Corella Management Program

September 2019

City of Greater Geraldton
a vibrant future

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1. INTRODUCTION

Introduced corellas are becoming an increasing problem in the City of Greater Geraldton ('City') through nuisance and impacts on infrastructure. This management program has been prepared in order to document the City's current approach toward corella management and to guide future efforts. It will also serve as a communications tool for key stakeholders and the community.

The Little Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*) and Western Corella (*Cacatua pastinator butleri*) are declared pests in the City under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*. They are a Category 3 declared pest under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Regulations 2013* which requires landholders to undertake some form of management that will alleviate the harmful impact; reduce the numbers or distribution; or prevent or contain the spread of the declared pest in the area. However, in practice there is minimal expectation that residents within the City can undertake control work.

In addition, the Little and Western corella is a native species protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. Under the Act the population in the City is one of the 'managed fauna' species. This is in recognition of the economic damage that corellas can cause. The term 'managed fauna' means that within the City boundaries they can be taken by means of a firearm, or disturbed by means of a noise or light generating device to prevent economic damage without seeking any approvals from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

2. BACKGROUND

Corellas are long-lived, highly intelligent birds that learn from each other. They are increasingly common in the urban landscape of Western Australia. This has led to a significant level of public concern where noise, property destruction and 'mess' have forced local governments to seek solutions in dealing with what has emerged as a significant human-wildlife conflict issue.

While there are several species of corella native to Western Australia, range expansion of eastern populations of corellas has driven a significant increase in population numbers in the last 20 years. Both the northern and southern Wheatbelt regions of Western Australia provide perfect foraging habitat, in combination with local and permanent water on farm properties, and appropriate roosting trees through retained fringing and remnant vegetation. To a large extent rural, peri-urban and urban communities duplicate this resource availability across landscapes meaning that flocks are persistent despite being physically moved using various scaring devices.

Despite the considerable efforts undertaken by the City to date, eradication of the corellas appears unlikely in the short to medium term due primarily to the size and distribution of the corella population in the Midwest region. As such, management of the birds is likely to be an ongoing issue for foreseeable future.

The City will continue to refine and improve its management of the corellas into the future in order to minimise their impact on the local community. However, it must be recognised that the corellas along with many other pest species pose a significant problem, one that extends beyond local government boundaries, resource availability and statutory responsibilities. As such, corella management requires a shared response across all stakeholders including government, the private sector and the community, where appropriate.

3. MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS

There are a number of key constraints that have the potential to pose a significant impediment to effective corella management, these include:

- lack of data relating to numbers, migration paths, breeding and feeding areas.
- current lack of experienced and equipped introduced corella control contractors.
- limited availability of secure and unimpeded control sites.
- lack of diversity of control methods.
- limited participation by and coordination across key stakeholders.
- limited resources in light of the magnitude of the problem.
- legislation around control methods.
- un-foreseeable changes to corella behaviour in response to environmental conditions.
- divergent community values and desires regarding management.

The City will endeavour to address these constraints where possible in order to improve its management outcomes and efficiency. However, it must be recognised that certain aspects are outside of the City's jurisdiction and resources to address and as such, these constraints may continue to pose a challenge into the future.

4. MANAGEMENT AIM

To minimise the adverse impacts caused by corellas within the City of Greater Geraldton.

In achieving the above aim it must be recognised that the City has finite resources to allocate to corella management and as such must priorities its actions. Therefore the City's primary focus is on protecting Council infrastructure and assets on Council owned and managed land (which includes community sporting facilities).

5. MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Firstly, it is very important to accept and understand that there is no 'silver-bullet' fix. Many members of the community are not aware of the complexities in managing abundant bird species, particularly corellas. Lethal culling of birds alone will not solve this ongoing problem.

5.1 Control

Undertake shooting, trapping and humane euthanasia of corellas.

It is considered necessary to reduce the number of corellas in view of the ongoing growth of the local population and its associated impacts. Culling methods such as shooting, trapping and euthanasia will be undertaken by contractors and/or staff with appropriate training and experience, in accordance with all legislative requirements.

Culling methods will occur at secure sites (i.e. those where public access is, or can be, restricted) where control activities are unimpeded, in order to maximise control outcomes and ensure contractor, staff and public safety. Monitoring of the corella population is an inherent part of this action as it is required to ensure the optimum outcome through the siting of control sites and timing of control activities.

5.2 Dispersal

Undertake non-lethal dispersal of corellas in order to protect City infrastructure and assets from damage.

This is an important action in the short to medium term in seeking to minimise corella impacts, as the culling efforts proposed under section '5.1 Control' will likely take time to achieve a sufficient reduction in the corella population such that adverse impacts are reduced.

There are two potential approaches towards corella dispersal:

- reactive dispersal – dispersal that occurs on an as needs basis in order to provide immediate, although likely temporary, relief from corella impacts.
- directed dispersal – dispersal that occurs in a coordinated manner in order to relocate the corellas to a desired area where their impacts can be tolerated and/or control activities undertaken.

Reactive dispersal approaches are considered appropriate in seeking to protect critical City assets (i.e. infrastructure) from corella impacts given the significant damage and expenses that the City has incurred in recent years. The City will develop this capability through the receipt of required licences and approvals, training of staff and/or appointment of contractors and purchase of required equipment. Where appropriate, efforts will also be undertaken in order to address any risks to the community associated with reactive dispersal (e.g. noise nuisance) and to keep community members abreast of the City's actions.

Given that dispersal approaches have the potential to be highly resource and labour intensive, the City will be limited as to where and when dispersal techniques will be employed. Managing this dispersal action may potentially including daily quotas on the number of scaring events and/or pyrotechnic devices used. This is considered important in order to avoid the untimely exhaustion of allocated resources and/or cost blow outs.

Please Note:

Reactive dispersal to protect private assets or public areas/parks without critical infrastructure will not be undertaken by the City because:

- *it is resource intensive (due to the creation community expectations/setting of precedent);*
- *it is beyond the City's statutory responsibilities; and*
- *it may carry additional and unacceptable operational risks (e.g. the risk of damage to private property through the use of explosive or mechanical scaring devices).*

5.3 Advocacy

Actively advocate for responsible management of corellas by all relevant stakeholders, including all tiers of government, the private sector and community.

The problem posed by corellas extends beyond individual local government boundaries, resource availability and statutory responsibilities. Arguably, the higher tiers of government, private sector and community also have an important role to play in contributing to corella management in their roles as regulatory authorities, research and development leaders, land managers, domestic corella keepers and wild bird feeders, amongst others. In light of these considerations, advocacy for responsible corella management by all parties is considered to be an important strategy for the City to employ in seeking to minimise the impacts caused by the birds.

The City is of the view that the higher tiers of government in particular have an important role to play with this issue through (for example):

- research and development of additional and alternative control and dispersal techniques.
- regional oversight and coordination of management responses to the issue.
- funding to assist with delivery of regional Corella control initiatives that span multiple jurisdictions and land tenure.
- regulation of bird keeping practices to minimise future releases of caged pest birds.
- establishment and encouragement of best practice Corella management approaches.
- provision of centralised record keeping, data collection and information dissemination.

5.4 Community Education / On-site Advice

Provide advice to the community and meet with property owners/occupiers on-site.

Property owners/occupiers requesting advice must be willing and able to undertake scaring actions on their own property. City staff will only visit sites where the property owner/occupier is willing to help-themselves.

To request this service, please phone the City's Ranger Services Team on (08) 9956 6600 to discuss your situation and arrange an appropriate time for an officer to meet with you on-site. The City will use its best endeavours to accommodate specific times and days however response times cannot be guaranteed and will be dependent on the availability of staff resources.

Property owners/occupiers that experience nuisance issues at their property on private land need to undertake their own management controls to protect and relieve nuisance on their own properties. Care should be taken to ensure that any bird deterrent activities do not cause neighbour conflict. Below are some suggested scaring technique options:

Clap Boards

Two pieces of timber (approx. 400mm long x 35mm thick) with a hinge at one end to join them. Hold up high and start clapping boards together loudly when birds are present. Note: birds that are roosting (sitting in the trees) will take a bit more effort to get them to move with clap boards. Best done frequently, to make the birds feel very uncomfortable. Best to do it as the birds are flying into the area to land.

Torches/Lights at dawn and dusk

Use strong/bright torches (LED ones work well). Wave / flicker the light around the trees and branches where the birds are sitting and this will likely scare them off. Follow up with using the clapboards.

Visual Barriers

Install visual barriers on the ground (in open areas) place visual barriers in random areas on the ground to prevent birds having a 'line of sight' when they are on the ground feeding. Simple visual barriers may include star droppers with a piece of shade cloth running between the droppers or placing solid objects around the yard to prevent the birds' line of sight.

This will make the birds fear the area as they cannot see any approaching predators. Corellas need to see their surroundings. Generally when flocks are feeding or playing on the ground there will likely be a couple of 'scout' birds sitting in trees overlooking the flock to warn the other birds on the ground of any approaching predators. Use clap boards to move these birds out of the trees.

Other Products

There are various bird scaring products are available on the market, such as scare kites (kites that look like a predator such as a hawk/eagle), fright balloons, bird spikes, laser lights, devices that generate sounds to scare birds etc.

5.5 Habitat Modifications

Investigate and pursue (where feasible) modifications to habitat.

Habitat and landscape modifications will be the best way to deter corellas in the longer term and involves manipulating the environment to make it unsuitable for the corellas in some way. This could involve such actions as removing food or water sources, or removing roost sites.

Food sources are many and dispersed over a large area in the City and these multiple food sources cannot be managed effectively to prevent feeding by corellas. Similarly, corellas have access to water from a wide range of natural and artificial sources, many of which cannot be made unavailable to the birds.

If there are found to be significant areas in the City where the corellas roost then an evaluation can be made as to the effectiveness of removing roost trees, which would cause the corellas to go elsewhere. Issues such as land tenure, biodiversity and clearing regulations will need to be addressed.

5.6 Other Actions

Continue to research and/or undertake other actions.

The City does not assume that the specific actions listed above are the only actions that may prove beneficial and effective. There are other potential management actions that may become available or be proven successful by other stakeholders. One recent management option is the use of a contraceptive product. Other actions will need further research and development before potentially being included in the City's management program in the future.

6. ACTION PLAN

Management Action		Timeframe					Comments
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
5.1 Control	A1. Source people/contractors/groups that are willing to undertake a culling program.	x					Additional sourcing may need to be undertaken in future years.
	A2. Determine appropriate culling sites.	x					Sites may be located on City or non-City managed land depending on availability and suitability of the land.
	A3. Engage culling personnel (with the aim of culling a minimum of 500 corellas).	x	x	x	x	x	The target set for the number of corellas to be culled will need to be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with action A20.
	A4. Investigate if the City can provide assistance to other people/groups (e.g. shooting groups or farmers) if they wish to undertake a culling program.	x	x	x	x	x	
5.2 Dispersal	A5. Obtain corporate firearms licence.	x	x	x	x	x	Licence must be renewed annually.
	A6. Train staff in the use of pyrotechnic equipment.	x	x				Additional training may be required in future years due to staff turnover.
	A7. Deploy pyrotechnic equipment as deemed appropriate.	x	x	x	x	x	
	A8. Prepare a communication strategy to advise the community and stakeholders of deployment times and locations.	x	x	x	x	x	
5.3 Advocacy	A9. Support the creation of new partnerships with other key stakeholders in order to assist with the coordinated management of actions.	x					Potential partnerships include those with the community, key stakeholders, other local governments and state agencies.
	A10. Advocate for increased state government action in relation to: • Research and development of additional and alternative control and dispersal techniques. • Regional oversight and coordination of management responses. • Funding to assist with delivery of regional control initiatives.	x	x	x	x	x	As needed and especially when political opportunities arise.

Management Action		Timeframe					Comments
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
5.4 Community Education / On-site Advice	A11. Publish this program on the City's web-site and communicate the program via other avenues such as media releases, facebook etc.	x					
	A12. Provide updates on the program via media releases etc.	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing action.
	A13. Provide on-site advice to the community.		x	x	x	x	This service is dependent on City staff resources.
	A14. Respond to community/media enquiries as required.	x	x	x	x	x	As needed.
	A15. Provide updates to Council on the program annually.		x	x	x	x	May involve updates/amendments to this program as required.
5.5 Habitat Modifications	A16. Investigate if there are significant areas in the City where corellas roost.			x			
	A17. Evaluate the site (if any) to determine the effectiveness of removing roost trees.				x		
	A18. Investigate the possibility of making a site 'more attractive' for the corellas (e.g. planting a large site on the periphery of the Geraldton urban area with food crop and roosting trees).					x	
5.6 Other Actions	A19. Engage consultant on research program to undertake analysis of current/emerging control methods and those most likely to be of most effectiveness for the Geraldton region.	x	x				Extent and scope of works will be dependent on financial budget allocations.
	A20. Undertake monitoring of corella population activity.	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing action to be undertaken opportunistically by City staff to inform future management actions. May involve other stakeholders / members of the community to assist.
	A21. Seek funding for trial of alternative actions (e.g. reproductive control).			x			
	A22. Continuously monitor for other potential actions and control methods.	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing action.