

# Living with Muir's corella

Information about how you can work with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to help conserve Muir's corella and reduce the damage it causes on farms.



## About Muir's corella

- The world's only population of Muir's corella (*Cacatua pastinator pastinator*) occurs in south-western Australia from Boyup Brook and Qualeup south to the lower Perup River, Lake Muir and east to Rocky Gully and Frankland.
- Like other cockatoos, Muir's corella depends on mature eucalypts with hollows for nesting.
- Muir's corellas are great at removing onion grass (*Romulea rosea*) using their long bills to dig up from the ground.
- When large areas of the south-west were cleared for agriculture, numbers were reduced to less than 100.
- Muir's corella is now ranked 'endangered' and is protected by law.
- Traditionally, Muir's corellas fed on native shoots, bulbs and seeds, but now live mostly on farmland, where they damage crops and young trees.
- Shooting to kill and poisoning are illegal.
- There is no easy solution to the problems caused by Muir's corellas, but with planning, cooperation and communication, farmers can reduce the damage.
- A knowledge of the biology of Muir's corella can assist with planning damage control.

## Reducing damage on farms

### The facts

- Muir's corellas feed on different crops at different times of the year depending on when they germinate or ripen.
- Most damage occurs to germinating cereal crops in autumn and seedling trees in winter.
- Food is scarce in summer, when the population behaviour can be controlled by reducing the availability of grain.
- Birds use regular flight paths, flock and feed together and regularly return to good feeding sites.
- Flocks feed in the late afternoon and early morning in summer and can feed all day in winter.
- Onion grass is preferred to commercial crops and can be used as a decoy during sowing.

### The plan

- Work together with neighbours to monitor the whereabouts, movement and number of birds.
- Feed sheep away from crops and at or after dusk, rather than in the morning.
- Sow at the same time as your neighbours and as many paddocks as possible at the same time.
- Develop a program of frequent and random scaring, such as moving scare guns from farm to farm.
- Monitor crops for damage during the first few weeks of growth and take action at the first signs of damage.
- Identify sites for decoy feeding where the corellas can be provided with food away from crops.

## Management

### Crop management

- Sow at the recommended rate, at the same time as your neighbours.
- Cover grain, avoid and clean up spills during sowing and harvesting.
- Minimise residual grain in the stubble by grazing sheep.
- Direct drill to avoid exposing onion grass corms in seeded paddocks.

### Scare tactics

- Monitor the activity of birds and combine several methods of scaring with licensed scare shooting.
- Scare early in the season, early in the day and shift scare guns often.

### Decoy feeding

- Decoy feed to divert birds from crops and continue to scare at crops.
- Decoy feeding when food is not limited (e.g. autumn and winter) will not lead to an increase in population numbers but may reduce damage to your crop.
- Decoy feed as far away as possible from crops.
- Use seconds seed, or plough up onion grass in paddocks away from crops, to expose corms.

*We can't outnumber them, but we can outsmart them.*

## Seasonal planner

Understanding the biology of Muir's corella can help reduce damage to crops and young trees.



## Working together

Farmers can work with DEC to help conserve Muir's corellas and reduce the damage they cause by:

- retaining old, large and decaying trees on their property,
- planting the next generation of veteran trees such as marri, jarrah, yate flooded gum, paperbarks and wandoo,
- planning damage control early in the season and monitoring bird numbers, movements and damage,
- cooperating with neighbours to manage crops, scare birds and decoy feed, and
- recording successful methods of damage control and sharing the knowledge with neighbours.

For more information about living with Muir's corella contact:

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