

27. Rufous Bristlebird investigation

Aim

This activity enables students to consider the habitat and changing conditions of a species protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Students will become familiar with the requirements of the bird, why it is threatened and what conservation action is being undertaken to protect the species.

The concepts gained from investigating this species can be applied to other species.

Materials

- Resource sheet 27: Rufous Bristlebird.
- Materials to make a brochure or advertisement.

Activities

1. Read the resources sheet and complete the following about the Rufous Bristlebird.

Scientific Name:

Size:

Colour:

Call:

Nests:

Shelter:

Food:

2. Where is the Rufous Bristlebird found?

3. What is the Rufous Bristlebird's current situation as listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988?

4. Why has the Rufous Bristlebird's range in Victoria decreased? (List at least 3 reasons.)

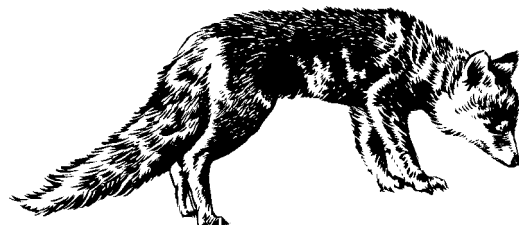
5. What actions have been identified in the Rufous Bristlebird Action Plan to conserve the species?

6. In groups of four discuss why it might be important to help save the Rufous Bristlebird from extinction? Do you agree with these reasons? Report your group's opinions to the class and then record a summary of these opinions.

7. Design a brochure or slogan that could be used in a campaign to save the Rufous Bristlebird. Make sure this is "catchy" and includes the main conservation issues.

Link to Section 4

See also Section 4 of this Parks Victoria education resource kit, in particular Port Campbell National Park where this bird is found.



Red fox © MT

27. Rufous Bristlebird

APPEARANCE AND HABITAT

The Rufous Bristlebird (*Dasyornis broadbenti*) is a reddish brown bird the size of a blackbird. (between 23 to 27 cm long). It has a loud squeaky call.

Rufous Bristlebirds are often found in dense coastal scrub. In the Otway Ranges they occur in forested valleys. These birds nest close to the ground in tussocks or low shrubs. They are weak fliers and therefore find it difficult to travel long distances to other sites of suitable habitat. Much of its known coastal habitat lies within national parks or reserves.

The Rufous Bristlebird feeds on insects and other invertebrates (animals lacking a backbone) in the ground litter.

CONSERVATION STATUS.

The Rufous Bristlebird has been listed as threatened in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. Threatened is a general term applied to species that are considered either endangered, vulnerable or rare or there is not enough known about the species to determine its status. The Rufous Bristlebird is considered in danger of extinction.

The range (that is the area in which the species is found) of the Rufous Bristlebird has decreased because of many factors but the main causes have been:

- A loss of habitat through clearing for housing, agriculture and fire breaks.
- Introduced predators including foxes, feral cats and black rats that eat both the eggs and young birds
- Wildfire which destroys habitat.

The main conservation objective is to prevent further decline in the Rufous Bristlebird population. It is hoped to do this by:

- Researching the habitat conditions of the Rufous Bristlebird.
- Planting habitat corridors between separated populations of the bird.
- Reducing the impact of the factors that are threatening the species (see above).

Individual people can help by protecting the existing coastal scrub and forest habitat of the Rufous Bristlebird. If they live near coastal and forest habitat they can also decide not to keep a cat or ensure that their cat is kept within the boundary of the house yard.

The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act is a legal framework for the protection of Victoria's native flora and fauna. The aim of the Act is to ensure that our native species survive and flourish.

Once a species has been listed under the Act, botanists, zoologists and ecologists prepare an Action Statement for that species. This Action Statement identifies actions that government departments (e.g. Parks Victoria, Department of Natural Resources and Environment) and others can take to conserve the species and manage the processes that are threatening their survival.

The Action Statements are available on Department of Natural Resources and Environment's website at <http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/plntanml/native/actstats/actstats.htm>