
EDITORIAL

In this issue, two papers are published which relate to feeding preferences and poisoning of corellas. The response of the referees and the editorial team to these papers was interesting and diverse. All agreed that there were no errors of science in the methods and that the content was important. There was some dispute however, as to whether the papers were suitable for our journal, especially considering the name of the Journal — 'Corella'. There was also some discussion as to whether the topics sat well with our association's stated aim of promoting bird conservation.

No doubt you, the members, will have an opinion, and I would be very interested to hear from you on this point. However, what swayed me in the end to accept the papers for publication was the fact that changed land uses and agricultural practices (both in urban and rural areas) following European settlement have indeed made pests out of some species of animals. And no matter how unpalatable killing of our native animals may be to us, we cannot prevent it simply by refusing to acknowledge that it happens. That is akin to burying our head in the sand, ostrich style. And, as you will see from the list of references in these papers, the management of pest wildlife species is a big issue world-wide. Not publishing does not make it stop.

There are many examples of how we have altered the habitat and made it more suitable to other species that we

may consider less desirable. Two familiar ones are the Noisy Miner and the Bell Miner, which sometimes colonize habitats changed by people and then proceed to chase out many of the smaller species of honeyeater. I know that in the past our association has published a number of papers relating to the management of Bell Miners. Other examples are the Pied Currawong in Sydney, whose ravages on smaller birds is now well documented with the work that is being done by the Australian Museum and the Silver Gull, which has become quite a pest in some areas, feeding on our rubbish. The behaviours of these birds is often detrimental to maintaining variety of species in an area. Most birders I know are familiar with these problem species and see the need for change. Often of course, it is preferable to make such changes by changing habitats to make them less attractive to the problem species. This is especially so in areas where poisoning would be problematic and unacceptable to the general public, as in the city of Sydney.

I have enclosed a letter that the authors wrote in support of their work and which they agreed to have published. Again, I invite you to write with your thoughts on these matters, after you have read the papers, of course!

ANNETTE CAM
Hon. Ed. *Corella*

December 2000

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Annette Cam
Hon. Ed. *Corella*
PO Box 123
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Dear Annette,

Revised manuscripts for *Corella*

All authors concerned with these two papers were very pleased to hear that they were accepted subject to minor changes. This was most pleasing because all of us have been very aware of the ethical issues implicit in the research topic and can appreciate the dilemma presented to many members of your association. We wanted to provide you with some background to explain why we are confident that our research was appropriate and in the best interests of ensuring a more rational approach to a complex issue.

The use of poisons as damage control agents for cockatoos is a vexed issue in Victoria. While it is generally recognized that bird poisoning is an ineffective long-term damage control strategy, strong anecdotal evidence suggested the illegal use of poisons in the field. Some permits that allowed the use of poisons were issued in 1999 (this has now stopped). During this period, this project was undertaken to address the issue of a humane poison with the rationale being that if poisons are to be used, they should be humane. Under these circumstances, the adoption of a registered and regulated deterrent chemical such as 4 aminopyridine (4-AP) was considered preferable as it would

not require the killing of large numbers of birds and has less potential for adverse target and non-target impact. In addition, research was initiated in order to assure the humaneness of 4-AP by investigating analgesic/4-AP combinations. Notwithstanding the situation at the time this research was undertaken, the issue of cockatoo control remains largely unresolved, as does the development of long-term damage control strategies that farmers are prepared to use, that also meet community standards regarding animal welfare.

We are hopeful that these papers may stimulate informed debate and as scientists feel it our responsibility to publish our work for scrutiny by our peers. This is not only to ensure scientific rigour, but as a means of allowing discussion concerning the ethics and appropriateness of such work. Accordingly, we look forward to reading your Editorial in the issue that publishes these papers. All of the authors wish to thank you and the members of the ABSA for the opportunity to publish this 'non-traditional' work in *Corella*.

Yours sincerely,
Dr John Barnett
Dr Kelly Waples
Dr Ellen Jongman
Mr Clive Marks
Ms Penny Fisher
Mr Ian Temby

20 November 2000