

Rainbow lorikeets have been established in the Perth metropolitan area since the 1960s and it is estimated that more than 15,000 birds currently live in the area.

In late 2001, rainbow lorikeets were declared pests in Western Australia in all areas south of the Kimberley excluding the Perth metropolitan area, under legislation administered by the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA). Due in part to reports of significant damage to table grapes in the Swan Valley in the summer of 2006/2007, the declaration was changed in 2006 to include the Perth metropolitan area.

The declaration means that private, municipal and State Government landholders are responsible for the control of lorikeets on their land. It is extremely important that when birds are found and identified outside the main infested area in Perth, they are removed immediately so further establishments of this bird pest do not establish in other areas.

Lorikeets are considered serious agricultural and horticultural pests. They cause severe damage to fruit crops, foul vehicles and outdoor living areas, are extremely noisy, and compete with other species for food. Rainbow lorikeets can be identified by their noisy, continuous screeching when flying and at a food source. They have a swift direct flight with rapid whirring wing beats, and display flashes of dark green and bright red.

What has been happening with rainbow lorikeets recently?

In February 2004, the Rainbow Lorikeet Working Group WA was established in response to concern from community conservation groups and the general public. The working group consists of representatives from a range of government and non-government organisations.

FERALS

ON THE LOOK- OUT FOR LORIKEETS

Marion Massam and Lisa Wright



The working group has prepared a Rainbow Lorikeet Management Strategy, which details the long-term aims of the group, short-term targets and progress over the past few years. The strategy indicates that if 4,000 to 5,000 lorikeets were removed from the Perth population each year for the next five to seven years, with follow-up maintenance of 500 - 1,000 birds per annum after this period, the population could be kept at a low level of less than 1,000 birds.

The Agriculture Protection Board has recently approved this strategy and it will shortly be available on DAFWA's website. Additional funding sources have been identified and representations are being made.

In addition to supporting the efforts of landholders (see below), DAFWA and DEC are working to reduce bird numbers in parts of the Perth area where private landholders cannot. This work includes conducting regular night shoots at one of the big lorikeet roosts in the city, Perth Domestic Airport.

The Swan Valley Declared Species Group (DSG) is an action

group that has been formed by the Table Grape Growers Association, the Swan Valley Winemakers and the City of Swan with matching funds coming from the Agriculture Protection Board. The group has been assisting valley grape growers in planning bird management activities after severe damage was reported last year. At least 1,500 lorikeets have been removed so far this grape season. In addition, damage estimates are being made along with counts of birds, to gauge the effect of control so the information can be used to support a case for further funding.

Reports from the Perth Hills area indicate that perhaps more than 2,000 birds have been destroyed over the past two to three months by horticulture growers.

To manage the spread of lorikeets outside the Perth area, an incident management plan has been developed. During the coming months, the plan is to remove rainbow lorikeets roosting in the towns of Northam, Toodyay and York (if they are shown to be present in all three towns). The local communities have been kept fully informed of the actions that will be undertaken by the department and their help has been enlisted to look out for lorikeets and inform them of the methods used to remove them.

Further information is available from DAFWA's website (search for Management of Rainbow Lorikeets page): www.agric.wa.gov.au

Any sightings of rainbow lorikeets should be reported to the DAFWA's Pest and Disease Information Service on freecall 1800 084 881 or by completing the on-line reporting form.

Marion Massam is a Development Officer and Lisa Wright the Communications Officer for the Invasive Species Program with DAFWA.