

## Mapping the birds of rural landscapes: where are our birds now?

by Cheryl Gole

You've fenced off your remnant bushland from stock. You've replanted trees and understorey. Your land is being managed for wildlife. Now its time to find out which varieties of feathered wildlife are inhabiting the land you care for so carefully. A new project enables people to help map the birds of our rural landscapes.

In the 15 years since the first "Atlas of Australian Birds" was published, over 10 million ha of bushland has been cleared and some 100,000 ha has been replanted. Where are our birds now? The "New Atlas of Australian Birds" wants to answer that question by mapping the distribution of all Australia's birds in all types of habitats, and we need your help to compile it.

The Atlas is the largest bird survey ever attempted in Australia. The four-year project has been funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and will give you the opportunity to put your birds on the map. Anyone can take part, as long as they have some knowledge of their local birds, a pair of binoculars and a field guide to Australian birds.

How do you atlas? Its easy, and Birds Australia, the organisation running the project, will provide you with a kit of materials to answer your questions and get you started. There are several different survey methods and the project is very flexible. If you also do a once-off habitat survey in some places, and do a bird survey in each season in those sites, that will give us extremely valuable information about how our birds are using land that has been grazed, burnt, cleared, logged, revegetated, or fenced off from grazing stock. We are particularly interested in how birds are responding to the immense effort



Jenny MacIntosh (left) and Cheryl Gole birding at 'Shelterwood', Mt Helena.

that has gone into revegetating our landscapes and fencing remnant bushland and wetland.

Australia's biggest bird survey is now under way. Become an atlaser and contribute your bird sightings and knowledge of local landuse practices to map our birds. Why not birdwatch on your land, and maybe also in local bushland or wetland, or other places where you visit or go on holiday? Its a great contribution to a very big project and, if you keep a copy of all your surveys, you will have an important record of the bird biodiversity on your own land. Australia's beautiful birds are excellent indicators of the health of our land. Wouldn't you like to know about yours?

*If you would like a starter kit, or just find out more about atlasing, or nominate your farm, or offer to be an Atlas Project host, (or whatever!) contact Cheryl Gole, Atlas Project Assistant, Birds Australia (WA), 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat WA 6014. Phone/fax 9293 4958.*