



supporting landholders with native vegetation conservation management network

Issue 2 Sept 07

Swift Parrot

Endangered Visitor to the South East

By Belinda Cooke

Swift parrots breed in Tasmania and migrate to mainland Australia in autumn. During winter the parrots are semi-nomadic, foraging in flowering eucalypts mainly in Victoria and New South Wales. Their main threats are clearing of suitable habitat but collisions with wire netting fences, windows and cars during the breeding season and migration also impact the parrots numbers.

Swift parrots are listed as endangered in both NSW under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and Nationally under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Swift Parrot distribution on the mainland varies from year to year in response to what is flowering. The birds rely on winter flowering eucalypts (spotted gum and red bloodwood in the south east) and also feed on lerp. There have been regular sightings of swift parrots on the south coast. This year a total of 30 birds were sighted from the south coast at Merimbula, Guerilla Bay and Kalaru. All of these sightings were in April as the birds headed up the coast. It is possible that more will be sighted as they begin their return migration during September and October.

What do they look like?

Bright grass green in colour, the swift parrot has patches of red on the throat, chin and forehead which are bordered by yellow. It also has blue on the crown, cheeks and wings. The swift parrot has a streamlined body with red on the shoulder and under the wings. The swift parrot is distinguished from Lorikeets by its longer, pointy tail, and red colouration both under the wings and tail.

What do they sound like

A distinctive call of kik-kik-kik (listen to the call on the threatened species web site, see below).



Swift Parrot. Photo by Aleks Terauds

Can you help?

A recovery effort is in place to assist the conservation of this species with actions undertaken across the whole of its range. On the mainland you can help by:

1. Reporting all sightings of Swift Parrots
2. Get involved in the twice-yearly national swift parrot and regent honeyeater surveys
3. Identify important areas and types of habitat and get in touch with the recovery coordinator
4. Plant winter-flowering native trees
5. Retain and expand mature and mixed-age habitat
6. Reduce accidental deaths caused by collision with windows and fences by putting stencils on windows and attaching strips of material to chain-mesh fences to make them more visible

To report sightings and for more information please contact Belinda Cooke, Swift Parrot Mainland Coordinator

Freecall 1800 66 57 66 or (02) 6298 9733
swiftparrots@yahoo.com

For more information check out www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au and type in "swift parrot"

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Coordinators Column

We're getting into a rhythm now as we deliver to you the second CMN newsletter. Thanks for those who gave such kind feedback on the first and please continue to let us know if you'd like your copy on email.

After such a wonderful wet autumn and winter, we hope that spring will be a time for some rejuvenating growth in your native vegetation. Of course that often means that weeds take the opportunity to flourish so now is a good time to get out and survey what is coming up and plan ahead for control.

Spring is also a time when the endangered Swift Parrot passes through our region on its way back to Tasmania and a great time for native grassland herbs to 'spring' from their dormancy with vigorous growth and flower. We've included info on both of these in this issue.

CMN events have been well attended and the weather has been kind to us. Please let us know if you'd like to come to an event so we cater for everyone (we don't want you missing out on any of the scrumptious catering!).

A particular series of events we are starting to roll out we call 'Local Links'. These are gatherings held in smaller sub regions of the valley the first of which was in Brogo. The aim of these Local Links is for us as network facilitators to find out what the specific native vegetation management issues are in your area so we can better support your efforts. It is also a good chance to mingle with like minded people and indulge in the delicious catering we provide. Have we mentioned before that two of our guiding principles are *good food and good coffee!*

This issue also introduces a couple of new faces in local organisations. We try to keep you informed of who is out there to support landholders.

We hope to see you at an event soon.

Dan and Vick

What is the FSCCMN

The Far South Coast Conservation Management Network supports landholders with native vegetation on their property. Native vegetation might range from a native grass paddock that you still graze to acres of uncleared bush. The CMN caters to all types of vegetation and all types of land holders.

The network will provide information and activities to help landholders decide the best way to manage their vegetation to get the outcomes they want. This includes:

- Field Days
- Workshops
- Web site at www.fsccmn.com.au
- A discussion group for email users
- A bi-monthly newsletter
- Display and trial sites



The FSCCMN is funded by the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority.



Brogo Local Link June 07

The CMN organised a get-together of Brogo residents in June to share ideas and challenges about their native vegetation management.

Over 30 came along and we're grateful to hosts Will and Anni Hughes. We provided a sumptuous Indian style lunch which was catered by 'Spicy Mammias' – perfect for a sunny winters day.

Each property holder listed their skills and experience in managing vegetation on their property in particular their aims for the future. After the event the info gathered was compiled and distributed back to the group. Residents now have a resource outlining the skills and knowledge in their area. The responses showed a wealth of experience in the group which will be invaluable in supporting one another.

Some of the Brogo vegetation aims include:

- Providing habitat for fauna
- Managing climate change impacts
- Managing weeds in native vegetation
- Providing firewood and fence posts
- Managing impacts from cattle and horses

The CMN also found there was information we could help provide to Brogo residents such as managing rabbits and erosion.

We're calling these events a 'Local Link' because the aim is to understand the needs of the group and hopefully uncover ways residents can find links to help one another. If you think a Local Link would benefit your area please let us know.



Vickie (bottom right) facilitates a discussion about native vegetation management issues in Brogo.

Vegetation Corridors July 07

The CMN held its first dairy demonstration in July when a group of farmers and landholders gathered at John and Sue O'Brien's to learn more about vegetation corridors.

John, a fourth generation dairy farmer, started willow control on the Bemboka River in 1999. After this he gradually established corridors for wildlife to travel from the South East Forests National Park on one side of his farm to the river on the other. Working closely with Jock Waugh, Vegetation Recovery Officer with the Bega Valley Shire Council, John made these corridors into fenced shelter belts.



Jock Waugh (center) BVSC Vegetation Recovery Officer pointing out the benefits of John O'Brien's vegetation corridors

Once established, shelter belts provide shade to the moving herd reducing stress in hot weather. The belts are also used to graze poddy calves separate from the herd and free from John's disease. During dry times John also noticed that grass grew better under native vegetation.

Along with production benefits, John and Sue enjoy knowing their children have grown up planting trees and valuing native vegetation on their farm. An added bonus is the pleasure of native birds and animals returning.

"I was working on my pump at the river and up popped a platypus, right under my face", says John.

On the demonstration walk, John and Jock shared their experience about the work and the challenges along the way. We gathered for morning tea afterwards and there were a few mentions of how impressed others were with John and Jock's knowledge on the management and benefits of native vegetation in a dairy production environment.

More Than Just a Paddock!

Spring is here and it's a great time for plant ID as some plants can only be seen or identified when flowering. This edition we have focussed on native flora that may be out now or very soon. Grab a field guide and get out there!

In the Bega Valley, grassy woodlands were dominant ecosystems supporting a diverse array of flora and fauna of which only a small percent is left in good condition. It was the open grassy hills of the valley that helped make it appealing for dairy and other agricultural enterprise. But these days what is often seen as an unproductive paddock can actually be a remnant of the type of vegetation that once rolled over the hills of the Bega Valley prior to European settlement.

Two grassy communities, Bega Dry Grass Forest and Candelo Dry Grass Forest are now listed as endangered in NSW under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. They are currently being assessed for a national listing under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act as a single community, Lowland Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland. This community is one of the most depleted floristic assemblages. It generally consists of widely spaced trees and an open grassy understorey which holds a very interesting range of often unnoticed native grasses and herbs.

The most characteristic trees are forest red gum and rough-barked apple with white stringybark and coast grey box occurring less often. Candelo Dry Grass Forest may also include yellow box, snow gum or broad-leaved peppermint.

But to see the real range of diversity in these grassy woodlands you'll find yourself on hands and knees. Spring is the best time to explore the ground layers as many of the herbs that retreat back to their roots over winter start to show their true glory. Spring leading into summer is the time that more of the grasses tend to exhibit their character.

The main indicator grasses are usually kangaroo grass, poa tussock, and weeping grass. Herbs include kidney weed, yellow burr-daisy, blue flax lily, native St. John's wort, clustered everlasting, mulga or rock fern and small-leaved bramble.

Some of the best places to find good diversity are cemeteries, roadsides and paddocks that have not been intensively grazed. So make some time this spring to get your eyes close to the ground. Best to first get your hands on a good field guide or *fact sheet 1 - Bega Dry Grass Forest / Lowland Grassy Woodland* produced by the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA). It can be downloaded from www.esc.nsw.gov.au/Environment/ThreatenedSpecies/index.html or visit the SRCMA office above Woolies in Bega.



Some grassland herbs found in the south east
From top left clockwise:

Tiger orchid, *Diuris sulphurea*

Vanilla glycine, *Glycine tabacina*

Bulbine lily, *Bulbine glauca*

Zornia, *Zornia dyctiocarpa*

Native St. John's wort, *Hypericum gramineum*

Yellow rush-lily, *Tricoryne elatior*

Photos by Jackie Miles and Max Campbell

Monitoring Native Vegetation by Jackie Miles

Monitoring is usually the part of Landcare or home vegetation management projects that gets overlooked because it doesn't feel as 'productive' as getting out there and fencing, planting trees or killing weeds. However, it can be important for letting you know if you are on the right track with your management actions, and stop you wasting your time or making expensive mistakes in future.

Photopoints

Photopoints are the simplest form of monitoring, useful for recording obvious changes to vegetation such as tree and shrub regeneration or effects of weed control actions. It involves taking repeated photos of the same site and comparing them from year to year. Pick sites where future plant growth is not going to obscure the rest of the scene. Use a landmark like a stump or fence strainer, or drive in a steel post to mark the spot. Keep good records of the details of your site locations— your memory is never as good as you think it is!

Try to take your photos on an overcast day as strong shadows can obscure details. Take the photos at the same time of day and the same time of year to reduce the factors that might make the photos look different.

Transects

Transects or quadrats record more detail. You could mark out a 50 metre line between two posts and count the number of trees/saplings occurring along the line. You can measure the height of all the tree saplings and the number of trees and shrubs of each species. The trick is to measure or count things, so that you have numbers that you can compare from year to year, not just a



vague impression of change.

Whichever the method you choose, repeat your monitoring at the same time of year to reduce seasonal differences. Try to do it in 'average' 'onditions, although additional data from extremely dry or wet periods may also be of interest. Year to year variation in climate can be so great as to obscure changes resulting from your management, so it may be necessary to repeat monitoring for quite a few years to detect any overall trend. The more sites you include in your survey the more likely it is that you will pick up all the changes going on. But don't get too carried away or it will all become too difficult and therefore less likely to be done.

You might also like to keep an eye on the wildlife that uses your patch. Buy some field guides and get to know your local bird species. There are also good field guides to mammals, reptiles and frogs as well as the traces they might leave behind such as scats (droppings), bones and diggings. Learning the calls of the local animals can be a great help in detecting their presence. CDs of calls

can be bought from specialist shops such as those attached to Botanical Gardens and museums.

Get in the habit of spending an hour in your bush patch once a month or as often as you can and recording what you see or hear. Early to mid morning is the best time for detecting birds and reptiles, while you need to be out after dark with a strong torch to see most mammals and frogs.

Veg monitoring at home

If this article has you thinking "hmm I wonder what my native vegetation site is doing, maybe I should set up a monitoring process." Firstly consider combining skills and knowledge with your neighbours, you may find they know things you don't and vice versa! Secondly the CMN is planning a monitoring workshop next year. If you are interested let us know you're keen or if you have particular skills in this area you could contribute.

VCA Monitoring Program

*Belinda Cooke, Community Programs Officer,
Department of Environment and Climate Change*



The Far South Coast has an extensive network of landholders involved in land management including many who have Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCAs) or Wildlife Refuges (WRs) on their land. The Far South Coast is becoming a

leader in both the number of conservation initiatives and also in the strong conservation management network that has formed to support landholders efforts.

In order to support on-ground works and implement management recommendations on these properties, Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC which now encompasses National Parks and Wildlife Service) will be carrying out a monitoring program of existing VCAs and WRs. Monitoring will be planned together with threatened species experts, the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and local park rangers.

This is an avenue for Landholders to provide feedback about their experience with the VCA/WR process and help build better programs in the future. The monitoring program will also be a good chance to receive up to date survey information about the condition of their vegetation including a species list which can be compared with initial surveys.

Belinda Cooke will be implementing the monitoring program and has just started as Community Programs Officer with DECC and is based at Queanbeyan. Belinda will be travelling to the coast often to meet up with landholders to start the program and also carry out work for her other role as Swift Parrot Coordinator. She is looking forward to catching up at CMN events or may be in touch to organise a visit out to your property.

If you have any queries about the monitoring program or protected areas on private lands you can contact Belinda on (02) 6298 9733 or belinda.cooke@environment.nsw.gov.au

Potoroos Prove Elusive

An extensive survey for the Long-nosed Potoroo in the Gulaga Mountain area (reported in the last edition of this newsletter) has failed to gather any definitive evidence of the species. The survey used baited hair tube tunnels that capture hair from any animal that enters the tunnel. These were placed at locations where diggings suggested the animal might be present.

The results are disappointing, particularly given that there were abundant numbers of potoroos in this area within living memory and that the survey had great support from local Aboriginal people and landholders.

The outcomes reinforce community views that these animals are now quite rare and valued particularly by the local Aboriginal community. The findings certainly highlight the importance of locating areas of Gulaga Mountain where potoroos survive and emphasising the need to protect them and the habitat that sustains them.

Another survey effort is planned for October 2007. This time survey methods will include the use of cameras fitted with motion sensors placed at likely locations in the hope of gaining hard evidence of the animal's presence.

We are keen to hear from anyone in the region who believes that Long-nosed Potoroos may be present on their properties.

Chris Allen
Threatened Species Recovery Project Officer
Department of Environment and Climate Change
6495 5008 chris.allen@environment.nsw.gov.au



Wang-ga'lee by Lynne Thomas.
Wang-ga'lee is the local Aboriginal word for potoroo.

Sustainable Catchment Management in Towamba Valley

By Derek Lewis

Community Projects Officer

Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority

Towamba valley has been the home of my dreams, hopes and disappointments for the last 25 years. You see I have, with my delightful partner Faye, been trying to make all my income from orcharding and vealers. Now our children have flown and last year's late frost had me looking for extra work. So a contract to (in my words) help build sustainable catchment management with the landholders of the Towamba valley has been an opportunity to combine my practical land management knowledge with my environmental science degree.

My time at university taught me that the environment is immensely complicated and farming taught the need to make pragmatic, under-funded decisions with boldness and good timing. So I have an aim to propagate a management ethic that always considers the environmental health consequences but understands that keeping land productive is fundamental to the land manager.

In my years here so far I have had the pleasure to work with a generous, broadminded community that is prepared to get out and do things for themselves. As president of a landcare group that amongst other things runs the Towamba water sharing plan and has taken responsibility for weed control on local roads, I have had contact with many residents. Hopefully I can help coordinate more community projects and use the landcare group's activities as a conduit to individuals as well as using media like this newsletter.

If you need advice on weed identification/management and/or funding for a land management project in the Towamba catchment, then I'm your man....

Derek Lewis 6494 2194 or fdlewis@bigpond.com.au

Platypus Workshop and Survey

A leading Platypus ecologist, Dr Tom Grant, will be the main guest speaker at a workshop to be held at Bemboka Hall on the 3rd November. Information about the distribution of the Platypus in local rivers and creeks will also be presented at the workshop.

Dr Grant has researched Platypus in many parts of Eastern Australia and is the author of a lovely and informative book *The Platypus: a Unique Mammal*. We are privileged that Tom can spend time with us to learn more about this very special animal and the habitat that sustains it.

After the workshop we will spend the evening at locations where Platypus are known to be present and learn more about how to survey and monitor the species.

As an outcome we hope that a Platypus Watch Group can be established in the Bega Valley to help improve community awareness and conserve this very special animal.

Planning for the workshop is in the early stages. The CMN will be informing members once plans are finalised. Keep an eye on the CMN web site or for more information contact:

Chris Allen 6495 5008 or chris.allen@environment.nsw.gov.au

Upcoming Events

Native seed collecting workshop - field day Nov 17th 9am-3pm

A practical field day looking at the principals and techniques of native seed harvest. Covering topics of collection, processing, storage and documentation. Part of 'Grow Your Own' workshop series which will cover plant propagation and revegetation methods early next year. Venue in the Bega district to be announced closer to the date.



Summer events to be finalised Register your interest now

Birds of the south east

Birds and bird activity can tell us a lot about the vegetation around us and they are relatively easy to observe and record. Or are they? This walk will cover bird observation techniques as well as be a fascinating look at the vast array of birds that call the Far South Coast home. Late Nov or early Dec 2007.

Vegetation management planning workshop

If you have vegetation and want to keep it healthy, this workshop is essential to understanding how to manage it to gain the outcomes you want. Early in 2008.