



Saving Kyloring

No. 90 – Autumn Months 2021

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A major milestone in the Western Ground Parrot Recovery Journey



The news is out of the box-read below!! Photo: Stewart Ford - DBCA

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Update

(Stewart Ford, Abby Thomas, Mark Blythman, Helena Stokes, Abby Berryman and Sarah Comer)

Since our last newsletter contribution, the DBCA team - with help from BirdLife Australia's Helena Stokes - completed the ongoing 2020-2021 spring and summer introduced predator control, ground parrot monitoring and continued to work through the significant list of tasks required to prepare for and carry out a world first wild-to-wild translocation of western ground parrots.

Feral cat trapping efforts between December 2020 to May 2021 have removed 25 feral cats from the Cape Arid-Nuytsland (CANP-NNR) population with the area between Thomas Fishery and Point Malcom targeted. The project team were assisted by volunteers in completing the annual spring and autumn autonomous recording units (ARUs) deployments for monitoring ground parrots, and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot funded a helicopter to assist with servicing of the CANP-NNR solar ARUs and camera grid. The increased capacity to monitor at both a landscape level (with the solar ARU grid network) and in more detail within localised areas provides data to give us confidence that ground parrots are responding positively to the intensive habitat management and introduced predator control efforts undertaken over the past 10 years.



Volunteer Mark True setting a cat trap. Photo: Sarah Comer - DBCA



Volunteer Jim Creighton and DBCA's Abby Thomas servicing a solar Autonomous Recording Unit (ARU) Photo: Sarah Comer - DBCA

Establishing a second population of western ground parrots is a priority conservation action for recovery. With the threat of bushfires ever present at Cape Arid and Nuytsland, the recovery plan for the species and the workshop that followed the 2015 fires identified establishing additional

populations as providing the best chance of securing a long-term future for the species (https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/plants-animals/animals/creating_a_future_for_the_western_ground_parrot_workshop_report.pdf).

The recent translocation of seven ground parrots from Cape Arid to an area east of Albany was the culmination of close to ten years of careful research and planning completed by a large number of dedicated DBCA staff, the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team, volunteers and stakeholders, and has been directly supported by ongoing assistance in the form of time, funding and/or equipment by the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, the federal Threatened Species Commissioner, BirdLife Australia and the Perth Zoo. Numerous other partners have supported recovery efforts over the past decade including State NRM, South Coast NRM and the Commonwealth Government. ABC reporter Mark Bennett joined the team and his work can be seen on Landline <https://iview.abc.net.au/video/RF2004Q018500>.

Laying the foundation for a successful translocation has been a key component of our work over the past few years, not the least of which was selecting a suitable translocation site. This process has taken several years and has considered a number of biotic (i.e. living) and abiotic (non-living) factors including climate change modelling work completed by Shaun Molloy, detailed consideration of vegetation and landscape habitat values and DBCA's management capacity (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/oryx/article/using-climate-change-models-to-inform-the-recovery-of-the-western-ground-parrot-peizoporus-flaviventris/4773C1736612D65390B26899B7FE8805>).

The shortlist of potential locations was also assessed by the recovery team and project staff, and the top-ranking sites were selected for a detailed botanical assessment to confirm their suitability and support the final selection of a release site. DBCA botanist Adrienne Markey completed this work, and we were grateful for her support and botanical skills.

In conjunction with selecting a suitable release site, a detailed framework for the translocation was prepared. This included a Predator Management Plan, a peer-reviewed Translocation Proposal and Risk Assessment and a Translocation Plan. These documents have underpinned all of the translocation work to date and provide criteria for measuring success of the first year of this work.

On-ground management within the release area has included establishing a 1 x 1 km predator monitoring grid, an ARU network and enhanced predator management through additional Western Shield baiting and targeted feral cat trapping, similar to the work being done in Cape Arid and Nuytsland. We were fortunate enough to be offered an opportunity to trial some of the Felixer grooming traps developed by Thylation (<https://thylation.com/>) to provide additional feral cat and fox control around potential ground parrot habitat at the release site, and look forward to sharing some of the results from this work once the trials are completed and the Felixers are operational. The Friends have supported predator monitoring at the release area through the purchase of new camera traps used in the 1 x 1 km predator monitoring grid. Prior to the translocation, data from these camera traps were compared with a paired site in occupied ground parrot habitat at Cape Arid to look at occupancy of cats between the two sites. No significant difference was found between the occupancy of cats at the release area and that at Cape Arid, suggesting that predation pressure at the release site will be no greater than what the ground parrots are used to in an intensively managed site.

Post-release the DBCA team are busy tracking the seven ground parrots. In the first four weeks following release there has been some significant movement by a few of the birds, presumably exploring the new habitat. An ARU monitoring grid was installed in the release area in the months prior to the translocation as part of the BirdLife support for the project, and this will play an important role – in addition to volunteers - in the ongoing monitoring of translocated birds.

We look forward to sharing the stories from the translocation itself, as well as some of the initial post-release results, in the next edition of the newsletter. In the meantime, thanks again to the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot and other supporters and volunteers who helped to realise this vital step in the conservation of kyloring.



A team effort of volunteers and staff (DBCA and BirdLife) Photo: Stewart Ford - DBCA

Western Ground Parrot Update from Perth Zoo June 2021

The team at Perth Zoo have been very busy over the past few months progressing works for the Zoo and Aquarium Association Wildlife Conservation Fund and preparing for the breeding season. Also, Zoo staff participated in the recent translocation of birds.

New hatches were installed in the aviaries in March and birds have subsequently been paired for the upcoming breeding season. With the new hatches in place, multiple birds have been given access to each other so we can continue to evaluate social behaviours of the species and provide an opportunity for mate choice. The birds have chosen to continue to remain primarily in their own areas at this stage however we expect to see increasing movement and exploration in the coming months.

The new WGP holding aviary (Fig. 1&2) is now very close to completion. There is some further work to be done with padding of exposed hard surfaces, addition of irrigation for plants, CCTV cameras, feed platforms and weigh scales. Once the new aviary is completed, we plan to move male Brutus into the facility to limit his disturbance to the paired birds.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to progress the upgrades of the CCTV equipment as the aviary ended up costing more than planned. We are now on the lookout for alternative funding sources to progress the CCTV system upgrades.

Old male Zephyr displayed a degree of weight loss in April, and we have been keeping an extra close eye on him as a result. He has since stabilised and is doing well.

Female Kopin has continued to occasionally present to keepers for copulation. What we can take from this behaviour is that she is well settled in the aviary, very comfortable in the presence of her keepers

and that she is keen to progress her breeding intentions. Last season she engaged in allo feeding with male Zephyr and we are hoping that she will further advance her breeding intentions this year.

The birds are all doing well, and the breeding season diet has now been enacted.



Figure 1. New holding aviary March 2021. Photo: Perth Zoo



Figure 2. Plants ready for planting in the new aviary. Photo: Perth Zoo

Perth Zoo Staff Involvement in Cape Arid National Park Western Ground Parrot Translocation

In April Perth Zoo's Supervisor Zoology Australian Fauna, Arthur Ferguson and Acting Senior Veterinarian, Alisa Wallace travelled to the remote Cape Arid National Park for 14 days to support Parks and Wildlife staff with the first ever wild to wild translocation of western ground parrots from Cape Arid National Park, to a conservation managed reserve east of Albany.

Perth Zoo staff contributed significant expertise providing veterinary oversight, handling, and caring of birds in preparation for their transportation to the release site.

Despite the remote field conditions, Zoo staff were well equipped and prepared a veterinary processing tent and temporary holding, with CCTV camera monitoring.

Seven birds were successfully translocated to the release site and Park and Wildlife staff have continued to monitor the birds post-release to track their movements and progress.

One of the male birds that was transferred to the release site had difficulty flying upon release. Due to concerns for his wellbeing, he was transferred to Perth Zoo for emergency evaluation and care. With the circumstances and risks associated with attempting to re-release this bird, he has been incorporated into the western ground parrot program at Perth Zoo. The new male now goes by the name of Jinnung which means 'seeing' in the local Noongar language – he has seen a lot of different places (for a ground parrot!). Jinnung responded very well to the care at Perth Zoo and has since completed quarantine.



Vehicle setup for safe management of birds in preparation for transport. Photo: Perth Zoo



CCTV was used to monitor the bird behaviour, feeding and wellbeing prior to departure. The birds were under constant video surveillance monitoring. Photo: Perth Zoo



Heat lamps were used to provide birds with extra warmth overnight prior to departure. Photo: Perth Zoo



Three birds ready for transport to the release site. Photo: Perth Zoo



Veterinary processing tent. Photo: Perth Zoo



New male western ground parrot Jinnung settling in well at Perth Zoo June 2021. Photo: Perth Zoo



Chirpings from the Chair

Paul Nettin

HURRAY it has finally happened!!! After many years of planning and urgent need, the translocation of 7 parrots from Cape Arid to another remote and suitable location east of Albany has been undertaken. The Friends have long supported the need for a translocation, and we have been advocating vociferously with governments to provide the necessary financial support for DBCA to do so. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge this support from the State and Federal Governments, the latter via the Threatened Species Commissioner's Bushfire Recovery Fund, and also BirdLife Australia and their participating project officer, Helena Stokes.

I hope you have had the opportunity to view the ABC Landline story about the translocation- <https://www.abc.net.au/landline/parrots-in-peril:-saving-western-ground-parrot/13386470>. Thanks to the ABC, and particularly reporter Mark Bennett, for doing this story and their overall media coverage.

I trust members will appreciate how difficult and challenging the translocation action has been and will continue to be. The DBCA (Parks and Wildlife) Report provides an excellent outline of this process. I can assure you that as a member of the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team that the process was comprehensive and rigorous. But it should also be pointed out that the assessment was undertaken with imperfect knowledge about many aspects of the parrots' biology, ecology and behaviour, and other mitigating factors. But to gather that information before undertaking a translocation would have meant more years of study of the wild population; a population that we know is at risk of extinction from a wildfire in the small patch of remaining unburnt habitat at Cape Arid-Nuytsland.

The work undertaken by the DBCA, BirdLife officer and volunteers who participated in the lead up to the translocation and subsequent capture and transfer over an extended period of weeks, and in challenging conditions, has been outstanding.

As a member of the Recovery Team and at the invitation of DBCA, I was proud to participate in the release of 3 of the translocated birds, along with Anne Bondin who is also on the Recovery Team. I saw a western ground parrot!! It was a truly thrilling experience, but also tinged with uncertainty and hope for the future of those birds as they flew off. There is a long road ahead to achieve the priority outcomes sought under the Recovery Plan. It will be a roller coaster ride of challenges, and emotions, which I certainly felt during this release.

<https://www.facebook.com/WAParksWildlife/videos/1325416591185802>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=301463608369388>

As indicated in the DBCA (Parks and Wildlife) report the Friends' contribution to the translocation was significant. In the immediate lead up to the translocation we provided some \$55,000 to DBCA from a combination of donations and grants. These funds were used to:

- purchase a large number of predator camera traps which were installed in the translocation area to good effect. These cameras remain in that area.
- hire a helicopter to retrieve the data cards from the Cape Arid-Nuytsland ARUs. The analysis of these cards for the detection of parrot calls influenced DBCA selection of capture site.
- hire a helicopter to retrieve ARUs and/or data cards from Fitzgerald River National Park which I reported on in the last Newsletter. DBCA and I subsequently analysed the song files from these ARUs. Unfortunately, no kylloring calls were detected.
- have a Disease Risk Assessment completed by DBCA to determine the susceptibility of birds to acquiring a disease after being captured.
- support volunteers who participated in field work in Cape Arid in April.

I again thank all our members, donors, and grants from the Australian Wildlife Society Kinder Project, the Communities Environment Program and the WIRES and Landcare Australia Wildlife Relief Fund for this support.

Ongoing funding support from governments for the overall Recovery Plan and potentially further translocations is a remaining concern. Letters from me to DBCA and Threatened Species Commissioner in December 2020 met with an "in principle" commitment from DBCA and no response from the Commissioner, even after a further reminder letter to her in February 2021. There needs to be a firm ongoing funding commitment from both governments especially to protect the wild population in Cape Arid-Nuytsland, and potentially to undertake further translocations subject to the review of circumstances and outcomes from the recent one. I and the Friends' Committee will continue to vigorously pursue this outcome.

Upcoming Art Auction

The Friends have been very fortunate over the years to have received a number of pieces of western ground parrot artwork (e.g. see below). We're currently in the process of planning an "art auction" to find homes for these beautiful pieces and raise funds for the WGP at the same time. As soon as we have more details about the when and how, we'll let you know, so keep your eye out on our website and social media!



Stained glass leadlight produced by Chris Powell with his thanks to Otago Stained Glass, Dunedin, New Zealand for assistance. Phot:- Chris Powell

Annual Memberships

I would strongly encourage Annual Members to continue your membership - as per instructions below please. We are definitely on a journey that could save kylloring from extinction!!

As always, happy to hear from any of you!!

Notice – Annual Membership for 2021-22

Fees for annual membership are due from 1st July 2021 and can be paid on our website. The membership form only needs to be completed for **new members**.

Fees are not applicable to Life Members.

If members wish to provide a donation in addition to their membership fees, please use the donation link below or on our website as a separate payment to ensure that you are provided with an accurate receipt for tax deduction purposes.

Note – You cannot pay membership fees through the Donation Link.

Fees are \$20 for Single Year Memberships

\$40.00 for Family Single Year Memberships

\$250.00 once off fee for Life Membership

Members who are due to pay fees will receive an email reminder soon.

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Australian Government

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