



# PROJECT UPDATE

May 2002

To contact the Catchment Group:  
Project Officer: Tania Norton

c/- Adelaide Hills Council  
1 Crescent Drive  
Norton Summit SA 5136  
Phone: (08) 8408 0800  
Fax: (08) 8390 1598  
Email: [tnorton@ahc.sa.gov.au](mailto:tnorton@ahc.sa.gov.au)

## REVEGETATION AND HABITAT RESTORATION FOR BIRDS – Penny Paton

Many land managers are asking for information on how they can manage their properties for birds and, more specifically if they are involved in habitat restoration, what methods will favour native birds. Like most ecological questions this is complex and we don't have all the answers. However as people are asking these questions it is desirable to attempt to give guidance even if this is based on imperfect knowledge.

### WHAT BIRDS AM I TRYING TO ATTRACT?

We can look at this problem at several scales: the landscape scale, groups of properties scale and the property level scale. The scale we choose will depend on the types of birds that we are talking about. Some bird species have small home ranges and are able to live their whole lives in just a few hectares, e.g. Superb Fairy-wrens. Clearly revegetation on a single property is more likely to benefit the birds that have small home ranges and to be less effective at improving habitat for long-range migrants, birds that have large home ranges or nomadic species.



White Plumed Honeyeater

Another important factor to consider in habitat restoration for birds is that some species are much easier to provide for than others. Attracting nectarivorous birds (those that feed mainly on nectar) is generally much easier than attracting insectivorous birds (those that feed on insects). Also some species are what some scientists call "increasers" for whatever reasons these birds do well even in (or sometimes because of) degraded habitats and in revegetation sites that can never exactly mimic native vegetation. Examples of "increasers" are Grey Shrike-thrush and White-browed Scrub-wren.

As well as "increasers", there are threatened species and "decliners" - bird species that are in decline generally across temperate southern Australia. These species tend to be smaller birds, most are ground and/or low-shrub feeders and dwellers feeding on insects; and flycatchers (including robins) are over-represented. Attracting these species back into areas through revegetation and habitat restoration is a much harder proposition and requires planning and execution at the groups of properties scale or the catchment/landscape scale.

### PRINCIPLES FOR PLANNING REVEGETATION/HABITAT RESTORATION FOR BIRDS

#### Principle One: Bigger is Better

Revegetation/habitat restoration needs to be implemented over much bigger areas than it is currently done - both in terms of block size and total area. Much of southern SA has less than 20% remnant vegetation (and sometimes less than 10%) and recent research in fragmented landscapes shows that for biodiversity conservation of certain habitat types the remnancy figure should be much higher. Ideally revegetation sites should be 10 ha or larger and rectangular or round in shape (unless they are corridors).

#### Principle Two: Revegetate the Most Cleared Habitat Types -Woodlands

Planning for revegetation should take into account the pattern of land clearance. Land clearing has occurred preferentially on the more fertile soils, so that some habitat types are rarer than others. Birds that depend on these preferentially cleared habitats, even for a portion of the year, will be more at risk. Attempts should be made to restore or revegetate these areas first.

#### Principle Three: Protect Existing Habitats

The protection and enhancement of existing native vegetation is more beneficial than revegetation, because revegetation cannot mimic native vegetation. Generally remnants support more diversity and numbers of birds than revegetation. Also, revegetation and habitat restoration close to remnant vegetation are more likely to attract a diversity of bird species than programs that are isolated. In particular, more woodlands need fencing.

#### **Principle Four: Mimic Natural Habitats in Your Revegetation**

If revegetation is the appropriate course of action, a combination of tubestock planting and direct seeding is probably the best option. The scale of the problem of vegetation clearance and fragmentation in many areas is such that broadcast direct seeding is required. However, in areas where little native vegetation exists, direct seeding on a large scale may be impossible due to lack of seed source, so tubestock planting would be more important, at least in the early years.

##### *Local Is Good*

Use plants that occur naturally in the area (local native species) as these will provide more resources for local wildlife such as food, shelter and nest material. Collecting seed as close to the revegetation site as possible will protect the integrity of local gene pools.

##### *Layers Are Good*

Species choice in revegetation needs to include a range of species as well as different strata (trees, shrubs and groundcovers) and try and mimic areas of native vegetation with a similar soil type as well as aspect and slope.

##### *Patchy is Good*

Tubestock should be planted at irregular intervals, as different bird species require different niches - generally canopy feeders are not fussy about tree/shrub density, but ground-feeders require spaces between trees/shrubs. Try and duplicate the patchy nature of natural landscapes by introducing patchiness into revegetation – looking at remnant vegetation nearby will help in choosing species to group together and in achieving appropriate planting distances.

##### *Different Bird Foods Are Good*

When choosing plant species think about what food source they may provide birds. For example, callistemons, banksias, grevilleas and some eucalypts will provide nectar for honeyeaters and lorikeets; acacia seeds will attract rosellas and bronzings; and native grasses provide food for finches. Try and include species that provide for a range of bird groups. If you are particularly interested in providing for nectar-feeding birds, find out when the different plants flower and include species that flower at different times of the year - e.g. *Banksia marginata* is summer-flowering, *Callistemon rugulosus* flowers in spring and *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* over winter (in some areas).



Scarlet Robin

#### **Principle Five: Leave Dead Trees Standing**

Dead timber – both standing and fallen – is an important part of the habitat of two declining bird species in the Mt Lofty Ranges – namely the Hooded Robin and the Brown Treecreeper. So leaving dead trees and dead timber in areas of revegetation or adding logs to such sites would be beneficial to some birds as well as other fauna. Likewise rocks and coarse litter are likely to increase microhabitat diversity and be beneficial to fauna.

[More information](#) – contact NCSSA Temperate Woodlands Campaigner, Penny Paton on 83448891 or [paton@chariot.net.au](mailto:paton@chariot.net.au).

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### **Upcoming Events**

During the course of the year, the 6th Creek Catchment Group is planning a number of events. These events will be widely advertised when times and dates have been confirmed.

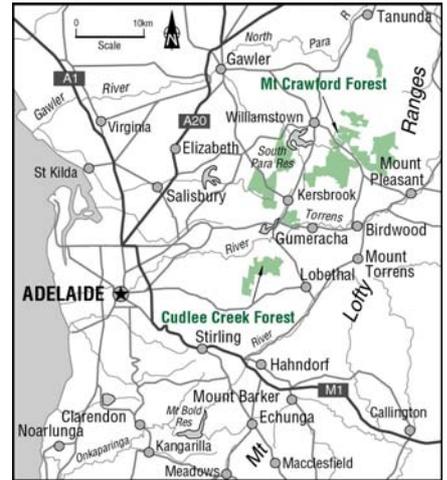
- Field day at Lobethal Road, Ashton
- Land Management & Property Planning Course. Like all land management courses that we have run, these courses are designed specifically for the problems and topics of most interest to landholders in this area
- Native Grasses Workshop
- Phytophthora Workshop. This may also include information about Mundulla Yellow (if appropriate)

A useful website for events and courses offered across the Mt Lofty Ranges is the Mt Lofty Ranges Catchment Program website. The address for this site is

## Cudlee Creek Forest Rehabilitation Program

May 2002

Cudlee Creek Forest is managed by ForestrySA and located near Lenswood in the Mt Lofty Ranges. The forest consists of 1467ha of land that forms a significant part of the north eastern section of the Sixth Creek Catchment area. It includes 683ha of native forest that contains significant areas of remnant native vegetation. The forest also contains 229ha of pine and hardwood plantation. The remaining 555ha of land is undergoing an extensive rehabilitation program with the aim of restoring native vegetation and improving the conservation value of these areas. This program includes the removal of pine regeneration that has become established since the 1983 Ash Wednesday Bushfire. It also includes pest plant and pest animal control programs and the establishment of native vegetation through natural regeneration or revegetation programs.



### Gazettal of Native Forest Reserve

In March 2001 the area of native forest in the southern section of the Cudlee Creek Forest was gazetted and proclaimed as the Coralinga Native Forest Reserve to be protected for conservation under the Forest Act. Remaining areas of native forest located in the northern section of the forest are in the process of being gazetted and proclaimed as the Cudlee Creek Native Forest Reserve.

On-ground works for 2001/2002 are progressing well and include:

### Pine Regeneration Removal

In the last 3 years there has been a concentrated effort to remove pine regeneration from 150ha of land located in the north eastern section of the forest. The majority of this area has now been cleared of pine and is being followed up by weed control and revegetation programs.

### Woody Weed Control and Weed Mapping

Woody weed control has progressed well over the last year and has concentrated on control of blackberry in creeklines. It has also included woody weeds located in steeper areas that are more difficult to access. Although good results have been achieved across extensive areas it is anticipated that the scale of the program required to control weeds will need to be maintained for at least another 3 to 5 years.

Over the last year Native Forest Ranger, Trev Ferguson and SCCG Project Officer, Tania Norton have continued with weed mapping in the Forest. This information is being used in the development a GIS database that is improving the planning and implementation of weed control programs.

### Revegetation

Revegetation of approximately 28ha of land located in the central section of the forest was undertaken between July and October 2001 by contractors, Friends of the Forests volunteers, the SCCG Green Corps team and students from the Urrbrae TAFE Natural Resource Management Course.

The 2001 revegetation program also included the construction of kangaroo proof fences around 5 biodiversity plots where a range of indigenous shrubs, ground covers and grasses have been planted. The construction of these fences was seen as the best option to overcome the heavy grazing pressure on the 4 plots that were originally established in October 2000. The 1.8m x 25m x 25m fences were constructed and plots planted by the SCCG Green Corps team.

### Fox Baiting Program

This is the third year of a coordinated fox baiting program undertaken throughout the area by the Mount Lofty Ranges Animal and Plant Control Board. Cudlee Creek Forest is part of this on-going Program.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Native Forest Ranger, Trev Ferguson who has recently left ForestrySA for a position in PIRSA. Trev's commitment to the Rehabilitation Program over the last 6 years has been a key factor in the success of on ground works in the Cudlee Creek Forest.

ForestrySA is committed to the on-going rehabilitation of the Cudlee Creek Forest and recognises the cooperative work and funding support from the Torrens Catchment Board & 6th Creek Catchment Group. This support is playing an important role in helping ForestrySA meet management objectives for the Rehabilitation Program in the Cudlee Creek Forest.

**Andrew Moylan – Coordinator Community Programs**

## From the Chairman's Annual Report

The Sixth Creek Catchment Group has maintained its focus in promoting and implementing good natural resource management within our catchment.

### Achievements of the Sixth Creek Catchment Group during 2001

- Completion of the very detailed Information Kit.
- A successful land management and property planning course
- Displays at community events
- Development of newsletters to residents
- Coordinating the activities of the Green Corps team relating to publicity
- Revegetation, fencing of watercourses and remnant bushland, weed control to encourage regeneration of native plant species and feral animal control;
- Ongoing coordination of riparian works between Torrens Catchment Water Management Board and Sixth Creek Catchment Group;
- A joint project with the Urban Forest Biodiversity Program on one property in Summertown considered to be of high conservation value;
- Rehabilitation of the "burn site" in Cherryville. The size of this site (approx. 200ha), the steep terrain, a wet start to the season and excessive weed growth have created many difficulties in managing this site. The On Ground Works Committee has developed a 20 year management plan as a guide to future management of the site;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service have also been undertaking work on their Marble Hill property, which complements our program;
- On ground works have also continued on all other existing sites within the catchment including work for ForestrySA;
- A feral animal control program has been initiated with the South Para Biodiversity and the Mid Torrens Catchment Projects;
- Mapping of all fire tracks in our catchment to assist with ongoing planning in the catchment.
- Coordination of the on ground works component of the Green Corp project, including weed control, fencing, revegetation, and the building of a frog pond and a model of the Sixth Creek catchment;
- Finalist in SA Landcare Awards
- Weed Society Field Day at Cherryville
- Joint field day with the Animal and plant Control Board at Marble Hill
- A number of newspaper articles
- Provide assistance in establishment of the Fourth Creek Catchment Group
- Provide support in the establishment of the Mid Torrens catchment Group

A special thanks to Trevor Ferguson, ForestrySA for his invaluable assistance with on ground works. We wish him well with his new position at PIRSA.

### Don Cranwell

#### Members of the Project Management Committee & its Working Groups

<p>Elected members of the Project Management Committee for 2002 are:</p> <p>Chairperson: Don Cranwell 0407 728 878</p> <p>Vice Chairperson: John Jessop 8390 1176</p> <p>Secretary: Bob Butler 8390 1852</p> <p>Treasurer: Margaret Crooks 8390 3120</p> <p>Members: Mike Bossley 8390 3510</p> <p>Sue Campbell 8331 7127</p> <p>Jean-Pierre Blignault 8390 1072</p> <p>Peter Geers 8390 1341</p> <p>Peter Davis 8390 8142</p> <p>Agency Representatives: Jane Tassie NHT Adviser</p> <p>Liz Millington Landcare Officer</p> <p>Andrew Moylan ForestrySA</p> <p>Bryn Troath National Parks</p> <p>John Wood Torrens Board</p>	<p>The members of the On Ground Works Working Group are:</p> <p>Don Cranwell 0407 728 878</p> <p>Sue Campbell 8331 7127</p> <p>Bob Butler 8390 1852</p> <p>Jean-Pierre Blignault 8390 1072</p> <p>Peter Geers 8390 1341</p> <p>Bryn Troath (National Parks)</p> <p>The members of the Publicity &amp; Training Working Group are:</p> <p>Margaret Crooks 8390 3120</p> <p>John &amp; Dieuwke Jessop 8390 1176</p> <p>Delma Cranwell 8390 1341</p> <p>Denise Mullen 8390 1072</p> <p>Solveig Grenfell 8390 1516</p>
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### The 6th Creek Catchment Group is supported by:

