



No. 18 Options for parrot control

Damage control

Damage caused by parrots can be reduced using the techniques explained in this fauna note. For more information on the biology and control of specific parrot species, refer to the fauna notes listed under further reading.

Legislation

Some parrots are declared pests of agriculture under the provisions of the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*, administered by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food. This declaration allows for the approval and implementation of a management program in various areas of the state, in accordance with the provisions made under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*. Examples include the Australian Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*) and the Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*).

As native species, parrots are protected under provisions of the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Under this Act, except in areas where open seasons have been gazetted, destruction of birds can only take place with written approval (via a damage licence) from DEC. Destruction should be viewed as a last resort after all other control options have been attempted.

Effective parrot damage control

Management of parrot damage requires a strategic approach that takes the individual circumstances of each problem into account. Thus, it is not possible to set down a generic program for all pest management problems and management plans must be prepared on a case by case basis.

More information and guidelines on how to develop and implement a vertebrate pest management program using these guidelines can be found at the bureau of rural sciences website on agricultural pests and feral animals.

Reducing the potential for damage

- Enquire with neighbours before planting to determine if birds are present or if there is a history of damage.
- Plant crops in large blocks with smaller edge to area ratio as these generally suffer less damage. This is because

parrots tend to damage outside rows first and most severely.

- Plant crops away from native vegetation (which parrots rely on for nest and roost sites) and away from the birds' regular flight paths where crops are less likely to be found and damaged. Crops planted away from areas where the birds have fed (stubble, silos) are also less likely to be damaged.
- Plant early or late maturing and other varieties favoured by parrots (e.g. red and green apple varieties) away from crop edges.

Successful damage reduction

- Consider if the benefits of taking action (decreased damage) will outweigh the possibly considerable costs. Trials have shown that sometimes the most cost-effective measure is to do nothing, especially for low-value crops.
- Set aside adequate resources (money, labour, equipment) to deal with damage problems.
- Use control combinations that are known to work on parrots and in your situation.
- Be persistent. Use scaring devices early and late in the day throughout the damage period when the birds are likely to be feeding in the area. This will increase the time taken before the birds become used to the devices.
- Combine a number of devices and use them in rotation to maintain variety. This will reduce the chances of the birds becoming used to the devices.
- Cooperate with neighbours to ensure they use methods that compliment yours.
- Scare or shoot to scare occasionally throughout the year to maintain a degree of wariness in birds and to indicate that the area is not safe for feeding.
- Check trees for signs of damage regularly. Early action can then be taken before the birds become reliant on the crop for food or develop a habit of coming to the crop.
- Determine an acceptable level of damage. Assess and record losses caused by the parrots and monitor how effective the program has been. The costs and benefits of damage control can then be assessed and the program

can be modified to achieve better control in the following seasons.

- Provide hungry birds with a feeding area away from the crop. If alternative feeding areas are not provided, the birds may return to protected crops despite other control efforts like scaring and shooting.

- Fauna note no. 24. Western rosella. DEC, Western Australia.

References

Bomford, M. and Sinclair, R. (2002) Australian research on bird pests: impact, management and future directions. *Emu* 102: 29-45.

Further Information

Contact your local DEC office.

See the department's website for the latest information:

www.dec.wa.gov.au

Further Reading

- Fauna note no. 22. Australian ringneck. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 23. Red-capped parrot. DEC, Western Australia.

Options for reducing damage caused by parrots.

Option	Application	Benefits	Costs
Limiting food	Dispose of fruit which has fallen from trees, control weeds. Fauna note no. 11. Limiting access to food to reduce bird damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Can reduce bird numbers over time. Can reduce concentrations of birds in the vicinity of farm buildings.	Requires continued attention over a long period to be effective.
Anti-bird netting	Enclose crops with temporary or permanent netting. Fauna note no. 3. Netting to reduce bird damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Effective, long term and humane.	High initial capital outlay. May obstruct farming practices and require maintenance.
Shooting	Only legal method of destruction. Damage licences may be required from DEC. Firearms must be licensed. Fauna note no. 9. Destruction of birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Humane if properly carried out. Effective when used intensively and when combined with other methods.	Must be applied intensively. Not suitable in built-up areas or very small farms. Usually targets immature birds, many of which die anyway.
Scaring	Various devices, most effective when used in combination. Fauna note no. 2. Scaring and repelling birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	Humane and safer than shooting in built-up areas. Scaring backed up with shooting can be effective when used intensively.	Often costly, must be applied intensively and with other methods to be effective. Scarers may breach noise regulations and crackers can be a minor fire risk.
Alternative food	Place far from crop, birds move to undisturbed alternative. Continue scaring at crop. Fauna note no. 13. Decoy feeding – providing alternative food to birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.	In blue gum plantations, somewhat effective on Australian ringneck, but unknown effectiveness against red-capped parrots.	Decoy food supply must always be available during the damage season or birds could shift back to the protected crop.
Encourage birds of prey	Install perching poles, protect native vegetation which provide nesting sites.	Low cost solution.	Must be combined with other control measures. Anti-coagulant rodenticides must be used carefully so as not to affect birds of prey.

Option	Application	Benefits	Costs
Rectify damage to blue gums afterwards	Silvicultural treatments minimise economic loss to blue gums include tree culling, form pruning and coppicing. TreeNote 29. Rectifying parrot damage in eucalypts in the greater than 450 mm rainfall zone of WA. Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia.		
Live trapping	Illegal without special permit from DEC.		Only for use against Australian ringneck parrots.
Live export of birds	Illegal under federal legislation. Fauna note no. 14. Trapping and export of native animals. DEC, Western Australia.		Wild-caught birds make poor pets and often die in transit. As birds enter the market prices and demand will drop.
Repellents	Fauna note no. 2. Scaring and repelling birds to reduce damage. DEC, Western Australia.		Do not appear to be effective against birds. Restrictions/prohibitions for some products.
Poisoning	Illegal under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> .		Crop contamination threatens markets. Other non-target species may be affected.

Last updated 18 June 2009

Further Information

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