

Wildlife Rehabilitators – Part of the State's Biosecurity Surveillance Network

*Marion Massam
Invasive Species Development Officer,
Department of Agriculture and Food,
100 Bougainvillea Avenue, Forrestfield WA 6058
Email: mmassam@agric.wa.gov.au*

ABSTRACT: Invasive species are internationally recognised as one of the most significant threatening processes to biodiversity and increasingly they are causing considerable economic, agricultural and social problems. In WA, at least 50 exotic bird species have been released into the wild and 14 have now established feral populations. Some exotic species including sparrows, mynas, house crows and birds of aviculture including Indian ringnecks and Barbary doves are not yet established in the wild here because, when found at large, they are reported and removed soon after. All these species and many others have bad track records for establishing feral populations and causing problems. Other native species outside their natural range including sulphur-crested cockatoos, corellas and rainbow lorikeets are subject to containment and/or removal activities. The approach to facilitating the maintenance of the State's barrier of protection is three-fold:

Risk assessment. The risk posed by various birds is estimated to help determine if it is necessary to prohibit the entry of high risk species, what should happen when a new species is detected in the wild, and to justify security requirements for high risk species already here.

Risk management. Systems are in place to ensure high risk entry points and keeping establishments are monitored, and to facilitate the rapid removal of pest birds from the wild. Legislation is being revised to more effectively prohibit, regulate, and facilitate removal from the wild and/or prosecution as required.

Risk communication. Focussed and broad-scale methods including use of the media, leaflets, websites, presentations and the like are used to indicate the status of all exotic and feral bird species and to encourage secure keeping and early reporting of such birds in the wild via a Biosecurity Surveillance Network made up of government workers, members of the public, environmental groups, bird keepers and other interest groups.

Wildlife rehabilitators are in a unique position to assist in two ways in maintaining the State barrier by being part of the Surveillance Network. They can do this by being aware of the status of birds and other animals in their local areas and reporting unusual, out-of-place species in their care or in the wild. They can also play an important role by not releasing out-of-place species back into the wild, particularly those that could establish wild populations, damage agricultural crops, directly compete with native species like red and white-tailed black cockatoos for food or nesting sites, directly affect public amenity through noise and droppings or that are known to carry exotic diseases including those that have been identified as key threatening processes under Commonwealth legislation (e.g. psittacine circoviral disease).

No paper submitted.



