



Department of Environment & Conservation Exotic Corella Control Program

10 August 2011

Introduction

This report has been prepared as supplementary information to assist Council in its consideration to support a proposal from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to extend its exotic corella program to Bunbury in the 2011/ 2012 financial year.

This report addresses the following topics and is structured accordingly:

1. local exotic corella population background information;
2. chronology of the City's involvement with the exotic corella issue;
3. DEC's proposal for the control of the local exotic corella population; and
4. implications for the City of Bunbury.

Local Exotic Corella Population Background Information

A population of approximately 500 - 1,000 exotic corellas currently resides in the Greater Bunbury Region.

It is understood that the population comprises of a mix of species including the little corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*), eastern long billed corella (*Cacatua tenuirostris*) and galah (*Eolophus roseicapilla*) hybrids.

The DEC has advised that the corellas in question are native to the eastern states of Australia and have been introduced to Bunbury and other parts of Western Australia through escape and release from aviaries (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2007).

The DEC has advised that, based upon experiences in the Perth Metropolitan Region, the local exotic corella population is likely to continue to grow into the future if management measures are not employed. It is therefore anticipated that the impacts associated with the exotic corellas will continue and intensify.

Impacts typically associated with the exotic corellas include:

- noise;
- fouling of areas / assets;
- damage to trees, cabling, turf; and
- impacts on native species.

It is understood that there is no statutory responsibility on any party, including the City of Bunbury, to manage the local exotic corella population at the present time. This understanding is based upon considerable liaison with relevant State Government agencies and a review of applicable legislation.

Chronology of the City's Involvement with the Exotic Corella Issue

At its meeting on the 3rd August 2010, Council accepted a petition from residents in the Horseshoe Lake area in complaint of the nuisance caused by exotic corellas. Council subsequently resolved (Council Decision 133/10) to refer the matter to the Bunbury Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee (BESAC) for advice.

BESAC considered the matter and formulated advice to Council in November 2010. Council made the following resolution at its ordinary meeting on the 14th December 2010 (Council Decision 266/10.) following receipt of BESAC's advice:

Council:

1. Acknowledge the concerns of the petition signatories and the potential for the exotic corellas to have ongoing and increased impacts on local residents, businesses and the natural environment into the future;
2. Facilitate the creation of an external working group to investigate options for the management of the local exotic Corella population, devise an appropriate strategy and report back to Council, pending;
 - Confirmation from the Department of Environment & Conservation and Department of Agriculture & Food that management of the exotic corellas is warranted at the present time;
 - Commitment from Department of Environment & Conservation and Department of Agriculture & Food to participate in the process (at least in an advisory capacity); and
 - The receipt of sufficient interest from the surrounding shires and / or other key stakeholders (e.g. Bunbury Turf Club) to participate in the process given the need for a regional collaborative approach.
3. Formally write to the Department of Environment & Conservation requesting their advice as to what Council needs to do to obtain any approvals that may be necessary for the management of the Corella population.

On the 27th of January 2011 the City of Bunbury wrote to the DEC and the Department of Agriculture & Food Western Australia (DAFWA) seeking their advice and commitment to participate in the process.

Both departments subsequently indicated their support for the control of the exotic corellas and their intention to participate in the working group.

The DEC further advised the City that a damage licence would be required under provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* to lawfully control the birds and that an appropriate management strategy would need to accompany the damage licence application.

Key stakeholders were contacted in February to participate in the external working group. The following organisations agreed to participate in addition to DEC and DAFWA:

- the Shire of Harvey;
- the Shire Dardanup; and
- the Bunbury Turf Club.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) were also advised of the City's intent to form a working group to address the issue, in response the RSPCA requested ongoing updates on the City's proposed course of action.

The first exotic corella working group (ECWG) meeting was held on the 13th of April 2011. Several other meetings were held over the ensuing months to support the preparation of a draft strategy for the management of the exotic corellas. In preparing the strategy the group:

- researched the general behaviours of the exotic little corellas including their breeding, feeding and roosting habits;
- mapped known occurrences of the local exotic corella population and noted the observed behaviour of the birds at these locations e.g. feeding, roosting or nesting;
- researched the feasibility of potential control options for the management of the local population; and
- undertook a risk assessment of preferred control options.

During the meetings the DEC advised members of the ECWG that the current impact of the exotic corellas on the local environment is perceived to be low. However given that the population is likely to increase there is potential for the corellas to extend to areas where they will compete for habitat with federally listed and protected bird species such as the Carnaby's black-cockatoo, Baudin's black-cockatoo and Muir's corella. It was also advised that the exotic corellas may potentially interbreed with the Muir's corella compromising the genetic integrity of this species of bird.

Initial estimates for the expenditure and staff time requirements for the implementation of the draft recommended control program developed by the ECWG suggest that it would require approximately \$20,000 and one FTE for 10 weeks. It is envisaged that these costs and time requirements would be shared amongst the members of the ECWG on a negotiated basis should the program be implemented.

On the 5th of July 2011 the DEC advised the City of an internal proposal to extend its exotic corella control program in Perth to Bunbury, subject to support from stakeholders. This proposal was dependent on the receipt of sufficient funding through internal and or external funding bids.

The ECWG decided to defer further development of the draft strategy until confirmation of the DEC's directions had occurred.

Proposed Extension of the DEC Program to Bunbury

On the 5th August 2011 the Department advised the City that it had received the required funding and would be extending the program to Bunbury during the 2011/2012 financial year.

The DEC's proposed methodology is provided below:

1. **Site identification:** The Department with support from local stakeholders identify appropriate control sites in the local area. These must be free from public disturbance and regularly attended, or likely to be regularly attended by large flocks of exotic corellas.

The Bunbury Turf Club (BTC) was previously identified as a preferred control location by the Exotic Corella Working Group, as it was free from public disturbance and regularly attended by large flocks of exotic corellas. It is anticipated that that DEC will use this site.

2. **Baiting:** The site will be baited daily with grain to establish a regular and predictable feeding pattern in the birds. The DEC will provide the grain and the BTC have agreed to provide staff to bait the trapping site.
3. **Trapping:** When a feeding pattern has been established, DEC will staff use a remotely activated sling trap to capture the birds. It is likely that the bulk of the trapping will occur in spring and summer when large flocks of the corellas aggregate to feed on grassed areas.

4. Euthanising: Captured birds will be shot or gassed with carbon dioxide gas by DEC staff in accordance procedures approved of by the Animal Ethics Committee and in compliance with the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*.
5. Supervision of trapping: The trapping incident may need to be supervised in order to ensure that the general public do not disturb the process. It is proposed that a City of Bunbury Community Law and Safety Officer, or Bunbury Turf Club staff member undertake this supervision.
6. Disposal of birds: Deceased birds will be appropriately disposed (i.e. bagged and buried) of by City of Bunbury staff at a licensed putrescible waste facility, such as the Stanley Road tip site.
7. Public and media enquiries: The effective management of public relations is viewed as critical to the implementation of the control program because of the strong and divergent opinions that are likely to be held by the local community regarding the control program.

The DEC, as the lead agency implementing the program, advised that they will manage all public and media enquiries associated with the program. The DEC are better equipped than local government, or private stakeholders to handle this because managing pests is a part of its core business. Furthermore, the community are more likely to respect an animal pest control program that is implemented by the DEC than one implemented by local government, or private stakeholders.

8. Travel and Accommodation: DEC trapping staff will have to commute from Perth to undertake the trapping and may require to stay over night in Bunbury. It is proposed that the City of Bunbury will cover the travel costs of the DEC staff.

Implications for the City of Bunbury

A rough budget has been prepared to determine the City's likely expenditure and time commitments associated with the DEC's proposal. This estimate is based on 12 trapping incidents occurring over the financial year, i.e. one incident every month.

Table 1: Estimated cost implications for the City of Bunbury.

Item	Responsibility	Cost	Time
Transport and accommodation costs	Environmental Operations budget	\$5000	
Supervision of trapping	Bunbury Turf Club / CoB rangers		30 hours
Bags to carry diseased birds	Environmental Operations budget	\$100	
Administrative support	Environmental officer		40 hours
Disposal of birds	Waste services officer		40 hours
Tipping Fees	Environmental Operations budget	\$300	

Item	Responsibility	Cost	Time
	Total cost =	\$5,400	110 hours, or ~ 3 wks

\$10,000 has been allocated within the 2011/2010 financial year environmental operations budget for exotic corella management. It is presumed that this allocation will be sufficient to accommodate the expenses associated with this project.

The estimated 110 hours of required officer support for the program may involve several internal departments including Development Services (Strategic and Environmental Planning), Community Law and Safety and Waste Management. This requirement has been discussed with the relevant managers and is able to be accommodated.

An important component of officer time will be keeping all members of the ECWG and other stakeholders, including the RSPCA, informed of the outcomes of the program.

References

Department of Environment & Conservation (2007). Little Corella, Fauna Note No. 20, Government of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia.