

BIRDS FOR BIODIVERSITY – MT LOFTY RANGES (SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

A multi-species regionally-based recovery program for bird taxa.

South Australia:

Region: Mount Lofty Ranges

Affiliated Regional NRM Group: Mount Lofty Ranges (interim) Integrated Natural Resource Management Group

Background

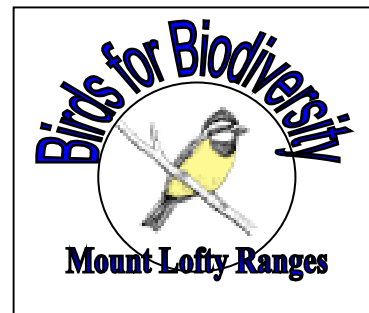
The Mount Lofty Ranges is an ecologically diverse region that is home to a wide range of bird taxa. However, the high rate of clearing (approximately 16% of native vegetation remains), combined with other environmental threats has resulted in a significant decline in the diversity and abundance of birds in the region.

The National Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000 identified the Mount Lofty Ranges as having one of Australia's largest concentrations of threatened bird taxa. In response to this finding, the Mount Lofty Ranges (MLR) Bird Task Force was convened and the Birds for Biodiversity program was initiated.

The Birds for Biodiversity program is a multi-species recovery project that uses declining birds as flagship taxa. The project involves a number of research and conservation activities designed to address the requirements of a range of species across the region. It is an active adaptive management approach for regional biodiversity outcomes.

The goal of the program is to:

prevent the loss of more birds from the Mount Lofty Ranges by re-establishing and maintaining regionally viable populations of bird taxa identified as declining in the region. This includes the nine species identified as being of regional conservation significance in the National Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000.



Achievements to Date:

- ❖ The project commenced in June 2002, with project officers commencing in September 2002.
- ❖ An Interim Recovery Plan is being developed. This plan will identify current knowledge and gaps with respect to critical habitat, as well as identifying significant threats and priority management actions for declining bird species.
- ❖ A Habitat Strategy that will provide a spatially explicit description at multiple scales (from the sub-region to the individual remnant) of landscape characteristics, vegetation communities, and species' populations. This will be used to identify appropriate management actions and priorities for each sub-region.

Information Used:

- ❖ Declining species have been identified through the comparison of a range of databases compiled in different time periods:
 - South Australian Ornithologists Atlas 1975 and 1985;
 - Birds Australia Bird Atlases;
 - Department of Environment and Heritage data;
 - Research data from local and interstate universities.
- ❖ The data exists on a GIS.
- ❖ Declining status was derived from an expert system which considered ecological data on the individual species and changes in their abundance and distribution over time.

Market and Non-Market Mechanisms for Biodiversity Conservation:

Economic instruments (financial mechanisms):

- ❖ Devolved grants scheme linked to habitat protection, management and re-establishment, and delivered through an adaptive management process.

Community measures (motivational mechanisms):

- ❖ Education and awareness raising activities.
- ❖ Training program for natural resource workers and volunteers across a range of areas including bird surveys.
- ❖ Technical advice for land managers to support improved on-ground activities for biodiversity outcomes.
- ❖ Communication strategy that identifies and links key stakeholders and will provide a mechanism for prioritising future actions. It will identify key stakeholders in terms of their influence on biodiversity outcomes and will identify strategies to involve them in the project.

Important Features:

- ❖ The long-term nature of the program and the identification of realistic timeframes within which to evaluate outcomes.
- ❖ Planning based on sound science.
- ❖ Action research/ adaptive management model may result in:
 - improved information and knowledge base regarding the restoration of various habitat types;
 - better understanding of the requirements of birds in the region;
 - a better understanding of the adequacy of conservation activities based on the requirements of birds, for the protection of other flora and fauna species.
- ❖ Partnership approach with research institutions that will be important for achieving the anticipated scientific outcomes.
- ❖ Building on the efforts of previous work undertaken by a range of stakeholders and aiming to add value to existing projects.

- ❖ The Interim Recovery Plan and the associated Communication Strategy and Habitat Restoration Strategy may provide useful science-based tools for guiding biodiversity investment in the region.
- ❖ This is a “watch this space” project that has potential to develop into an important approach to biodiversity conservation at a regional scale.

Further Reading:

- Birds for Biodiversity MLR project - information sheet;
- Birds for Biodiversity MLR project, *A Multi-Species Recovery Project for the Declining Birds of the Mount Lofty Ranges*. Brochure;
- Garnett, S.T, and Crowley, G.M (2000). *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000*. Environment Australia (in association with Birds Australia).

Contacts for Further Information:

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