

# REGENT PARROT

## NEWS (12)



January 2016

Hi everyone,

It has been a while since I last sent out a newsletter. My sincere apologies.

The Regent Parrot Recovery Team has continued to work on a number of projects:

- River Reach nest surveys
- Nest camera project
- Tracking individual Regent Parrots
- Data compilation project
- Education

At the State Landcare Conference in Waikerie in September the RP Recovery Team was presented with an award for its efforts .

### Regent Parrot Nest Surveys

Following a number of years of conducting selected breeding colony surveys it was decided to concentrate our efforts into River Reach surveys. Two sections of river were selected, each covering 30 – 35 km of river corridor. In the 2014 breeding season the river corridor from Lock 2 downstream to Cadell was surveyed and in 2015 the area from the Custom's House at Murtho downstream to Heading's Cliffs was targeted. A number of interesting findings were noted:

The previously held idea that Regent Parrots return to the exact location (and even the same nest hollow) year after year to breed was found to be a myth.

In the reach upstream of Renmark, many of the parrots have moved away from nesting in the drowned red gums and colonies have been established in live trees that previously had no nests in them. This movement is understandable as many of the drowned trees have deteriorated so much since they were drowned (when the locks were built) that many have fallen over. Other trees have lost major limbs and it is likely that the remaining hollows may no longer be suitable for the Regents to use. Despite these changes, the numbers of nests located was only slightly less than the 2003 survey in this area, indicating that the numbers are stabilizing in this section of the river compared to the declines recorded in the 1990's.

Downstream of Lock 2 nearly all the nests recorded in surveys have been in live trees. The Regents appear to choose where they will nest each season depending on the health of the Red Gums and the vegetation on the floodplain in the nesting area.

Where areas have been watered using e-water allocations, the Regents have chosen to nest there in preference to areas where the trees are declining in health. The number of nesting Regents in this section of the river is slightly higher than were recorded in the 2004 survey in this area.

### Nest camera project

Negotiations are proceeding on engaging a student from Flinders University to repeat the work previously conducted by the team. The 2013 project recorded a nestling being removed from a hollow by a Lace Monitor, breeding parents suddenly deserting active nests and a low fledging rate for the nests studied. Yellow Rosellas proved to be the major competitor for nest hollows and also proved to be a nuisance to nesting Regents.

This project has the potential to provide valuable information on problems faced by Regents that may influence the recruitment of young birds into the population.

### Tracking

One satellite tracker remained active on a juvenile bird (from the 2013 nesting season) for a period of over 14 months. However, this juvenile did not behave as we had thought it would and so a lot more tracking is needed to determine exactly where the birds move throughout the year.

### **Good News**

The tracking of a larger number of Regent Parrots will be conducted in the near future as a result of Banrock Station Wines providing the team with a \$35,000 grant to continue this project. We will be working in conjunction with Monash University to continue this work. Regents that are captured to attach transmitters will also be tested by veterinarians from the Adelaide Zoo for the presence of any diseases in the Regent population.

### **Data compilation**

A great deal of data has been collected by members of the team as a result of the work conducted over the past few years. Community members have contributed many observations and researchers in other states have also contributed to our understanding of these unpredictable birds. The task Luke Ireland has been set is to bring all of the currently known information that is contained in a number of documents and data bases together into one single document, so that information is not lost.

### **Education**

Even though Regents appear to breed successfully every year, their numbers have declined over time.

Our current work is designed to determine where birds are being lost from the population.

Is the rate of fledging so low that it is not sufficient to maintain population numbers? – Nest camera project.

Is competition and harassment from Yellow Rosellas sufficient to prevent Regents breeding successfully? – nest camera project

Are adults lost during the breeding season or at other times during the year? - Tracking project.

Are there factors preventing juvenile birds from reaching maturity? – Tracking

And there are many more questions that we need answers to if we are to be able to intervene to prevent these wonderful birds following the Paradise Parrot.

One factor that was found to be a significant factor affecting the survival of Regent Parrots in Victoria was the illegal shooting of them in almond orchards.

In order to address this as a possible issue in SA, the information gained from research in Victoria is being distributed to almond growers in the Riverland. It was found that Regents do very little damage to almonds and are beneficial to growers by cleaning up residual nuts after harvest that can harbour pest species.

### **Have you seen any Regents lately?**

You can still report sightings of Regent Parrots to the team. We are particularly interested in larger groups, as we need to capture a number of birds to attach the new trackers.

Please continue to report sightings to the DEWNR office **8595 2111**

Kevin Smith