise position possible. So many pressures come to bear on volunteer organizations and individuals have to make realistic decisions about what they can, and cannot do effectively.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional work of the committee members that have carefully considered the issues, listened to the membership, and come up with viable options to allow the Society to continue to function in a meaningful way.

As one of the membership that quietly sat in the background I had little idea about the huge number of man-hours that go into running the Society so successfully. Dedicated and tireless workers such as Bob Hall, Pam Robinson, Barry and Lesley Hodgson, Sharon Blair, Margaret and Oliver Fuller, Anita Turton, Sheila Charles, Wendy Bagot, Bev Langley, Allison Milnes, Leonie Phillips and Roy Bond... (the list could go on and on), leave me in awe. A special thank you also goes to Anne Whicker for her amazing tolerance and dedication in manning the bird care mobile phone for the entire year. (I was a cot case after only a matter of weeks!).

So many other people have played important roles in keeping the group running successfully, and I would like to acknowledge everyone who has helped with advice to the public, has taken in birds for care, sat on sub committees, produced or supported the magazine, fact sheets, book production and sales, web site etc. over the years, many of you whom I am sorry to say, I have never even met. Despite our current smaller membership everyone has played an important part in helping our feathered friends in so many ways (and certainly a numbers of furry friends along the way too!). All of your kindness, generosity and dedication is appreciated by the committee, and by the general public. We also appreciate the support of all of the families of our members, as I recognise that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes. My husband Ken, and daughter Shannon, have spent many an hour building cages, chasing, climbing, cleaning etc to assist me so generously. Thanks are also due to the many veterinarians, groups and individuals that have donated their time and money to assist our cause.

Despite the lower profile of our society, I believe that we have maintained a very valuable educational and hands-on service for the general public as well as maintaining an important network of information and friendships based on our mutual interests. I would like to look forward to a time where we have a larger active membership base and can offer even more help to the constant flow of creatures that rely on us for help.

Thank you for your support and encouragement this year,

Liz Surridge- McCann



Your Membership Status

Thank you to all the BCCS members who have renewed their annual membership so promptly.

On the address label of your magazine, it now gives you your membership number and your subscription paid up to date. If you have renewed your subscription, the date should read 03/06, which means March 2006. (L means life member, F means free mailout).

If you have not renewed but would like to continue to support the efforts of the Bird Care & Conservation Society, please forward your subscription fee to the BCCS Secretary, c/- Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield Street Adelaide 5000

Subscriptions are
family \$30 concession \$15
single \$20 concession \$10

If there is an error in your label, please phone Pam on (ah) 8390 3254 to have it corrected. Also if you have an email address please forward it to Pam at bccs@birdcare.asn.au for inclusion in our database.

Website Help

Apart from phone calls from the public for help and advice on rescued wild birds, BCCS also receives numerous requests by email through our website. These requests are not only from people in South Australia and interstate but from many parts of the world. All emails are answered with appropriate advice and usually receive a nice thank you from the inquirer.

Members Update

For those of you who have been asking or wondering, Sharon Blair (previous past BCCS President) has recovered very well from surgery and is feeling the best she has felt for a long time.

Margaret Fuller is struggling on at home after an operation on her hip replacement, which gave way. Margaret is having to cope with an antibiotic resistant bacteria which has infected the hip. She has had to find new homes for most of her lorikeets and native orchids. Oliver Fuller has

recovered from an amazing shoulder joint replacement - a French contraption that he says has the socket on the arm and the ball on the shoulder (in reverse to the way nature designed the original) which Oliver says works very well.

And the young man who drove into the back of Duncan Williams' car, resulting in the tragic death of Duncan, has been sentenced to 2 years and 3 months jail with a non parole period of 15 months. The offender was under the influence of alcohol, and driving at high speed when he hit Duncan's Morris Minor waiting for the lights to change at the intersection of The Grove Way and Main North Road. He asked to be jailed to ensure Duncan's family felt that justice had been done.

Letter to Editor

Just a short note to go with my subs. In response to Pam R's article Vanishing Magpies (BCCS Magazine Jan 2005), I think I know the answer! They've all moved to my part of the Hills - in particular Mount Barker!

I am very surprised by the number of magpies living just in our area. There seem to be numerous families and not too many fights.

The protected large gum trees may be a reason and the fresh air, plenty of food and views!. I'll be on the look out for any banded birds.

One concern I have though is for the small flock of beautiful Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos that feed on some very large, old pines that grow in an area zoned for new development just down the road from us. Having only moved to the area ourselves recently I am unsure as to what other food sources they have and where they might be breeding.

I think I'll be contacting the local paper in order to try and find out a little more about these feathered friends and the future of the pine trees.

I must also add what a wonderful time I had at the Christmas party at Wendy's last year. It was so good to finally meet many of the people I have rung and read articles from

for many years. It was a pleasure to meet you all in person

Sue Bormann-Ziersch

Magpie News

1. *More interesting facts about Magpies*

I recently spoke to Dr Gisela Kaplan - author of the book *Australian Magpie* (reviewed in the BCCS January magazine). I was most-surprised when ringing a number given to me by the University of Armidale that Dr Kaplan personally answered the call. I had a small window of opportunity to fire questions at will, as she was waiting for a call. Her E-mail is back logged with about 300 e-mails so she told me. The questions I asked are as such:

Q Should we release hand-raised baby Magpies back to the wild at all? Dr Kaplan's book illustrates the complex feeding and socialisation behaviours taught by the adult Magpies when raising their young.

A Yes. Hand raised baby Magpies that are released back to the wild do have reasonable outcomes. The most important criteria in the release is that the young Magpies must have access to the ground to allow them to forage for as much natural food as possible (called extractive foraging). Extractive foraging is considered to be one of the most complex feeding tasks. Never release one Magpie by itself. The time of release is unimportant (only in regards to weather extremes). The critical component is the ability to feed and forage successfully. In fact some data will advise sooner release rather than later. But never release from about May onwards as the territories are closing down ready for breeding and nesting.

Please note that there is a window of about 2-3 weeks to re-unite separated young Magpies with their parents. This is obviously the best scenario if appropriate.

Q Should a Magpie that has lost the sight in one eye be returned to the wild?

A No - only if that Magpie has recovered and adapted to it's disability in the wild.

Apparently predator information is received by the left eye and interpreted by the left side of the brain - so losing the left eye is a particular disadvantage for the Magpie.

Q Will a broken beak re-grow?

A No. The growth point of a Magpies beak is below the nostrils, but when the beak is broken right off, exposing these cells to air, no regeneration of cells occurs and no re-growth. Dr Kaplan did not have a one off answer as to how these injuries occur (but they are not uncommon).

We can put the survival rate of baby Magpies into perspective by referring to Dr Kaplan's survival rates as written in her book.

Studies have shown that in good permanent territories, the survival rate was only one magpie offspring for every two adult hens: or put another way, for every seven offspring hatched in that season there was only one that survived to adulthood. These results suggest that there is an extremely high attrition rate of 86% which means only a 14% survival rate! For Magpie groups in peripheral territories, of poorer quality, the figures decline to about one surviving offspring per 11 females.

2. *Warts in Magpies*

I was asked for advice recently on a warty type appearance on the bottom of a foot of a Magpie in captivity. The bird was quite lame and was only perching on one leg. Closer examination revealed a warty looking type growth that almost resembled coral. This condition was extremely painful for the Magpie.

Searching through my trusty book 'A Guide to Basic Health and Disease in Birds' published by the Australian Birdkeeper, I discovered a condition called Papillomatosis. This condition is described as a warty growth seen on feet, around beak, wings, eyelids, corner and inside of mouth. The problem is thought to be caused by a virus, but this has not yet been definitely proven. Treatment can be administered by the application of human wart preparations. Administer locally as per

the instructions taking care to avoid other healthy surrounding tissues.

The Magpie carer proceeded with this treatment of wart preparation, and within five days could see a noticeable result. The growth had decreased dramatically in size and the bird was now perching on two legs. She was to continue the treatment until the growth had completely disappeared. Other long time carers have also seen this problem with Magpies from time to time where the warty growths had become quite extensive, involving all the toes. Obviously there is a need to treat this condition in the very early stages if possible.

Rena Robinson
(Wildlife Welfare and BCCS member)

Minton Farm - Update

Winter is upon us at last, and we have 500 indigenous plants ready to be planted along our creekline, which was fenced off from stock last year. Those seedlings that were planted by the Greencorp last year are 1m high and thriving. Along with the rain comes our opportunity to install the swales throughout our 6 acres. These are part of our Court Order to control run-off. I am eager to install them and sow the pasture grasses to control weed growth in the disturbed soils, as this will see the end of 2 years of worry and demands from neighbours, Council and Court.

On the rescue front, we are fast approaching 6,000 rescues. There have recently been many successes, combined with much heartache and pain.

A juvenile Nankeen Kestrel was brought in by the RSPCA. It came from Franklin Street in the city and was not flying well. After initial intensive care in the hospital, he was housed in a shadecloth lined flight aviary to strengthen his flight muscles. His abilities improved daily until he could feed himself and within a week was flying strongly.

The RSPCA inspector returned him to his territory, where he flew up onto a familiar window ledge to preen himself. A local security guard was glad to see his return and was keen to follow his progress for us.

Early in March, Onkaparinga Council workers pulled a pinkie kangaroo from its dead mother's pouch and took it to the RSPCA. She weighed only 530 grams, was totally naked, and still had sealed ears. She fed beautifully and flourished on Formula One. Within three months, she weighed 1800 grams and was fully furred. In early June, she jumped out of her pouch for the first time but could not hold her weight at all. I placed her back into the warm pouch and she fed well, so I noticed no ill effects from her adventure.

The next day her leg was swollen from the toe to the knee, hot, discoloured and smelly - as quick as that it was gangrene! Her toe had always been twisted as a result of the car impact her mother had suffered, but I felt she would be able to move about normally as an adult. Obviously the bones were weak, and the first time she put weight on them they collapsed. You can never guarantee that a joey will make it day by day, and even after months of care you can lose them from freak happenings.

A kookaburra was brought in by the RSPCA from Norwood. He was a young adult male that had been trapped for several days in a fume extractor vent at a motor spray paint shop. He was a bit flat, understandably, and pretty thirsty. He felt uncomfortable in the confines of the hospital and refused to eat, so I moved him to a flight cage lined with shadecloth to avoid feather damage, and away he went, flying strongly. I placed 4 day-old chickens on the floor of the cage to tempt him to eat (not alive). To my amazement he ate all of them overnight and regurgitated a cast of the feathers and bones as well, indicating that his digestive system was working properly. He was returned to the area he lived in ASAP, as they are extremely territorial and will kill intruders, even their own family members if they are away for more than 2 weeks.

I also had an echidna brought in that had been dragged under the car it had been hiding under. Its home territory, a creekline at Coromandel Valley, had been destroyed by developers who had cleared the vegetation, erected fences and subdivided a once delightful setting. He had been forced

into the surrounding residential area to find new territory. His little feet were raw and bleeding, as was his nose. I tended his wounds in the hospital for several days, and then placed him into a tank designed for echidnas. He recovered well, so I took him back to his territory with 3 work experience students. We climbed the hillside above the area he was rescued from and released him. He immediately sunk into the Earth's surface like a hovercraft and hung on to it like a metal filing to a magnet. He was home at last!

The projects we are currently working on with the help of our dedicated volunteers, include the construction of shedding to house trailers etc; fox-proof fencing; deer-proofing tree revegetation zones; and the continued planting of indigenous vegetation throughout the property as a corridor to link the surrounding remnant vegetation with Scott Creek Conservation Park to assist the movement of birds. All of this continues in conjunction with meeting the daily requirements of our rescued wildlife. Plenty to keep us all happy

Bev Langley

Committee Appointments 2005

Assets officer	Barrie Hodgson
Banding officer	Anita Turton
Book Sales	Barrie Hodgson
Conservation Council representative	Alex Randell
Conservation sub-committee	Sharon Blair
	Margaret Fuller
	Pam Robinson
	Alex Randell
	Pam Robinson
	Bob Hall/Leonie Phillips
	Lesley Hodgson
	Wendy Bagot/Alison Oxenham
	Anne Peters
	Lesley Hodgson/Pam Robinson
	Kay McGrath
	Allison Milnes
	Barrie Hodgson, Pam Robinson
	Barrie Hodgson
	Anne Whicker
	Lesley Hodgson
	Barrie Hodgson
	Bob Hall
	Sharon Blair/Anita Turton
	Lesley Hodgson
	Roy Bond
	Pam Robinson

Book Review - Herons Egrets and Bitterns



CSIRO Publishing has very kindly sent me a copy of their new title: **Herons, Egrets and Bitterns Their Biology and Conservation in Australia** to review. The author is Neil McKilligan, who has taken decades of research and field experience to produce the first book dealing exclusively with the Australian members of the Family Ardeidae (herons, egrets and bitterns).

As the community has become more environmentally conscious, there has been an increased awareness of the impact of our daily activities on not only our physical surrounds, but on the wildlife that shares it with us. In this book, Neil McKilligan demonstrates that more specifically, we could consider the heron family to be vital bio-indicators, revealing the presence of toxic materials in the waterways and their habitats. This factor alone justifies the attention which we should pay these water birds, for their ability to provide such vital information on the status of our environment, particularly our water and the surrounding wetlands.

I have had little experience dealing with this particular bird group, but I found the book easy to navigate and understand, making it a far more accessible text for the layman to pick up and read. Scientific terms are defined after the term – asynchronous hatching is hatching a day or more apart - so that the flow of reading is uninterrupted by visits to the internet to look words up. This earned big bonus points for me!!

However, this extra effort has not detracted McKilligan from meeting the needs of those readers seeking comprehensive information on this bird family. The book is structured to thoroughly cover all aspects of bird study, including the importance of herons, taxonomy and classification, distribution, feeding habits, breeding behaviours, current population status and conservation issues.

The book includes a spread of high quality colour plates of number of Australian herons and is followed up by more detailed information. This covers the distribution, breeding and feeding habits of the resident Australian species and some of the occasional heron family visitors to Australia.

An excellent, easy to read book which provides the most comprehensive coverage of herons ever produced in Australia. Well worth taking the time to explore this vital family of birds.

Books can be ordered by various means.
phone: 1300 788 000 (cost of a local call)
or +61 3 9662 7666

email: publishing.sales@csiro.au
mail: CSIRO PUBLISHING
PO Box 1139
(150 Oxford Street)
Collingwood, Victoria 3066
Australia
on line at:: <http://www.publish.csiro.au>

Correction - We have an apology to CSIRO publications and any members who may have been inconvenienced by the fact that in the January BCCS Magazine review of the Australian Magpie book we said it cost \$24.95. The correct price is \$39.95.

Allison M.

Book Review - Wedge-Tailed Eagle



For those members with a particular interest in the large raptors, the CSIRO is publishing The Wedge-tailed Eagle in September 2005 (a good Christmas present). The book is by Penny Olsen of the Australian National University and has 20 colour photographs, 10 photographs, illustrations, index, 144 pages, 248 x 170 mm.

CSIRO Publishing describes the book as follows:- The family of eagles rings the globe and the Wedge-tailed Eagle is one of the largest eagles in the world. Eagles have exceptional powers of flight and sight. Indeed, eagles may kill to survive, but they also sleep, scratch, enjoy a bath, make tender parents, and form lasting relationships.

This book gives a comprehensive overview of Australia's largest true eagle and one of our few large predators and scavengers. First appearing in Aboriginal rock-paintings more than 5000 years ago, the Wedge-tailed Eagle was a little more than a curiosity for the early European settlers. The book traces the changing attitudes to this magnificent animal – covering its distribution, territorial

behaviour, its exceptional powers of flight and sight, hunting ability, reproduction and chick development. A final chapter covers the threats to its existence and the change in our attitude, from persecution to conservation.

Written by one of the world's leading raptor experts, this book will be of interest to ornithologists, nature lovers, conservationists and eagle fanatics everywhere

Cost will be \$39.95. Order details as before.

Bits and Pieces of Interest

A lady knocked on our door late one afternoon in May (before the rains started). "I've brought birds to you before but now I need help with another problem - there's a koala in the street tree outside our house! I've asked lots of organisations and they're either not allowed to touch koalas, or they won't do anything unless it's injured. It's on Seacombe Road near the corner of Brighton Road and I'm afraid that with all that traffic it will be injured".

It took us quite some time to come to terms with a koala on Seacombe Road, Brighton down near the coast. How did it get so far out of its normal habitat? Is it really a koala? Do people steal koalas from the hills? Does the lady really know a koala when she sees one? How does anyone catch a koala?

The whole subject is way beyond our experience, but we made several phone calls to people who might know what to do or who to contact - several of which the lady had already tried - and eventually we were given an unlisted number and a duty ranger rang us back within minutes.

Essentially the answer is exactly as the lady told us. "We cannot do anything unless it is injured and easily caught up. But don't worry - it will stay exactly where it is until very late into the night, and then move on". (Now comes the bit that amazed us.) "There are koalas all over the suburbs - they're in Goodwood and Keswick, they're down Anzac Highway, and they're surviving! Conditions in the hills have driven them out to look for food on the plains!"

Those same tough conditions (before the rains) turned our back yard into something like that place in Queensland where tourists feed rainbow lorikeets and take photos. We've always had a few rainbow lorikeets around the place - some were released years ago and seemed to include our yard on their migratory path around the suburbs, and made friends along the way.

Then our two gum trees, and those around us, had a sensational flowering season - we've never seen so much flowering or known it to go on for so long. Consequently the rainbow lorikeets, musk lorikeets, purple crowned lorikeets, noisy miners, wattlebirds and every other nectivorous bird in town visited us in their hundreds. (Incidentally, does anyone need about 10kgs of gum-nuts every day?) Then we had a few very hot days and the nectar supply couldn't meet the demand - but we still had the rainbow lorikeets.

They quickly learned that when we distribute food to the unreleasables in our aviaries, we put out the left-overs for the "wildies". We were swamped and we started mixing a bit extra. When times are most desperate, ie the flowers are dry or they've been washed out by rain, we've had wild rainbows clambering over each other and on everything in the yard - from the back door outwards.

They seem very tame but they're not stupid. A few of the most daring (or are they just desperate?) will feed from our hands but they're wary of other people. And if we have a few days of fine weather and the nectar starts flowing we don't see them - but they come back!

After many years of having the same 16 rainbow lorikeets in the aviary - we suddenly had two deaths. One simply dropped at Sheila's feet as she fed them, and the other was dead the next day. We have no doubt that the two were long term partners and how often have we heard similar stories? If you are fancifully inclined, its a sort of Romeo and Juliet story

Most of our lorikeets have been in residence for more than 10 years but we have a broken-wing 'musk' that has been with us for 17 years - courtesy of Margaret Fuller. We suspect there are lots of members who have birds transferred from Margaret and lots of lorikeets who have been grateful for that chance of a new life.

Speaking of Margaret Fuller, she was the second person last month to tell us that she had sighted an Eastern Spinebill in her Linden Park back yard - for the very first time.

The first was Sheila's brother - a twitcher who travels all over Australia simply to 'sight' and sometimes photograph birds. His was in Warradale and again, he'd never seen one there before.

Then a couple of weeks ago we had a call from a man in Morphett Vale. "This will seem an odd call from a total stranger, but I just wanted to tell someone, that I've seen an Eastern Spinebill in my own yard. I've never seen one here before".

Is it just me, or have other people seen an extraordinary number of magpies out and about? They seemed to become active about 6 to 8 weeks ago, and they've remained most conspicuous.

I haven't noticed any aggressiveness yet, but I'm feeling vibes that we might be in for a big year for young magpies. I'd be interested to know whether other amateur observers have noted anything similar.

Along with Bird Care's reduced involvement in physically handling sick and injured birds, there has been a proportionate reduction in 'business to transact' at committee meetings. We still have ongoing obligations as a corporate body, and we still loosely inter-relate with other conservation groups. The frenzy however, has noticeably declined. We receive occasional newsletters (eg from the Marsupial Society, Animal Lib, and the Native Animal Network etc) and promotional material such as Birds Australia and the

Dolphin Research, but rarely get the opportunity to circulate it amongst our members. These groups are always looking for new members and funds to continue their projects, so if any of our members are interested in perusing some of this material, I will be very happy to pass it on.

Bob Hall
BCCS Secretary

Wedge-tailed Eagles in Tasmania

Tasmania is traversed by large electricity carrying pylons which carry the power from the hydro electric schemes to all parts of the island. These pylons, to eagles, look like wonderful places to perch and survey their domain. Unfortunately the wires on the pylons are not insulated and the birds with their large wing span easily cross wires, receive horrific injuries and usually die or have to be euthanased.

An injured pair (one shot, one entangled in power lines) was recently moved to Launceston Lakes where owner Dick Warren using his excavator, built a 400 square metre island in one of the lakes on his 350ha park. The eagles are fed on road kill wallabies and possums. Tourists to Tasmania are shocked by the high number of native fauna killed on the roads. Always avoid driving on Tasmanian roads at night.

Pam R

Starlicide

3-chloro-4-methylbenzenamine hydrochloride (Avicide = bird killer)

This article is quite long so get yourself a drink before settling down to read. It presents a collection of data on the next possible onslaught on our wild bird populations. Remember the onslaught in the Adelaide Hills and the Riverland when growers were given open slather for the destruction of lorikeets and rosellas and 40,000 lorikeets and 5,000 rosellas were shot - this project has the potential to be devastating to all sorts of foraging birds.

From the website
<http://www.feral.org.au/research/ACTprojects.asp>

A feasibility study of an avicide for the control of starlings in Australia is being carried out in Australia.

Starlings are becoming an increasing problem for Australia's horticulture, wine and feedlot industries. There is also a need to prevent them from spreading into new areas such as WA. Effective control of starlings and damage prevention is hampered by the lack of low-cost control techniques. This project will assess the suitability of 'starlicide', widely used for starling control in the USA, for Australian situations

And from the website of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry <http://www.maff.gov.au/releases/05/05183wt.html>
Media Release 19 June 2005.

Researchers and growers take on 'pest' birds

Researchers and growers will work together on a project to assess the damage pest birds wreak on horticultural industries, Australian Agriculture Minister Warren Truss said today [now former Federal Minister].

The Natural Heritage Trust's National Feral Animal Control Program (NFACP) has allocated a further \$129,364 to the project taking the total Australian Government support for this work to \$333,598.

Mr Truss said pest birds cause considerable damage to a wide range of crops in horticultural and viticultural industries.

"The NSW Department of Primary Industries will conduct a national bird damage survey as part of the project," he said. "The survey will use growers' responses to help pinpoint the extent of the damage and the species that are the main culprits.

"The project will provide a realistic picture of the extent and cost of the damage, and assist in developing best practice strategies to combat the problem. Most importantly, the project will improve communication between growers and researchers."

Each year, Australia harvests about 1.5 million tonnes of wine grapes worth about \$750 million.

Mr Truss said that even a conservative estimate of a 5 per cent production loss due to pest bird damage has a major economic impact on the industry and grower margins.

"Reducing the losses caused by pest birds will ensure growers achieve better returns for their efforts," he said.

Mr Truss said that, as the area and value of horticultural and viticultural crops grew, conflicts with pest birds were likely to increase.

"The Australian Government is working towards reducing this conflict by supporting projects to define and reduce pest bird damage," he said.

The NFACP is also allocating \$69,000 to a project investigating the potential use of baits to reduce populations of starlings. The project will look at the suitability of 'Starlicide', a control technique widely used overseas.

The Bureau of Rural Sciences administers the National Feral Animal Control Program, a key initiative under the Australian Government's \$2.5 billion Natural Heritage Trust. The NFACP has been allocated \$1.4 million over 2004-05 and 2005-06 to support high-priority national projects to reduce the agricultural impacts of pest animals.

Details on all funded NFACP projects are at www.brs.gov.au/feral. For further information on the pest bird project, contact Quentin Hart, NFACP project manager, on 0427 778 868.

Then on June 29th 2005 the subject was taken up on the ABC National Radio program Bush Telegraph which goes to air at 11 am week days, hosted by Amanda Web - and incidentally a very interesting program worth listening to.

Amanda interviewed John Tracey, a pest research officer with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries at Orange, in central-western New South Wales who is co-ordinating a national survey to work out just how much damage birds are causing and Murray Smith, a grape grower at Orange

who has seen first-hand the damage done by pest birds.

Murray Smith grows 20 acres of grapes and crushes them for wine. When his grapes are ripening he finds keeping birds out of his crop is a full time job for 1 person on motor bike. Big flocks of hundreds of starlings fly in and out as they are disturbed, eating a few grapes each time. It is a high stress factor for the grower and Murray has tried most other control methods - gas guns, electronic noise system, balloons, plastic hawks and has found the most effective to be human presence, scarecrows and shooting. Murray finds that all these methods work to some degree but birds are very clever and figure things out quickly. They are now attracted to the sound of gas guns as it indicates a food source. He doesn't net as he reckons netting is expensive. However a lot people do now net and it gives them great peace of mind.

John Tracy's research will enable him to target crops in industries where bird damage is the most severe. It is an opportunity for growers to contribute to the direction of research for the first time on a national level. Preliminary surveys show crop damage on average to be 25% for nuts and cherries, 5% for tropical fruit and citrus, with grapes and stone fruits somewhere in between. From a national survey, starlings are the most common culprits but many native species such as crows, raven and silver eyes were reported.

Starlings are a non native species introduced to Australia in the 1800's by the Acclimatisation Society. Starlicide is a poison chemical used in the USA for 20 years and used in New Zealand to kill crows. It has not yet been looked at in Australia and John is undertaking preliminary trials to gauge grower's interest in bringing it to Australia to put on baits.

How to ensure it is target specific is a challenge and some bird species are more resistant than others. John reckons starlings and Indian mynahs are more susceptible.

John's research is at the stage of looking at different bait types, looking for something highly palatable to starlings but not to native

species. He is looking at sultanas, poultry pellets, pigery pellets, dog biscuits and dripping. Starlicide in dripping is used in New Zealand to kill crows. He is looking at what non target species are coming in to feed at what bait types. And is investigating whether its possible to devise some restriction to control what species can feed from the baits in terms of their beak sizes.

Of course this project is controversial, bird lovers are very passionate and will not like the idea of starlicide and researches need to be aware of all issues. Others engaged in the project are gauging the interest in using starlicide. The research is in its early days so far.

John pointed out that the total elimination of starlings is a big call - they are highly mobile and in large numbers especially in the eastern states. It would be difficult to eradicate them. But it may be possible to reduce local populations down to below threshold levels of damage even if starlicide is not acceptable for use in Australia. There has been very little research on control of bird numbers and the effectiveness of current deterrent methods have not been assessed objectively so there is a need to focus on existing controls including shooting, netting, trapping and on alternative management options such as alternative foods. Trapping of starlings during the breeding season needs to be investigated. One pair can have three broods in a season producing 12 juveniles to feed on ripening crops.

For further information on this project contact
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Pam R

[Know how to tell sex of an adult starling?

For birds in breeding condition (yellow bill) the base of the lower mandible is bluish in males, and pinkish in females.]

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC
ANNUAL BANDING REPORT - MARCH 2005

This report covers the period March 2004 to February 2005

BCCS Inc Banding Officer: Anita Turton

BCCS Inc Bird Banders: Oliver Fuller Sharon Blair Anita Turton

BCCS would like to extend their appreciation to the following members/carers, who have had their birds banded prior to release this year: Margaret Fuller, Pam Robinson and Anita Turton.

PROGRESSIVE TOTAL

From June 1987 to February 2005 - Birds Banded: **2430**

TABLE 1

Figures showing number of birds banded in each 12mth period

Year	Total Birds Banded
1990	78
1991	105
1992	128
1993	175
1994	236
1995	155
1996	220
1997	133
1998	179
1999	132
2000	136
2001	121
2002	173
2003	147
2004	79
2005	26

TABLE 2

Number of different species banded since the programme began in 1987: 88
(unchanged this year - no new species)

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC
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TABLE 3

The figures for the breeding season (September to January) -
as a percentage of the totals from Table 1 (March to February)

Year	September to January	Percentage	March to February (Yearly Total)
1993	111	63%	175
1994	154	65%	236
1995	100	64%	155
1996	130	60%	220
1997	79	60%	133
1998	111	62%	179
1999	106	80%	132
2000	91	67%	136
2001	86	71%	121
2002	141	82%	173
2003	110	74%	147
2004	55	69%	79
2005	17	65%	26

These figures confirm the effect of the breeding season on the overall total. Anything affecting the breeding season (eg. weather, food supply) will have a significant impact on the annual total.

TABLE 4

Monthly totals of birds banded

MONTH	NUMBER BANDED
March 2004	3
April 2004	3
May 2004	0
June 2004	1
July 2004	0
August 2004	0
September 2004	2
October 2004	2
November 2004	10
December 2004	1
January 2005	2
February 2005	2
TOTAL	26

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC
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TABLE 5
Number of each Species Banded 2004/2005

Species Number	Species	Number Banded
43	Crested Pigeon	3
188	White-faced Heron	1
222	Collared Sparrowhawk	2
237	Peregrine Falcon	1
242	Southern Boobook	3
249	Barn Owl	1
338	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1
415	Magpie-lark	4
424	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1
591	Eastern Spinebill	1
638	Red Wattlebird	3
705	Australian Magpie	5

TABLE 6
Species List: Species banded during entire duration of project

No	Species	No	Species
5	Little Penguin	115	Crested Tern
9	Stubble Quail	125	Silver Gull
34	Common Bronzewing	126	Pacific Gull
43	Crested Pigeon	133	Masked Lapwing
45	Lewin's Rail	188	White-faced Heron
46	Buff-banded Rail	198	Cape Barren Goose
49	Australian Crake	202	Australian Wood Duck
55	Black-tailed Native Hen	203	Black Swan
58	Purple Swamphen	207	Australian Shelduck
59	Eurasian Coot	208	Pacific Black Duck
61	Australasian Grebe	210	Chestnut Teal
62	Hoary-headed Grebe	211	Grey Teal
71	Short-tailed Shearwater	215	Hardhead
77	White-headed Petrel	218	Spotted Harrier
89	Yellow-nosed Albatross	219	Marsh Harrier
96	Great Cormorant	221	Brown Goshawk
97	Little Black Cormorant	222	Collared Sparrowhawk
98	Black-faced Cormorant	225	Little Eagle
99	Pied Cormorant	228	Whistling Kite
100	Little Pied Cormorant	229	Black Kite

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC
ANNUAL BANDING REPORT - MARCH 2005

TABLE 6 (Cont'd)

Species List: Species banded during entire duration of project

No	Species	No	Species
232	Black-shouldered Kite	364	Willie Wagtail
235	Australian Hobby	401	Rufous Whistler
237	Peregrine Falcon	408	Grey Shrike-thrush
238	Black Falcon	415	Magpie-lark
239	Brown Falcon	424	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
240	Nankeen Kestrel	547	Dusky Woodswallow
242	Southern Boobook	574	Silvereye
249	Barn Owl	578	White-naped Honeyeater
254	Rainbow Lorikeet	591	Eastern Spinebill
258	Musk Lorikeet	614	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
259	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	625	White-plumed Honeyeater
282	Adelaide Rosella	631	New Holland Honeyeater
288	Eastern Rosella	634	Noisy Miner
307	Elegant Parrot	635	Yellow-throated Miner
313	Tawny Frogmouth	638	Red Wattlebird
317	Australian Owllet-nightjar	640	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
322	Laughing Kookaburra	693	White-winged Chough
325	Red-backed Kingfisher	705	Australian Magpie
326	Sacred Kingfisher	710	Little Wattlebird
337	Pallid Cuckoo	929	Southern Giant Petrel
338	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	930	Australian Raven
357	Welcome Swallow	935	Kerguelen Petrel
359	Tree Martin	976	Striated Pardalote
360	Fairy Martin	989	Spotted Turtle-dove

TABLE 7

Progressive Totals

The species most frequently banded since the program began in 1987

Pacific Black Duck	433 *no longer banding
Australian Magpie	378
Magpie-lark	205
Australian Wood Duck	158
Crested Pigeon	93
Nankeen Kestrel	90

BIRD CARE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC

ANNUAL BANDING REPORT - MARCH 2005

Recovery of non-BCCS banded birds, by BCCS

Band Number Species Release Site Release Date	Date of Recovery Site of Recovery Time Between Release & Recovery Status after Recovery	Distance Travelled (kilometres)
036-27086 New Holland Honeyeater Gilberton 20th April, 2003	12th August, 2003 Walkerville 3mths 23days Dead - cause known	0

Recovery of BCCS banded birds

Band Number Species Release Site Release Date	Date of Recovery Site of Recovery Time Between Release & Recovery Status after Recovery	Distance Travelled (kilometres)
035-55041 New Holland Honeyeater Enfield 30th September, 2003	11th October, 2003 Nailsworth 11days Rescued from ground, very young. Rehabilitation attempted but bird died.	< 2
111-22226 Southern Boobook Norwood 31st January, 2004	2nd March, 2004 Highbury/Tea Tree Gully area 1mth 2days Taken/attacked by Domestic Animal (?Species)	10
082-98493 Crested Pigeon Reeves Plains 23rd November, 2001	22nd August, 2004 Reeves Plains 2yrs 9mths Bird hand caught, band read and bird released. Second time caught pinching chook's grain! Initially (banded 2001) mild concussion in chook house.	0
111-23467 Pacific Black Duck Kersbrook/One Tree Hill 7th December, 1997	14th February, 2004 Finnis Point SA 6yrs 2mths 7days Shot for Sport/Food	69

ANITA TURTON
BANDING OFFICER, BCCS Inc

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