

DESTRUCTION OF BIRD HABITAT

Today, many of the mature native trees left in our agricultural areas are being axed and chain sawn by nest robbers. Not only are these trees partly or wholly destroyed; it also eliminates the future nesting sites for the generations of birds which could follow if the habitat had not been destroyed.



This was a nesting tree. Nest robbers have reduced it to a pile of dead wood.

In attempts to procure nestlings, robbers cause mutilation and subsequent high mortality to the young. Wire coathangers are extended down hollow tree trunks and the hook is ruthlessly used to jag out young inmates. With the decrease in wild bird populations and their nest sites there is increased competition among illegal trappers which necessitates the continuance of intense and costly enforcement programmes by the Department. Add also the possibility of a climatic catastrophe causing destruction of the vital limited vegetation, and we have a disaster.

Habitat destruction is widespread and is leading to the elimination of such species as Major Mitchell, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Corella, Naretha Blue Bonnet and others. The many species of birds which inhabit the sparsely vegetated areas of the State continue to suffer because of the direct and indirect interference from man. Some species today could be best described as remnant populations.

The failure in the past by farmers to leave adequate stands of timber has caused a lack of nesting and breeding sites, thereby creating fierce competition between the different species. These factors, together with harsh climatic conditions, also result in minimal breeding success of the rarer species.

Because of the demand by local and overseas bird fanciers, wilful damage and destruction of the already decimated vegetation by avaricious misfits is now taking place. The effects of this are many and varied, the most severe being the complete loss of future nesting and breeding sites. Wildlife Officers of the Department who often come in contact with habitat destruction and crippled, suffering birds would like to see an end to all aviculture. It is however realized that aviculture in the hands of responsible people can have recreational, scientific and conservation aspects.

The following points and photographs are therefore provided to remind everyone that supreme responsibility in the chosen hobby or business of aviculture is imperative if it is to continue.

1. Aviculturists or those interested in this field should have a copy of "Licensing Requirements for Keeping Aviary Birds", available free from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.
2. **Regulations**—Aviculture is strictly controlled under the Wildlife Conservation Act and Regulations. Copies of the Act and Regulations are available from Parliamentary Papers, Government Printer's Office, Wembley, Western Australia. The controlling authority is the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.
3. **Acquiring Birds**—Birds may be obtained by purchase from legitimate sources only.



A River Gum chopped out on two previous occasions

4. **Licenses**—A license is required to keep in "captivity" any protected species of fauna whatsoever. There are various categories of licenses, depending on the species to be held. The minimum is a basic license costing \$1.00. In addition aviaries must conform to certain standards set out in the regulations.



“Milly Soak” approx 15 km north of Cue. A ruined Galah nest.

5. **Notifications**—Any increase or decrease in the number of species of birds requires that the Department be notified. Aviculturists need to maintain a record of all transactions and breeding results.
6. **Protected species**—All native Australian and migratory birds plus others which have been declared to be “fauna” within the meaning of the Wildlife Conservation Act. Therefore the trapping of birds is subject to restrictions and license limitations.
7. **Import/Export**—The import and export of birds is rigidly controlled under State and Commonwealth legislation. Movement interstate requires the importing *and* exporting State to give approval. Commonwealth health and quarantine requirements must also be met. Full details are contained in the Import/Export booklet issued on request by the Department.

8. Responsibilities of Genuine Aviculturists—

- (i) Acquire birds only from legitimate sources.
- (ii) Abide by the rules and regulations designed for conservation purposes and protection of species.
- (iii) Do not deal with *unlicensed* persons in any transactions.
- (iv) Report illegal trapping or smuggling activities—you are protecting the role and activity of *genuine aviculturists*.



A young Kestrel backs up in defence. This chopped out parrot nest now used by another species.