



West Region
Eyre Peninsula Threatened Fauna Update
March 2007



Sandhill Dunnart (Photo: P.Canty)



Sandhill Dunnart habitat, Middleback Ranges

Sandhill Dunnart, *Sminthopsis psammophila*

The Sandhill Dunnart, at 91-114 mm, is the largest of Australia's Dasyurids – small carnivorous marsupials. It is also one of the most threatened, and is listed as Endangered both Nationally and in South Australia. The Sandhill Dunnart was discovered on Eyre Peninsula (EP) in 1969 near Mamblyn, and shortly afterwards in the same year at Boonerdo, 80 km to the south east. Surveys conducted in 1999-2000 throughout EP recorded the Sandhill Dunnart at sites near Cowell and Middleback Ranges. Recently, the species has also been found at Pinkawillinie and Hincks Conservation Parks.

Sandhill Dunnarts prefer parallel sand dune habitat with a diverse understorey and a ground cover of Spinifex (*Triodia irritans*). They are nocturnal and eat insects (mainly ants and beetles) and spiders. Sandhill Dunnarts nest inside the centre of well-formed Spinifex tussocks. The tussocks that have the most suitable shape and structure for nesting develop between 8 and 30 years after fire. Changed fire regimes since European settlement have reduced the variability of Spinifex age, and available and suitable habitat for the dunnarts. Other threats include feral predators such as foxes, dogs and cats.

Sandhill Dunnart surveys will be conducted at Munyaroo Conservation Park on eastern EP this year, and historical sites will be re-surveyed to gain more knowledge of the species' status and distribution on EP. An information field day at Cowell is planned for later this year. Stay tuned!

For more information on Sandhill Dunnarts see www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/sandhill.html and www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/arkoneyre/pdfs/sandhill_dunnart_recovery_plan.pdf

Eyre Peninsula Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (EPYTBC)

The 2006-2007 breeding season has been one of the worst for the Eyre Peninsula (EP) population of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos since the recovery project began in 1998. The impact of the 2005 Black Tuesday fire has been exacerbated by the drought, and only ten individuals were recorded in the Koppio Hills breeding area this summer. Food resources are scarce and regenerating Hakeas are yet to flower and produce their edible cones. Hakea tubestock planted during 2006 revegetation works are also battling the drought. Yaccas also failed to flower in response to the dry conditions, so



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there was also a shortage of the burrowing insect larvae food resource. Based on observational records since the 2005 fire, the Recovery Team now believe that there are only between 10-14 EPYTBC. As far as we know, no new chicks survived to fledging this breeding season, despite locating three new nests (two in poly pipe nest boxes and one in a natural hollow).

The good news is that two EPYTBC pairs at the Gorge Wildlife Park have begun to breed and one chick has hatched. The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and Gorge Wildlife Park are working with the Adelaide Zoo to establish stud book records and plan long-term management of the captive breeding program. With numbers so low, the captive breeding population is integral to EPYTBC survival in the wild and re-introduction of captive bred birds is planned for the future. The EPYTBC population has recovered before from low numbers in the 1980s, so there is still hope for a second recovery.

What you can do to help:

- report EPYTBC observations to DEH on 8688 3111 (summer and winter habitat areas)
- take advantage of Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board (EPNRMB) and DEH fencing incentive schemes to fence off areas for revegetation and to protect EPYTBC nesting and feeding habitat, i.e. Sugar Gum Woodland remnants (summer habitat areas, Lower EP) and mallee scrub (winter habitat areas, Northern/Central EP)
- revegetate with Sugar Gums and EPYTBC native plant food resources, i.e. Wrinkled Hakea, Elm-seed Hakea and Yacca (summer habitat areas, Lower EP)
- retain Aleppo Pines in areas that pose low risk of infestation, e.g. around farmyard buildings, shelterbelts in grazed/cropped paddocks (summer and winter habitat areas).

For more information see www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/yellowtailed.html

Malleefowl

Summer surveys at the five Eyre Peninsula Malleefowl grids were held late last year, with many community volunteers getting involved. The two Heritage Agreement grids had the highest number of active mounds (five mounds at Cowell and four at Lock), followed by three mounds at both Hincks and Munyaroo Conservation Parks. The Pinkawillinie grid was burnt by fires in 2006 and will not be surveyed for a few years until the habitat regenerates. It is great to see active mounds still being worked by the birds in such a dry year – Malleefowl are certainly well adapted to their mallee environments! Non-destructive nest excavations conducted earlier this month on a sample of active mounds predict good recruitment from nest with up to 15 eggs in found one nest.

Fencing Grants

I'd like to hear from any landholders on southern and eastern Eyre Peninsula (EP) who have threatened fauna habitat remnants that they are interested in protecting. In particular, the habitats I am targeting are:

- Sugar Gum Woodland on lower EP in the Koppio Hills/Todd Reservoir catchment area (EPYTBC).
- Tea-tree (*Melaleuca*) Swamps and Black Grass Sedgeland (*Gahnia*) in the Salt Creek, Merintha Creek and Kellidie Bay areas of lower EP (EP Southern Emu-wren).
- Sand dune habitat with a good cover of Spinifex and shrubs, EP Mallee areas (Sandhill Dunnart).

Please give me a call ASAP if you are interested.

Until next time!

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For further information

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