

# **LOCAL BIRD BREEDERS DO THEIR BIT TO HELP AFTER FIRES**

Following the disastrous Black Tuesday bushfires last year (2005), the Mid North Branch of The Avicultural Society of S.A. Inc. moved to sponsor a group of the extremely rare Eyre Peninsula Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo. (Mid North Branch of the A.S.S.A. are a group of dedicated bird breeders, based in the Copper Triangle, many of whom regularly breed rare parrots, finches & other species).

This bird is one of the most endangered birds in the world. Before the fires just over 20 birds were known to exist in the wild, since the fires National Parks & Wildlife (NPWL) have only been able to only account for 15. Much of their breeding & feeding habitat was destroyed, including many breeding hollows.

Fortunately NPWL in conjunction with the late Colin McKechnie of the Gorge Wildlife Park moved to set up another population of the birds just in case of such a disaster. Black Cockatoos lay 2 eggs per clutch, both will usually hatch but normally the parents will only rear 1 young. By removing 1 egg per nest the parents still rear their normal offspring but the potential of the second egg is not lost. A couple of these eggs have been transported to Gorge Wildlife Park each year for several years, successfully hatched & reared by Colin's son Steve.

At the time of the fires Gorge had 7 of these rare birds & at one time it was feared that they were the total world population of their race! The oldest of these captive birds are of breeding age & are beginning to lay now. It is this special colony that Mid North is sponsoring on an ongoing basis.



Several pairs of the remaining wild birds have attempted to breed this season but it is not known if they will be able to find enough food to rear their chicks successfully. Steve received 3 eggs just before Xmas, these have hatched & the chicks are progressing well. Hopefully one day a way will be found for these birds or their descendants to rejoin their wild relatives on Eyre Peninsula.

As a separate project two Mid North members (Jim Hodson & Barry Schultz) have been working on the construction of a large new 6 flight aviary block especially designed to house & breed these beautiful cockatoos at Gorge Wildlife Park – occupancy expected late January. This will also enable the public to easily see & appreciate these rare birds.



Gorge Wildlife Park is working with NPWL in this important work with this extremely rare bird. To help, Mid North aviculturists have tried to show that they are not just bird keepers, but have the concern & expertise to help increase the population of a critically endangered species in the wild.