



## Information for residents

# Control of introduced corellas and lorikeets in the metropolitan area

### *Some answers to commonly asked questions*

#### **Which species have been introduced to the Perth metropolitan area?**

The Little Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*), the Eastern Long-billed Corella (*Cacatua tenuirostris*) and the Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) have been introduced to the Perth area. Little Corellas are native to the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions of Western Australia and a small population occurs in the northern wheatbelt between Dongara and Three Springs. Little Corellas also occur in the Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and the eastern parts of South Australia. Eastern Long-billed Corellas are native to south-central New South Wales, south-western Victoria and south-eastern South Australia.

Rainbow Lorikeets, in Australia, are found naturally occurring from the tip of Cape York, Queensland south to near Adelaide South Australia and occasionally in northern Tasmania.

Many people are under the misapprehension that these birds are native to the south/west of Western Australia and particularly to the Perth area, **but this is not the case.**



**Fig 1. Feral Little Corellas taking over a nest hole that would have normally been available to native species.**  
(Photo by Gary Porter - DEC)



**Fig 2. Long-billed Corella in the foreground and Little Corella in the background.**  
(Photo by Gary Porter - DEC)

### How did these birds end up in Perth?

Accidental escapes and deliberate releases of aviary birds and the subsequent breeding by those birds once established in the wild has led to them becoming established in Perth (and in the case of the corellas, a few rural centres in south-west WA).



**Fig 4. Rainbow Lorikeets are very good at escaping from aviaries. In Perth, escapees have bred up to form a large feral population which is now impacting on fruit growers and the environment. (Photo by Gary Porter – DEC)**

### How many corellas and lorikeets are there?

During the period 1998-2005 inclusive the community-based bird conservation group, Birds Australia (WA) has conducted annual surveys of the introduced corella populations in Perth. A survey conducted in 2005 counted 2077 corellas (1574 Little Corellas, 503 Eastern Long-billed Corellas and 38 of undetermined species) in selected parts of the metropolitan area. The actual population is likely to be somewhat larger given that not all parts of the metropolitan area were surveyed.

Population modeling conducted on the lorikeet population suggests that numbers may reach as many as 20,000 by 2010 if not controlled.

### Why do we need to control them?

The introduced corellas cause a number of problems right now including;

- digging up newly planted seeds of wheat and oats;
- feeding on grain supplied for stock or at locations where horses are agisted;
- pulling up or cutting down seedling blue gums, newly established grape vines, seedling lettuce, cabbage and root vegetables;
- damaging the reticulation systems established to support intensive horticulture;
- damaging grassed public playing surfaces, leaving sizable holes in the surface (these holes represent a hazard to the users of the sports fields, and a public liability/insurance risk for the managers of the playing fields);
- trimming small branchlets and leaves from their roost trees (e.g. heritage listed trees in Stirling Square, Guildford) which can lead to trees dying or needing expensive tree surgery to make them safe;
- damaging telecommunication and lighting towers by chewing through cabling; and
- creating excessive noise at night roosts that are located close to houses making it difficult, if not impossible for residents to sleep.

These introduced corellas also pose an environmental threat to our native parrots and cockatoos by taking over nest hollows that are in limited supply in the metropolitan area. If the populations continue to expand into the rural areas they may come in contact with our native corella populations (Western Corellas *Cacatua pastinator*) and inter-breed with them.

The Rainbow Lorikeets are also agricultural pests (damaging grape and stone fruit crops),

ecological pests (competing with native fauna for nectar and pollen and nest hollows), and a public nuisance.

It is much easier to successfully control any introduced pest species when their population numbers are small. Doing nothing for a few more years is only going to lead to more problems, more complaints and less chance of ever doing anything to manage the problem in the future.



**Fig 3. Rainbow Lorikeet damage to a peach crop in the Perth Hills  
(Photo by Gary Porter – DEC)**

#### **How will the birds be controlled and will the methods used be humane?**

A number of methods will be used, the choice of which method will vary depending on the location, level of public access to a site, public safety issues and the behaviour of the species concerned.

The methods that **will** be used include:

- walk-in cage traps (corellas);
- cannon nets (corellas);
- clap traps (corellas);
- shooting (corellas and lorikeets); and
- mist nets (lorikeets)

Captured birds are euthanased using humane methods advocated by the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCAART) and DEC's own operating procedures for euthanasia of animals in the field.

The use of firearms in built-up areas has been discussed with Western Australia Police and has their endorsement subject to the usual safety requirements associated with firearms.

#### **Who supports the control program?**

A wide selection of the general community supports the program along with;

- The Minister for the Environment;
- Members of Parliament in constituencies affected by corellas (e.g. Guildford, Churchlands);

- Local Government Authorities (e.g. City of Swan, Town of Bassendean, City of Melville);
- Department of Local Government and Regional Development;
- Department of Agriculture and Food;
- Perth Zoo;
- Western Australia Police;
- Western Australian Planning Commission;
- Western Australian Fruit Growers Association;
- Westralia Airports Corporation Pty Ltd;
- Metropolitan Golf Courses (e.g. Wembley, Rosehill and Burswood)
- United Bird Societies of WA
- Birds Australia (WA Group); and the
- Conservation Council of Western Australia

It is appreciated that not everyone in the community may see the need to control the birds.

#### **What public debate or media coverage has this issue had?**

This issue has received fairly wide media coverage in both print media (*West Australian* 2/4/2001, 5/6/2001 and local community newspapers e.g. *Hills Gazette* 10/11/2001, *Echo* 30/8/2003) and local radio (ABC, 6PR, RTR FM). The issue of introduced corellas has also been raised in Parliament (19 October 2004). More recently the issue has been covered in the *West Australian Newspaper* 2/4/2007.

Live lorikeets have been displayed at agricultural field days at Margaret River and Wagin.

#### **If I want more information who can I contact?**

For more information on corellas in Western Australia visit the following website

<http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/animals/living-with-wildlife/index.html>

Information on Rainbow Lorikeets can be found at

<http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/animals/living-with-wildlife/living-with-wildlife-publications.html>

and information is available from Free call 1800 084 881

or contact the DEC Species and Community Branch on tel. 9334 0421