

New fire plan to protect threatened birds in Bookmark Mallee region

A draft fire management plan for the Bookmark Mallee region, released on 2 May 2008 for public comment, has been developed to help protect threatened birds that rely on the area for habitat.

The plan's author, Ben Kaethner from the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH), said threatened birds such as the Black-eared Miner, the Malleefowl and Major Mitchell's Cockatoo require large areas of old-growth mallee that have not been burned for at least 40 years.

"The Bookmark Mallee region is part of the Riverland Biosphere Reserve, one of the largest reserve systems in Australia, protecting over 700,000 hectares of habitat, over seven reserves, managed by four different stakeholders," Mr Kaethner said.

"The region contains a diverse range of animals and plants, including many threatened birds that rely on the area for habitat.

"Unfortunately, the area is prone to bushfires, such as the fire in December 2006 that burned over 100,000 hectares of habitat.

"We can help protect the threatened birds by reducing the likelihood of a major bushfire destroying large areas of the remaining habitat.

"Fire management strategies proposed in the draft plan include reducing fuel loads in strategic areas, creating fire breaks, upgrading fire tracks and various fire suppression techniques," Mr Kaethner said.

"The local community and SA Country Fire Service volunteers have contributed extensive amounts of time, energy and resources to fire suppression at Bookmark and they are to be commended for this contribution.

"I also wish to thank the various stakeholders that have contributed to the plan, especially Birds Australia, the Australian Landscape Trust and Robertson Chowilla Pty Ltd.

"The co-operation of both the immediate stakeholders and the local community will be critical to the success of the plan, so I encourage everyone involved to have a close look at the draft and provide comments," Mr Kaethner said.

The development of the draft fire management plan was funded by the Natural Heritage Trust through the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board.

Comments on the draft plan, which is available on the DEH Parks website at http://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/management/fire_management/index.htm, should be addressed to Grant Pelton, Fire Management Branch, Department for Environment and Heritage, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001.

The closing date for comments is 30 May 2008.

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