

LITTLE CORELLA MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET



Background

The Little Corella are a small species of cockatoo about 35cm in length. They are distinctive in their white colour with a blue eye-ring and a pale rose-pink patch between the eye and bill. Little Corella can be noisy and have distinct high-pitched screech which can be heard far away. They are a very adaptable species and can live in diverse habitats such as savannah woodlands, pastoral farmlands, urban parklands, sports fields, Mallee shrub lands and dams. Little Corella feed on the ground searching for grains, grass seeds and occasionally flower bulbs and fruits.

During the breeding season, which is generally between August and October, Little Corella travel to rural areas of South Australia and lay eggs in tree hollows. Once the young are old enough to fly, the Little Corella congregate towards the coast of South Australia, particularly towards the Adelaide Plains, in search of food and water where they remain from December to April.

Distribution and range

Little Corella are widespread and common throughout Australia but have only been in the Flinders Ranges and Adelaide region since the 1960s. The numbers of Little Corella have increased, due to environmental and urban factors such as an increase in lakes, ponds, sports ovals, non-native trees and the farming of grains.

In 2017, the Little Corella population substantially increased in the City of Salisbury Council area. This is likely due to lots of Little Corella in other local government areas in South Australia as well which is leading to the birds looking for an ample food supply and favourable roost.

Impacts

An increasing Little Corella population in the City of Salisbury Council area is concerning as it damages our native environment and public and private properties. They use their strong bills to dig up crops, plants and grasses and chew on electrical wires, wooden structures, irrigation systems and shade sails. Little Corella prune native trees such as River Red Gum, Peppermint Box, Long-leaved Box, Northern Cypress Pine and other pine species, to prepare them for roosting. This affects the trees, their survival rates and ecosystem health through removing important habitat for other native wildlife. Additionally, their large flocks and loud calls are prone to intimidating smaller native bird species, preventing them from living within the same area. Further to the impact on our environment, Little Corella also have a negative impact on residents living within affected areas due to loud screeching vocalisations and the mess they create by defoliating trees.

Management Options

In order to manage the Little Corella population, we must understand their numbers, location and travel patterns. This can be achieved through ground surveys, mapping of roosts and bird counts. Once we have an understanding of the Little Corella population, we can implement passive and active management actions to help prevent the Little Corella from settling within the Council areas.

Passive management is where the Little Corella are managed through indirect methods to help minimise this attraction to the area. Techniques include:

- All council and privately owned land to be irrigated in the evening and overnight in summer through to autumn.
- Cut grass before seed heads emerge
- Revegetate open areas of land with native bush species where possible
- Remove exotic tree species where possible

Active management is where the Little Corella flocks are deterred through dispersal which discourages the Little Corella from roosting and foraging in the area. It is important to start the dispersal as soon as they arrive, before they get comfortable with their surroundings.

Techniques undertaken by professionals include:

- Stockman whips
- Short-burst pyro techniques
- Modulated PA siren systems
- Starter pistols
- Torches
- Wooden clappers
- Strobe light

What is Council doing?

Council are conducting Little Corella monitoring through ground surveys, mapping and bird counts. The Council has experts currently conducting a range of dispersal methods that will take place most nights between 7pm – 10pm.

Additional street sweeping and verge and footpath cleaning has also been delivered in areas of high impact.

What will Council do in the future?

The South Australian Government Department of Environment and Water (DEW) is formulating a state-wide strategy on mitigating the Little Corella population. In the interim, The City of Salisbury Council is liaising with DEW, nearby councils and industry to develop a management plan that will consider both short and long term actions. This will ensure an integrated approach to the situation.

What options do the public have?

The management of the issue is very complex with habitat and landscape modifications the best way to deter Little Corellas in the longer term. However, there are some things property owners can do in the meantime

The Little Corella are now part of our environment and will be for the foreseeable future. Learning to adapt and live with these birds the best we can, whilst undertaking actions to reduce the damage and nuisance caused by the Little Corella is important.

Landscape modification should be considered for long term benefits to reduce the attraction of areas for the birds. If the area isn't appealing to the birds, they will move on and find somewhere else.

There are some scaring techniques that residents who experience issues caused by the Little Corella on their own private property can undertake. Here are some suggested options:

- Clap Boards – Join two pieces of timber (about 400mm long x 35mm thick) with a hinge at one end. Hold up high and start clapping boards together loudly when birds are present.
- Torches/Lights - At dawn and dusk, use bright torches and wave the light around the trees and branches where the birds are sitting to scare them off.
- Visual Barriers - Install visual barriers on the ground such as shade cloth to hinder the birds' line of sight. This deters them from staying as they will feel unsafe not being able to see approaching predators.
- Landscape Modification – Reduce open space areas by planting islands of bushes /shrubs in open areas and also at the base of larger trees as this increases the fear that predators could be hiding in the bushes etc

Residents can help by implementing their own passive management actions. This can be done by keeping grass longer where possible, planting native species which are not favourable to Little Corella and watering their gardens at night. It is also important not to feed the Little Corella.

The public can cooperate with Council by notifying us when they see a large flock in the Council area. To increase the success of the Little Corella dispersal, it is also advisable to bring pets (dogs and birds) inside during the dispersal hours (7pm -10pm).

For further information regarding the development of a state-wide management strategy please contact the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources on **8204 1910** or visit www.environment.sa.gov.au