

Artemis

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2022 Mid-Year Progress Report

Welcome to another Artemis Nature Fund update.

We have produced a new video that explains the main threat to Golden-shouldered Parrots: the loss of grasslands and sparse open woodlands. This 3 minute video explains how this process affects the parrots, and what we're doing to reverse the problem.

To watch the video, please click on the picture below, or [follow this link](#).



Habitat restoration efforts so far this year

This year we are aiming to restore 50 hectares of habitat. This will be spread over several discrete patches, each containing multiple termite mounds within which the parrots excavate their nests. These restored patches will provide a safer place for parrots to breed in the coming years.



As explained in a [previous video](#), we use several methods to restore habitats back to an open vegetation structure. One of the best methods involves clearing saws and chainsaws with herbicides. The reason we like it so much is because we can immediately reduce predation pressure by instant habitat restructuring. It's also good because we don't disturb the soil or damage termite mounds (compared to using heavy machinery) and our use of herbicides is very targeted.



So far, this "cut-stump" method is the main one we have used this year. As of last week, **we have restored three large patches of prime parrot breeding habitat**. The combined area of these patches is **21.5 hectares**.

Although it sounds labour intensive (and believe us, it is hard work!) it's surprising just how fast we can do it. For example, in early July we calculated that it took 36 person hours to remove almost every stem in a 2.3-ha patch that was once a completely open natural grassland. That's only 15 hours per hectare, which we think is a pretty good investment!



Impacts on parrot predators

Monitoring is an essential ingredient in our recovery plan on Artemis. We are especially interested in how parrot predators respond to our habitat restoration efforts.

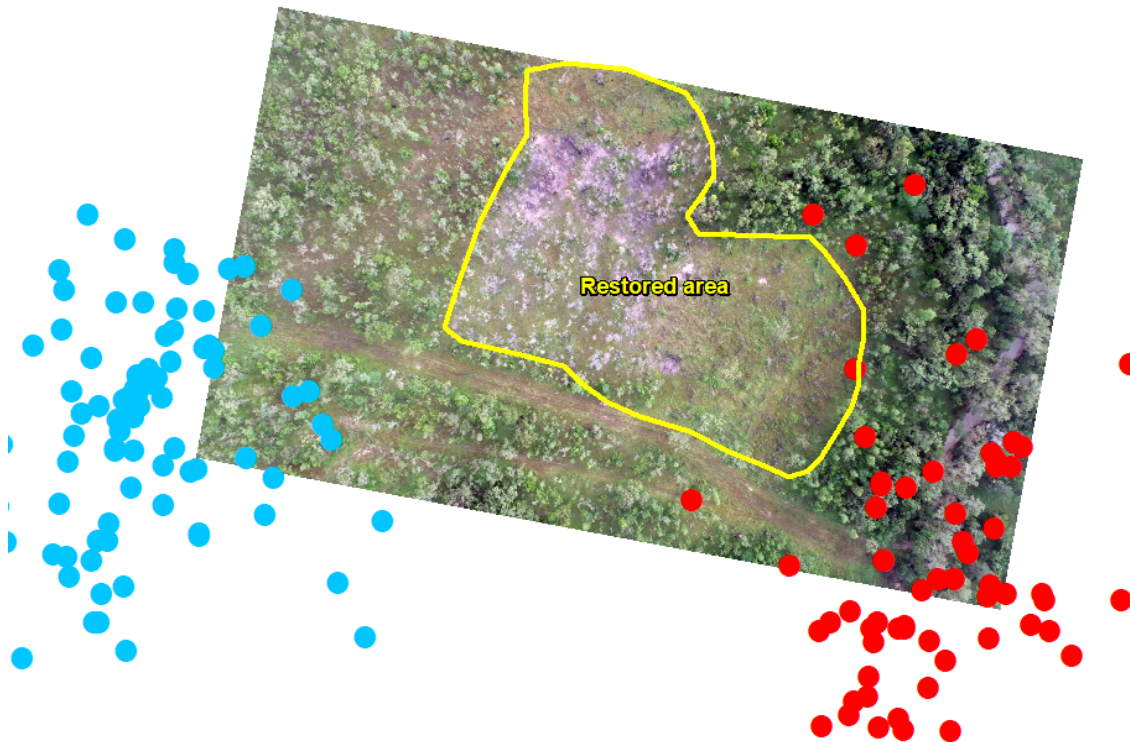
In April this year, we put tiny GPS tags on 5 Black-backed Butcherbirds caught immediately adjacent to areas we restored last year. We wanted to see if they used the areas.

None of the butcherbirds we tracked used the restoration areas.

We need to do more of this work, including getting pre-restoration habitat use information, which will make the story much more robust. But these early

results are very encouraging.

The results show that by restoring parrot habitat back to an open vegetation structure, we can influence the way butcherbirds use habitats and therefore reduce the predation risk to Golden-shouldered Parrots.



GPS tracking data from two Black-backed Butcherbirds (red and blue dots) trapped immediately adjacent to areas we restored last year. Neither spent any time in the restored areas, showing that we can influence the way predators use parrot habitats by reverting to an open vegetation structure.

2022 breeding season

We learnt an awful lot during monitoring of this year's breeding season. Between April and July we monitored 16 nests. Of these 31% were successful, adding 23 young parrots to the Artemis population. This is low compared to nests monitored between 1993 - 1995, when ~58% of nests produced at least one fledgling.

Of the 11 nest losses this year, 5 were due to an unknown cause but we suspect predation by butcherbirds and goannas was involved. Three nests failed due to attack by native meat ants. The remaining 3 failures were caused

by one of the adults being killed.

It's clear that we need to raise the nesting success back to what it was in the 1990s. Our habitat restoration activities will go a long way to help us achieve this, because we have shown that Black-backed Butcherbirds do not use the areas where we restore the open vegetation structure. Next year we will try to safeguard nests from meat ant attacks. This should be a relatively temporary management action designed to bolster nesting success.

Next year we will also do more intensive monitoring of nests using camera traps so we have fewer failures in the "unknown cause" category. The knowledge we gain from more intensive nest monitoring will help us tailor management actions to improve nest success, in addition to that offered by habitat restoration and meat ant control.



A Black-backed Butcherbird inspects a Golden-shouldered Parrot nest that contained 4 nestlings. Fortunately the butcherbird wasn't successful and this nest went on to fledge on July 1st.

More to come...

Hopefully this brief update has given you a sense of what we're doing to save Golden-shouldered Parrots on Artemis. We are 100% committed to redouble our efforts during what remains of 2022, and over the next few years.

It really is make or break time for these birds.

Thank-you for your support so far - it's been absolutely critical to allow us to get to this point.

Right now we require additional funding for a few essential items that will help us continue our work. The main one is a new side-by-side UTV ("buggy") valued at \$22,000.

If you would like to help us, please visit www.artemis.org.au/donations/

And please remember, practically every cent of every donation gets spent in the field where it's most needed.

Best wishes,

The Artemis Nature Fund Team.



High on our wish list is a new buggy. Up until now we have been sharing the Artemis Station buggies, but they are not always available especially during cattle mustering and fencing times. Having our own would also mean being able to properly fit it out to carry all the restoration equipment and safety gear that is essential to our work.

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