

Developing the South Australian Little Corella Management Strategy



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Summary of the issue

In the last 50 years, Little Corellas have extended their range from the far north east of South Australia into southern agricultural, urban and peri-urban areas. Little Corella flocks are reportedly staying for longer periods of time. Little Corellas have become a social, economic and environmental concern for many people throughout South Australia, whilst others value the sight and interaction with Little Corellas in our landscapes.

Little Corellas are described as an 'urban adaptor' as they are opportunistic feeders and consume a variety of food found in urban and agricultural environments, and enjoy easy access to water and shelter with little threat from predators. Our land management activities have created a perfect environment for Little Corellas. This habitat adaption has supported the population growth and increased flock size.

Managing little corella abundance is complex and polarises the community. Addressing all of the contributing factors to the impacts will take time, money and effort from all stakeholders. Communicating to the most affected, managing expectations of what can be done by when and maintaining long-term stakeholder commitment will be the biggest challenges.

What has been done in the past

Local Government, private land manager and landowner actions to deter, move or destroy Little Corellas have been undertaken for decades with varying degrees of success. Some local governments have implemented their own Little Corella Management Plans to try to address the impacts to their community. State government departments, such as Education, Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, etc. have undertaken their own activities to remedy damage to public infrastructure. Department for Environment and Water (DEW) staff have provided on the ground advice to people and groups affected by little corellas, and DEW offers training and accreditation for trapping and gassing of little corellas in line with the Code of Practice for humane destruction of flocking birds by trapping and carbon dioxide narcosis. Extensive research on the issue of little corellas has also been undertaken in the past two decades. See 'key resources'.

Research was undertaken in 2015-2017 by the University of South Australia Discovery Circle in partnership with the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (now DEW), Local Government Association of South Australia, University of South Australia, Alexandrina Council, City of Marion, City of Salisbury, District Council of Mount Barker, The Flinders Ranges Council and Town of Gawler. The recommendations have informed the development of a state-wide strategy.

Developing a strategy

The Department of Environment and Water (DEW) has lead the development of a South Australian Little Corella Management Strategy (the strategy) which has been compiled in conjunction with key stakeholders. The state-wide strategy builds on consultation with local government in the recent years and decades of research into the impacts of little corellas.

1. Little Corella Reference Group

DEW invited 26 local governments, the Local Government Association and other state government departments to be a part of the Little Corella Reference Group. These organisations have reported impacts of little corellas on the land they manage and have various experience in little corella management. The reference group have co-designed the strategic framework and provided ongoing feedback throughout the drafting of the strategy.

2. Industry consultation

DEW directly contacted industry stakeholders that were known to have managed the impacts of little corellas, may have land that attracts little corellas or who have expressed an interest in little corella management in the past. These

stakeholders were asked to provide their input into the methods and actions so the strategic framework could be achieved.

3. Public consultation

DEW are now seeking public feedback on the draft strategy. Feedback will inform the state government of the community's values around little corella management and regional management approaches.

Key resources

We encourage people interested in little corellas to familiarise themselves with the research reports available on our webpage. www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/plants-and-animals/Abundant_species/little-corellas.

Glossary of terms

Controls Management activities that include lethal and non-lethal actions that aim to deter or remove birds (or reduce their numbers) in an area in order to reduce their impacts.

Corella Sanctuary (also referred to as 'sacrificial site') suitable areas deliberately set aside as a little corella habitat; little corellas are not to be moved on from these sites.

Cull To destroy (kill) birds, usually in large numbers, to reduce the overall population size.

Early bird Small numbers of birds that arrive in an area ahead of a main flock. Terms 'scout bird' and 'call bird' incorrectly imply that birds report back to other birds in an organised and strategic way.

Exotic plants Non-native plant species can include Australian native plants that are not indigenous (i.e. from other places in Australia).

Exterminate To destroy (kill) every individual bird and remove the species entirely and permanently from all areas (synonymous with extinction).

Flock A large number of birds congregating together in a single area.

Habitat Little corella habitat includes roosting and nesting, watering and feeding areas.

Habitat modification Modifying habitat in some way, such as planting reeds along water banks or increasing shrub cover. As a management strategy, habitat modification may be used to attract or deter particular wildlife from target areas.

Human-wildlife conflict Experience of negative interactions with wildlife. Causes of this conflict can be varied, from real or perceived danger, to economic losses, to a reduction in amenity.

Lethal deterrent Lethal destruction of a small number of birds in order to deter a large flock of birds from the area, typically used in conjunction with non-lethal measures.

Loafing behaviour Loafing areas are where little corellas digest food, preen, play and rest.

Nesting habitat Hollows in large trees and cliffs comprise nesting habitat for little corellas.

Non-lethal deterrent Non-lethal actions that deter birds from an area.

Population reduction To destroy large numbers of birds to reduce the overall population size.

Problem site Where the presence of little corellas is of concern and where management action is desired.

Resident flocks Small resident flocks of little corellas that persist year-round.

Roosting Birds sleep at their roosts, typically little corellas settle at night in large roost trees.

Trap and gas/euthanize A method of "Lethal population control", where birds are captured and then destroyed by carbon dioxide narcosis.

Urban adapters Species that live in natural and modified areas, e.g. little corellas.

Wildlife acceptance capacity A measure of human tolerance of a wildlife species or of a situation involving wildlife (e.g. little corella acceptance capacity).