

Capacity building

Reconnecting Thunderbolt Country for Threatened Woodland Birds

Southern New England Landcare Ltd

LEP23-024-4-006



Engaging and Supporting Landholders to Protect and Increase Southern New England Biodiversity

The issue

A lack of viable habitat and poor condition of existing vegetation is jeopardising survival and impeding movement of 19 key threatened fauna and seven key threatened plant species in Thunderbolt Country around Uralla, Kentucky and Salisbury Plains in the southern New England region.

The solution

We sourced NSW Environmental Trust funding for a project that helped restore habitat connectivity for threatened fauna and flora; engaged landholders to protect remnant native woodlands and wetlands and plant new habitat with native trees, shrubs and groundcovers; monitored the outcomes; and provided educational opportunities to improve landholder capacity to better manage threats.

The impact

Graziers helped close a 25 km gap in habitat connectivity for threatened fauna and flora - from Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in the east to Kentucky and Racecourse Lagoon in the West. Landholders protected 24 ha of remnant woodland and wetland and restored 33 ha of farmland by revegetating these areas with 11,000 native seedlings.

Learnings

Four surveys were conducted (2020-2022), where the total number of birds recorded was 5,148. Of these, 3,027 birds (73 species/36 families) were detected at woodland sites and 2,121 birds (51 species/25 families) were recorded at wetland sites. Woodland sites supported 7 species of local conservation significance: Satin Flycatcher, White-browed Scrubwren, Eastern Yellow Robin, Double-barred Finch (decl. nationally), Fuscous Honeyeater, Buff-rumped Thornbill, and Wedge-tailed Eagle. Freshwater wetlands supported 1 threatened species - the Blue-billed Duck, and 10 wetland species of local conservation significance: Great Crested Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Black Swan, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-winged Stilt, Lewin's Rail, Australian Reed-Warbler, Little Grassbird, Tawny Grassbird, and Golden-headed Cisticola (InSight Ecology, 2023). Restoration work must target landscape areas where key species still occur and conservation outcomes are achievable - areas of new habitat for threatened and declining species can be successfully established and remnant habitat better protected and enhanced - emphasising functional habitat for present species and those that could reasonably be expected to return with these interventions (InSight Ecology, 2023).

Re-connecting Thunderbolt Country for Threatened New England Woodland and Wetland Biodiversity was funded by the NSW Environmental Trust (2019/RR/0041).



Key facts

- Re-connecting native fauna and flora isolated by habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation is a key goal of biodiversity conservation worldwide.
- Effective restoration action is needed urgently in highly fragmented landscapes such as the NSW Northern Tablelands.
- Functional habitat is of sufficient size, structure and condition to allow target taxa, in this case woodland birds, to survive, successfully reproduce and disperse.

Project Partners



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