



# MEDIA RELEASE

27 October 2015

## Farm Habitats for Woodland Birds

The second count of the twice yearly woodland bird monitoring program in the south west has recorded more birds than the previous spring.

On Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 October, 25 participants including farmers, members of the Panyyabyr Landcare Group (PLG) and the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group (UHLMG), visited vegetated sites on four properties, conducting counts of woodland birds. In total, 72 different species were identified across the two mornings in the two Landcare group areas. The program is undertaken as part of the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and has been made possible through the volunteered support provided by the Hamilton and Horsham branches of Birdlife Australia.

The purpose of monitoring is to collect base line data of woodland birds in the area, to measure the impacts of Landcare restoration efforts by local farmers. Farmers use the data collected to assess the health of their farms in their attempts to jointly manage their properties for both productive and environmental factors.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA Project Officer, David Nichols revealed that the weekend's activities were highly successful with all participants enjoying the monitoring activities and some great results recorded by the group.

Dan Tehan, Member for Wannon, joined with Landcare members to monitor the last farm. Here he learnt some of the tricks of bird identification, as well as the underlying principles of the monitoring program. "It was a great opportunity to join with the local land managers and see this fabulous project being implemented. To be able to identify bird species will provide us with useful indicators of our woodland health and in turn measure the benefits of environmental works or tree planting" said Mr Tehan.

At Woody and Craig Oliver's farm south of Dunkeld, 24 species of bird were identified in a 20 minute period. This was an encouraging result and reflected owners Woody and Craig's efforts to retain and improve habitat on their grazing property.

Craig, who is also the President of the Panyyabyr Landcare Group, said that after 20 years of Landcare work, especially tree planting, it is important to monitor and assess the effectiveness of these works. Monitoring woodland birds provides us with that opportunity. Woody believes that monitoring tells us what is working and what might be missing in our Landcare works. The species we are finding will inform us as to where the strengths in our habitat are. The landscape is the basis of our farming business and it is important that we look after the environment that underpins our production.

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In addition to the high number of birds at the Oliver's property, David was pleased to find resident White Browed Babblers and Red-Capped Robins on a revegetation patch in the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group area, rewarding the effectiveness of Landcare efforts.

Populations of woodland bird communities have struggled in South Eastern Australia over past decades, with many species declining greatly in the ranges where they were once found. This decline has occurred due to a number of factors including habitat loss and the increased number of introduced predators such as cats and foxes.

As a result, the land managed by farmers is now vitally important in the survival of the remaining populations of birds. Landcare farmers are taking the lead, creating suitable habitats for the woodland birds on their properties and extending existing pockets of native vegetation.

Farmers, property owners and managers can increase habitat for native birds by planting native vegetation close to existing vegetation, protecting mature trees such as eucalypts and planting a mix of native shrubs around their bases. A diversity of native grasses and shrubs can be food sources for woodland birds and these birds contribute to a balanced ecosystem. Retaining logs and dead trees and controlling introduced predators and pests may also increase the presence of native woodland birds and overall land health.



**Photo: Dan Tehan (Member for Wannon), Craig Oliver (President of Panyyabyr Landcare Group) and Sally Purnell (president of Birdlife Hamilton)**

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