

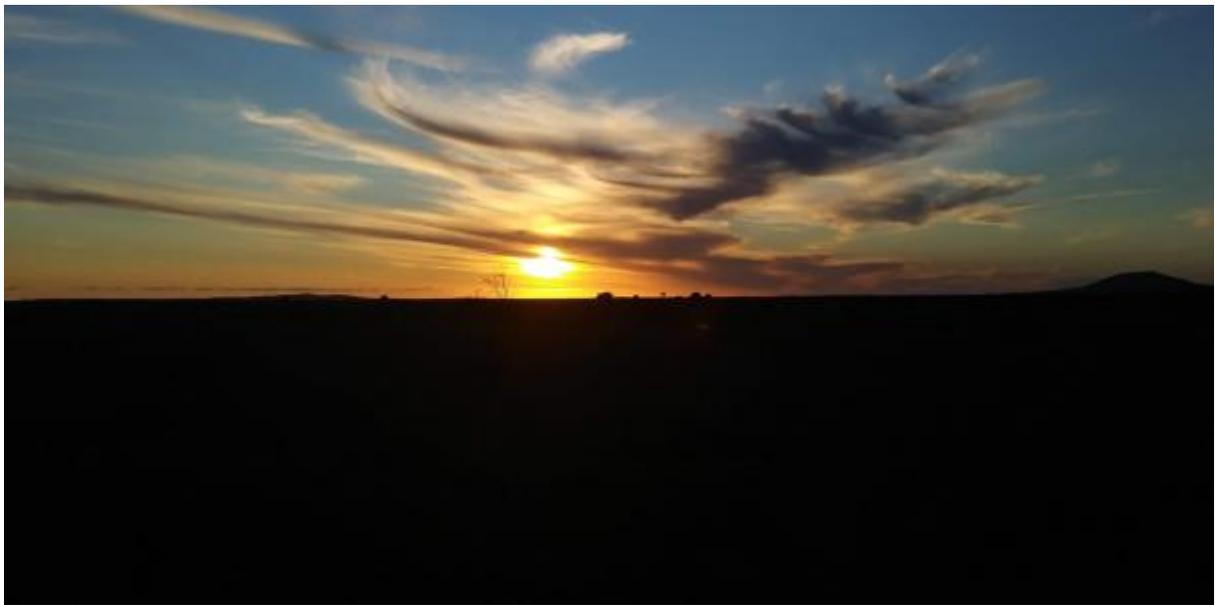


Welcome to the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot Newsletter

No. 83 – Winter 2019

Get up-to-date information about the latest efforts to save this critically endangered parrot unique to Western Australia

Uncertainty still clouds the horizon



Sunrises and sunsets are a common sight when listening for WGP (Photo: Deon Utber, DBCA)

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Western Ground Parrot Winter Update

Deon Utber

Winter is a relatively quiet time for the DBCA team as the post *Eradicat*[®] introduced predator trapping and Cape Arid population monitoring has been completed. As reported in the last newsletter the monitoring trip was completed in March with support from volunteers, including Friends of the Western Ground Parrot Chair Paul Wettin. At the time the DBCA team were still out in the field deploying solar powered Acoustic Recording Units (ARU) across Cape Arid and Nuytsland Nature Reserve and collecting data from ARUs already in the field monitoring extant WGP populations.

One of the benefits of ARUs is that they are tireless 'listeners' for WGP calls, particularly now that we are deploying permanent solar powered units across Cape Arid and Nuytsland and have plans to extend this network to other areas such as the Fitzgerald River National Park. Historically (pre-2012) listening surveys relied on humans over a 2-3 week period with staff and volunteers. This was both exciting and challenging for the monitoring team due to the WGP only calling pre-dawn and post dusk which lends to very early mornings and long days for the over a relatively short period. While human based listening surveys are still undertaken during field trips, ARUs can now be left in the field for months to maximise the probability of detecting WGP calls. The addition of a network of permanent solar ARU network will in time provide a wealth of information that can be used for modelling site occupancy across the remaining WGP habitat and complement the intensive ARU monitoring that has occurred in core areas of habitat.



Alan Danks, Jeff Pinder and Jim Creighton practising putting together solar ARU prior to deployment with volunteer Peter Taylor supervising (Photo: Phil Tucak, Volunteer)

The volume of data collected by ARUs is significant and requires a considerable amount of time in the office to process. The use of cluster analysis, conducted with software purchased with the support of the Port Rotary, assists to expedite the process that used to be undertaken manually. However, while the software does reduce the workload, the time required for analysis is still significant and is one of the tasks during the 'quiet time' referred to above.

The analysis of the autumn monitoring data has revealed a decrease in calling activity in all of the four core monitoring areas compared to the 2018 monitoring period. While this was influenced by the 2019

bushfire that impacted one area of core habitat, other areas have also shown a decrease in calls that may be related to other factors such as an increase in introduced predator activity. Post *Eradicat*[®] bait trapping was conducted in autumn with 10 cats, mostly males, caught and euthanised in areas of core ground parrot habitat



Improving the trajectory for the WGP is a hard nut to crack (Photo: Deon Utber, DBCA)

The quiet time did also include some rest and relaxation as staff take well deserved leave after spending much time in the field away from families. Some of our staff spent their downtime overseas on adventures or visiting family. Regional Ecologist Sarah Comer also took leave but managed to include a presentation at the 2019 Australasian Ornithological Conference on '*Acoustic monitoring informing the recovery efforts for the critically endangered western ground parrot*'. Another 'quiet time' activity has seen our staff supporting census for the Endangered western bristlebird (*Dasyornis longirostris*) and noisy scrub-bird (*Atrichornis clamosus*) in Two Peoples Bay and Mount Manypeaks Nature Reserves and Waychinicup National Park with funding support from BirdLife Australia.

DBCA have been working hard on trying to secure further resources to support recovery efforts for the western ground parrot. A contract was signed with South Coast NRM for funding through the Australian Government Regional Landcare Partnerships program, but this only partially meets the full costs of key recovery actions. DBCA are grateful for the efforts of the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot in raising donations and other funds that contribute to the recovery of the ground parrot. Most recently the FWGP confirmed that they will be providing funds for additional Solar ARUs for deployment into the remote areas of the Fitzgerald River National Park which will establish permanent and ongoing monitoring in historical WGP habitat. While calls have not been detected here since 2012

the Fitz is a large, remote area and WGP may still be present but at low levels of detectability using short period monitoring.

Western Ground Parrot Update from Perth Zoo July 2019

We are pleased to report that all of the birds have been maintaining good health and we are well positioned for the breeding season ahead.

The following birds have been provided with access for breeding - male Mingko and female Leuca; male Monak and female Kopin; male Zephyr and female Fifi; male Brutus and female Kangal. Male, Joy is currently housed in the holding aviary.

Male Zephyr and female Fifi initiated their breeding intentions in late July with the commencement of Zephyr feeding Fifi. Male Brutus and female Kangal have also been observed engaging in allofeeding for the first time in late July.

CCTV monitoring/review is continuing to increase to track key reproductive behaviours as we head into the breeding season.



Male Mingko (bottom right) watching female Leuca (top left) after providing access for breeding.



Male Monak (left) close encounter with female Kopin (right) after providing access for breeding.



Male Brutus (bottom) watching female Kangal (top) after providing access for breeding.



Male Brutus feeding female Kangal July 2019



Male Zephyr (right) watching female Fifi (left) after providing access for breeding



Male Zephyr feeding female Fifi July 2019



Female Kangal



Female Leuca, early morning feed



Male Monak



Male Mingko

Chair's Chirpings

Paul Wettin

Saving Kyloring

Dear Members,

My sincere apology for the Membership email to those of you who had already paid. This was mistake on my part and I hope you are not offended. I can assure you this has happened as a result of your Committee working very hard at the moment- too many things on the go in trying to secure support for the Recovery Plan for the Western Ground Parrot, which I hope comes through in this Newsletter.

Hello to you all and hopefully you have survived the last few months in good health and cheer. Isn't it fantastic to see our landscape looking so attractive with native wildflowers!!

Reports from Parks and Wildlife and Perth Zoo

I am delighted that the birds at Perth Zoo are doing well and I'm sure we all have our fingers crossed that successful breeding is achieved. So watch this space and our social media.

The Parks and Wildlife report is greatly appreciated and for the inclusion of some very important information as below.

Our thanks is ongoing for all the hard and dedicated work of the DBCA staff!!

Concern for the wild birds

While a preliminary result, and likely there being many factors involved, the reduction in parrot calling rates from the autumn surveys is of serious concern. As you would be aware, the Friends Committee has been lobbying intensively in the past few years about the susceptibility of the wild population exemplified by the 2015 fires in Cape Arid and so clearly demonstrated in the *Secrets At*

Sunrise documentary. The January/February fires this year which burnt a large area of known parrot habitat and exposed the birds to subsequent predation pressure only highlights that the birds are on the edge of extinction from the wild.

The report also highlights ongoing problems with securing adequate funds for critical parts of the Recovery Plan- see *Lobbying* comments below.

Committee Business

I am delighted to welcome another member to our Committee - Chris Young who is based in Perth. Chris has been an avid bird lover since his childhood in England. Long term committee member and former Chair Anne is particularly delighted that Chris is also a Puffin lover!! Chris has maintained his interest in birds and has been involved with sea birds in the Perth area in recent times. He is the General Manager for several states for a major, international water supply/wastewater treatment company.

Thank you for joining us Chris!!

Donation for 2019 and other funding

At our very busy Friends Committee meeting on 22nd August we decided to make a donation of \$20,000 to Parks and Wildlife to establish a long term network of acoustic recording units (ARUs) in Fitzgerald River National Park. This donation was based on advice from Parks and Wildlife for the highest priority use of our limited, available funds. The donation will be used to purchase additional ARUs with solar panels and for their installation into remote parts of the Park via helicopter in the next few months. Even though western ground parrots have not been detected in the Park since 2012, the surveys have been primarily done in limited areas where road access is possible. There are large areas of the Park and wilderness that cannot be reached via road access, and/or where there is a risk of transporting die-back. Hence the need to establish ARU's in these remote areas.

The Fitzgerald Park work is a critical part of any future, possible translocation of birds from the current wild population. It is vital to know whether a remnant population remains in "the Fitz" and also the locations' suitability for receiving translocated birds.

We will be pursuing funding/matching contributions from other parties given the total budget for the Fitzgerald ARU network is in excess of \$50,000.

In this context we have been advised recently by Rick Wilson, Member for O'Connor, that we have been selected to submit an application for \$10,000 for Fitzgerald ARU's from the Government's Communities Environment Fund. If our application is successful these funds may not be available until early in 2020. We are grateful for the opportunity to apply for these funds - thanks Rick!

Secrets at Sunrise September special offer

To celebrate Biodiversity Month and Threatened Species Day on 7th September, the *Secrets at Sunrise* DVD will be available for all of September at \$10 plus postage and handling. Please order via our website.

Thanks to Jennene Riggs of Riggs Australia for her support for this special offer.

Social Media

To keep abreast of the most recent events for the parrots please keep track via our social media platforms- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Western-Ground-Parrot-283796521652371/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/friendswgp?lang=en>).

Instagram has now been added to our Social media platform (<https://www.instagram.com/savingkyloring/>).

Lobbying

The most important lobbying action was in early July I wrote to the new Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley outlining the current circumstances with the wild parrot population and the impact of the January/February fires. I also emphasised that it was the Friends' view that the Federal Government was not meeting its funding support for the Recovery Plan, despite the birds being a so-called 20:20 species requiring urgent investment under their Threatened Species Strategy. I also highlighted the critical need to undertake translocation studies to (hopefully) establish a second wild population given the susceptibility of the Cape Arid/Nuytsland birds. The following is the relevant text in this letter:

Currently over \$1million per year for the Recovery Plan is being provided by the Western Australia Government for activities by the WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for fire management, limited monitoring and feral animal control (mainly cats), and for the captive program at Perth Zoo. This leaves a major funding shortfall including some \$150,000 per year to undertake the translocation study. I understand that recently a Federal contribution to the Recovery Plan via the NLP2 Regional Land Partnership Program to DBCA was agreed and is to be just over \$110,000 per year. Originally these funds were to be for monitoring of the core wild population. I further understand these funds are well short of what DBCA submitted in the RLP application to meet this purpose. Consequently, I also understand, DBCA have had no choice but to scale back the outcomes they can meet with these funds.

Your Government's announcement of the \$100 million Environmental Restoration Fund in this year's budget is a very welcome initiative. It is noted it includes funding for Threatened Species and therefore, in the context of the above, I have the following questions:

- *when will the process for access to these funds commence?*
- *what process will apply to getting access to these funds?*
- *when will these funds become available?*
- *will the Western Ground Parrot Recovery Plan receive urgent and priority consideration for these funds?*

I received a response to this letter on 29th August and it is seriously disappointing. Most importantly the Minister did not answer any of the above questions and made no mention of the Fund. The Fund is still advertised on the Environment and Energy Department's website (<http://www.environment.gov.au/environment-restoration-fund>). I will be writing to the Minister again seeking urgent answers to the unanswered questions.

Website

Hopefully in the near future you will see a new and improved website for the Friends that will allow more direct engagement with you. This is being done voluntarily by Committee members given we haven't been able to secure a grant to have it done by a contractor.

Please keep abreast with our social media postings for the latest news.

Cheers,

Paul

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