

Recovering the malleefowl in the northern WA Wheatbelt

THREATENED SPECIES NETWORK COMMUNITY GRANTS PROFILE



Malleefowl have disappeared from much of their former range in southwest Western Australia as habitat has become increasingly fragmented and degraded, and fox numbers have risen. There was an urgent need to review the status and conservation requirements for this species in the northern wheatbelt where malleefowl had not yet been properly studied. The North Central Malleefowl Preservation Group (NCMPG) worked with local farmers, NRM groups, the CSIRO, Birds Australia (WA) and the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management to determine the abundance, distribution, habitat use, movement and management actions needed to recover malleefowl in this landscape.

Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*)

Commonwealth Status: Vulnerable (EPBC Act 1999)
 Western Australia Status: Vulnerable (Wildlife Conservation Act 1950)

Malleefowl are large ground dwelling birds belonging to the family Megapodiidae (meaning big feet). They spend much of the year building and maintaining a large mound of earth and leaf-litter in which they incubate their eggs. Their preferred habitat is semi-arid to arid shrublands and low woodlands and they were originally widespread in every mainland state except Queensland.

Malleefowl have now lost much of their best habitat to land clearing or grazing by sheep, cattle, rabbits and goats and remaining habitat is very fragmented. Foxes, altered fire regimes and climate change are also significant threats to this species.

Project outcomes

With the assistance of a Threatened Species Network Community Grant, NCMPG and project partners held workshops and field days to raise awareness of malleefowl and their management needs, and to encourage community participation in mound surveys and land management planning for malleefowl conservation. NCMPG followed national best-practice protocols for malleefowl survey and monitoring, and produced a booklet entitled 'Volunteer Guidelines for Malleefowl Monitoring' to further assist community involvement and to ensure that the data collected during surveys is of a high standard.

A large-scale annual fox baiting program has been initiated with the involvement of between 80 and 120 farmers, which should improve the species' chances of survival in the region. Landholders are also being encouraged to fence strategic areas of habitat and corridors of remnant native vegetation to better allow malleefowl movement and dispersal.

Outputs

Area surveyed: 1050 ha

Volunteers participated: 56

Person days worked: 840

Products

- Volunteer Guidelines for Malleefowl Monitoring
- Information brochures
- Fact sheets

Expenditure

TSN grant funds - \$12,625.00

Proponent - \$59,840.00

Total project - \$72,465.00

Benshemesh, J. (2000) National Recovery Plan for Malleefowl. <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/recovery/malleefowl/index.html>
 Malleefowl Preservation Group website (2007) <http://www.malleefowl.com.au/Malleefowl.htm>
 North Central Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc (2005) Final report to the TSN on "Recovering the Malleefowl in the northern WA Wheatbelt" (TSN reference WA05/103)
 Threatened Species Network (2006) Malleefowl fact sheet. <http://wwf.org.au/publications/ntsd06-malleefowl-habitat-fragmentation/>