

Committee Meeting 7 December 2010 Petition – Corellas at Horseshoe Lake Supplementary Information

1. Introduction:

This report has been prepared in order to assist Council in the consideration of a recommendation from the Bunbury Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee (“BESAC”) concerning the management of the exotic corella population in Bunbury.

This report addresses the following topics and is structured accordingly:

- Background information concerning BESAC’s recommendation to Council;
- Local exotic corella population information;
- Exotic corella impacts;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Management strategies; and
- Other local government experiences.

2. Background information concerning BESAC’s recommendation to Council:

A petition signed by 286 residents in the Horseshoe Lake area regarding the nuisance caused by exotic corellas was tabled at the Council Meeting held on the 3rd August 2010. The petition text is quoted below:

“To: His Worship the Mayor and City of Bunbury Councillors assembled.

We the undersigned bring to your attention our extreme concerns relating to the growing population of White Corellas that inhabit the Horseshoe Lake area in Sandridge Park. These birds are an introduced species which are at risk of endangering native species and have been declared a pest. Since 2007 the flock have permanently night roosted in the trees along Sandridge Road and multiplied to an estimated 800. They have caused considerable damage to the vegetation of the area and to wiring into nearby homes. Residents living nearby are subject to daily excessive noise pollution, often as early as 3:30am and throughout the evening. Three years of this excessive noise has caused great stress to some residents.

We seek Council's consideration to attaining a licence from the Department of Environment to undertake a reduction program for the control of this flock.

Your petitioners pray that the City of Bunbury will heed the request of the people".

Council subsequently decided to accept the petition and refer it to BESAC for consideration and report (Council Decision 133/10).

BESAC was initially briefed on the issue on the 12 August 2010. Thorough consideration of the matter by the advisory committee was not possible during subsequent meeting rounds for a range of reasons. As such, BESAC formulated the recommendation to Council upon the matter via email following the receipt and consideration of a discussion paper from the advisory committee's executive officer on the 22nd November 2010. BESAC's recommendation to Council is detailed below:

"That Council:

- 1. Acknowledges 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. Facilitates 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. Local Exotic Corella Population Information:

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

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 Department of Environment & Conservation has advised that the corellas in question are native to the eastern states of Australia and are thereby not naturally found in the Bunbury area. It should be noted that there is a little corella subspecies that is native to northern Western Australia. The Department of Environment & Conservation has advised that the little corella subspecies found in Bunbury is an eastern states subspecies (*Cacatua sanguinea gymnopsis*).

The Department of Environment & Conservation advises that the exotic corellas have been introduced to Bunbury and other parts of Western Australia through escape and release from aviaries (Department of Environment & Conservation, 2007).

It is understood that the exotic corellas were first observed in Bunbury approximately 15 years ago. Favourable conditions (e.g. the presence of major food sources such as abundant pasture and irrigated turf areas) are thought to have supported the survival and breeding of the escaped / released exotic corellas in the wild, which has resulted in the further growth of the local population.

The local population is thought to typically divide into three flocks during the day, which often occupy the Eaton, Hay Park and Dalyellup areas. At night, particularly during the summer months, the entire population is thought to roost at Horseshoe Lake as it is the only known roosting site in the Bunbury area.

It is understood that the population is mostly resident to the local area ranging from Australind to Dalyellup and east to the Collie foot hills, although some minor dispersal to adjacent areas may occur.

The Department of Environment & Conservation 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. Under such circumstances, it is anticipated that the impacts associated with the exotic corellas will continue and may intensify.

4. Exotic Corella Impacts:

The problems caused by the exotic corellas typically include:

- Noise;
- Fouling of areas / assets;
- Damage to trees, cabling, turf; and
- Impacts on native species.

4.1 Noise:

The exotic corellas are noisy animals by nature; a characteristic which tends to be compounded by their flocking behaviour. For

example, previous monitoring of the noise levels generated by the little corella (N.B. one of the exotic corella species found in Bunbury) in parts of South Australia found instances where the noise generated by flocks of the birds exceeded the following recognised standards:

- World Health Organisation guidelines for sleep disturbance and annoyance;
- For comparative purposes, the maximum allowable noise levels for industries in a predominantly industrial area under the South Australian Government's Environmental Protection (Industrial Noise) Policy; and
- Maximum recommended design sound levels for primary and secondary school classrooms under AS/NZS2107 for areas adjacent to certain classrooms (Department for Environment & Heritage, 2007).

4.2 Fouling of Areas / Assets:

The exotic corellas, as with many flocking bird species, have a tendency to cause the fouling of areas through the deposition and accumulation of droppings. This can result in the loss of amenity in Public Open Space areas and impacts on residents and businesses through the fouling of clothes on washing lines, cars, commercial areas etc.

4.3 Damage:

The exotic corellas have a tendency to chew items that they encounter for a range of reasons including innate curiosity, beak maintenance and foliage thinning to assist in avoiding predation (Tracey *et al.*, 2007). This is another habit that is compounded by the birds flocking behaviour, which often manifests in the form of tree defoliation and damage to cabling and lighting in public and private areas.

The exotic corellas often feed on corms, bulbs and roots and will dig in grassed areas for such items. This behaviour can result in significant holes in playing surfaces, which can pose a public liability insurance risk to land managers through potential injury to playing field users (Department of Environment & Conservation, 2009).

4.4 Impacts on Native Species:

It is understood that the exotic corellas have the potential to impact upon certain native flora species (i.e. particularly trees and shrubs) through their chewing behaviour and tendency to cause defoliation.

The exotic corellas have the potential to cause adverse impacts upon native fauna species through competition for habitat and food. Of particular concern is the exotic corellas preference for tree hollows for nesting as this behaviour is shared by each of the three species of Black Cockatoo found in the South West. The Black Cockatoo species in question are considered to be threatened at present and competition for nesting hollows has been identified as one of the key threatening processes for these species (Department of Environment & Conservation, 2009).

4.5 Recorded Impacts in Bunbury:

To date, the local exotic corella population has caused a considerable nuisance to sections of the Bunbury community as evidenced by the recent petition received from residents in the Horseshoe Lake area.

It is understood that the Horseshoe Lake residents concerns to date have included the noise nuisance caused by the exotic corellas as well as the defoliation of vegetation and damage to wiring on homes in the area.

It is understood that the local hockey stadium had an incidence of speaker cable damage caused by the exotic corellas during a recent hockey carnival.

The Bunbury Turf Club has advised that it is experiencing ongoing problems due to the exotic corellas spooking horses and causing damage to the trotting track and equipment. It is understood that over \$10,000 worth of damage has occurred to wiring on the main stadium and callers box during recent months.

These impacts have prompted the Bunbury Turf Club to undertake control of the exotic corellas on its land. The Bunbury Turf Club has been issued a 'Damage Licence' from the Department of Environment & Conservation to control 300 birds. Ornithological Technical Services, an avian pest management contractor, has been engaged to undertake the control works and has culled approximately 30 birds to date.

It should be noted that whilst the Bunbury Turf Club is currently undertaking control of exotic corellas in Bunbury, this is unlikely to be sufficient to address the exotic corella issue in full given the wide distribution of the exotic corellas beyond the bounds of the Bunbury Turf Club's property. Also, it is possible that the exotic corellas will develop avoidance strategies to the site as the control works progress.

5. Roles and Responsibilities:

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, based upon considerable liaison with relevant State Government agencies and a review of applicable legislation.

It is understood that the exotic corellas are not 'declared pests' in the Bunbury area as is typically understood in the context of the *WA Agriculture & Related Resources Act 1976*.

The Department of Environment & Conservation and the Department of Agriculture & Food, as the lead State agencies in the management of pest animals, have both confirmed that they do not have a statutory responsibility to control the exotic corellas. It is understood that consequently neither Department intends to undertake management of the exotic corella population at the present time. However, both Department's have informally advised that management is warranted and that they may be able to assist other parties to undertake control works through the provision of advice.

The *WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* protects all Australian native species within the State of Western Australia, including animals not native to this State. As such, the exotic corellas are protected under the *Act* and a 'Damage Licence' is required from the Department of Environment & Conservation in order to 'take' them (N.B. the *Act* defines 'to take' in specific terms including killing, capturing, disturbing etc.).

The Department of Environment & Conservation has advised that it would be willing to issue a 'Damage Licence' to control the local exotic corella population provided that an appropriate strategy (e.g. incorporating risk management) is first formulated.

6. Management Strategies:

The Department of Environment & Conservation advises that the most effective methods for controlling exotic corellas include limiting access to food, scaring and population control by shooting and trapping. Ineffective / inappropriate methods of control include fertility control, alpha-chloralose, lethal poisons and anaesthetics and carbon monoxide necrosis (Department of Environment & Conservation, 2009).

It is understood that many of these strategies require statutory licences (e.g. shot firing licences, poison application licences etc.), and as such the services of a suitably qualified contractor may be needed in order for such strategies to be employed in Bunbury.

Ornithological Treatment Services has advised that the management of the local exotic corella population may be an ongoing process, particularly if the escape and release of birds from aviaries continues into the future. Education of the community in this regard may therefore be an important component of any future management strategy employed in Bunbury.

Ornithological Treatment Services recommends that a collaborative approach to management by key stakeholders be developed as this promotes the pooling of knowledge and resources and assists in the management of risks through shared responsibility.

The Department of Agriculture & Food has advised that a range of management strategies should be employed in order to maximise the likelihood of success. The Department also advised that a discrete approach to the management of pest animal species is often warranted given the potential sensitivities associated with such activities.

7. Other Local Government Experiences:

It is understood that the exotic corellas are also a concern in other local governments throughout the South West such as the Shire of Busselton, City of Mandurah, City of Rockingham and at a range of Metropolitan councils such as the City of Swan.

It is understood that the Shire of Busselton recently granted permission to a local volunteer to cull exotic corellas via shooting on a one year trial basis.

The City of Mandurah and City of Rockingham have both attempted to manage exotic corellas in the past through the use of scaring devices. However, these attempts are understood to have been ineffective as they tended to shift the exotic corella population to other areas and therefore didn't address the problem. Both local governments now undertake population reduction on an as needs basis (e.g. every few years).

It is understood that the City of Swan has had an issue with exotic corella nuisance for the past ten years. The City has not undertaken control of the local exotic corella population to date because considerable community opposition to this has previously been expressed.

In the context of the Greater Bunbury Region, it is understood that none of the surrounding shires have undertaken management of exotic corellas to date. However, the Shire of Harvey and the Shire of Dardanup have both expressed interest at an officer level in developing a regional collaborative approach to the management of the local exotic corella population.

8. References:

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

Department of Environment & Conservation. (2009). *Corellas and Other Flocking Cockatoos*. Pest notes: preventing and controlling damage by pest animals in Western Australia. Government of Western Australia. Perth, Western Australia.

Department of Environment & Heritage. (2007). *Little Corella (Cacatua sanguinea) Resource Document*. Government of South Australia. Adelaide, South Australia.

Tracey, J., Bomford, M., Hart, Q., Saunders, G. and Sinclair, R. (2007). *Managing Bird Damage to Fruit and Other Horticultural Crops*. Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.