

# **Monitoring the Rufous Scrub-bird *Atrichornis rufescens* in the New England region**

**Mick Andren**

Ecosystems and Threatened Species, North East Region, New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage,  
24 Moonee St., Coffs Harbour, New South Wales 2450, Australia., Email:  
mick.andren@environment.nsw.gov.au

A locally-based monitoring survey of the Rufous Scrub-bird *Atrichornis rufescens* in the New England region was undertaken during three breeding seasons from 2010 to 2013 to establish baseline numbers of territories. Twelve kilometres of transects were established in the Horseshoe Road area in known Scrub-bird habitat and surveyed 10 times. Twelve ‘territories’ were identified based on male birds calling on three separate occasions from the same site. It required seven surveys to identify the 12 territories and all of them remained occupied at the completion of the survey in 2013. Monitoring of this species is possible due to the conspicuous calling of male Scrub-birds; they were detected on 64 percent of systematic surveys of known territories. The habitat along Horseshoe Road appears to be of high quality for the Rufous Scrub-bird as numbers of territories were similar to surveys undertaken using similar methods in what is considered high quality habitat in the Barrington Tops and Wiangaree areas. A comparison with previous surveys involving different methods in the Horseshoe Road area from 1997 to 2004 indicated that territory numbers are stable (12 now compared with 13 previously) and that 75 percent of current territories are in the same location as previously.

## **Shadows of change: Square-tailed Kites *Lophoictinia isura* nesting in the Bendigo area of Victoria**

**John L. Robinson<sup>1</sup>, Barrie R. Cooper<sup>2</sup> and Donald C. Franklin<sup>3,4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> 12 Blucher Street, Strathfieldsaye, Victoria 3551, Australia

<sup>2</sup> 10 Battunga Court, Strathfieldsaye, Victoria 3551, Australia

<sup>3</sup> Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Northern Territory 0909, Australia.

Email: don.franklin@cdu.edu.au

<sup>4</sup> Ecological Communications, 24 Broadway, Herberton, Queensland 4887, Australia

The Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* is an uncommon Australian endemic raptor that has been infrequently recorded breeding in Victoria. We review the historic record of the species for the Bendigo area of north-central Victoria and show that it has increased markedly since about 2000. A survey for nests in remnant box-ironbark forest during the 2014–15 breeding season revealed ten concurrently-active nests and 34 old nests. Density was estimated to be 10.8 pairs per 1000 square kilometres overall and 25.8 pairs per 1000 square kilometres in forest blocks. Nine of ten nests fledged young, yielding a minimum of 1.6 and maximum of 1.8 fledglings per nest. These densities and success rates are as high as or higher than previously reported for the species, showing that the Bendigo forests provided outstanding habitat for the species at least in the study year. We suggest that optimal forest habitat for the species may be as much defined by the scarcity of predators of kite nestlings

and adults, and of territorial competitors, as the abundance of food. Notes are provided on nests and kite behaviour. We briefly explore two hypotheses for the species' increase, both of which involve or may involve changes to the abundance of aggressive or competing raptor species.

## **Long-term population trends in the vulnerable Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris melanops* at the Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia**

**Chris A. Surman<sup>1</sup>, Andrew A. Burbidge<sup>2</sup> and John Fitzhardinge<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Halfmoon Biosciences, 45 Heather Road, Ocean Beach WA 6333, Australia  
Email: halfmoon.biosciences@westnet.com.au

<sup>2</sup>87 Rosedale St, Floreat, WA 6014, Australia

<sup>3</sup>Dongara Marine, 2 Carrol St, Port Denison WA 6525, Australia

Estimated numbers of breeding pairs of the Lesser Noddy (Houtman Abrolhos) *Anous tenuirostris melanops* are reported from 14 surveys made between 1986 and 2014. Numbers on the three breeding islands, Pelsaert, Wooded and Morley, have fluctuated between years and within colonies. Total estimated numbers of breeding pairs for the Houtman Abrolhos population have varied from c. 77 000 in 1986 to c. 48 000 in 1993 and 2007; however, in most cases a lower number in one year has been followed by higher numbers in succeeding years. There has been decline in numbers since 1986, with both 2013 and 2014 both having relatively low estimates. Lesser Noddies nest only in Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* low forests and there has been considerable mangrove dieback during the past two decades, with Morley Island being particularly affected. The subspecies clearly meets IUCN Red List criteria for *Vulnerable*, and if a precautionary approach is taken to evaluation, could meet criteria for *Endangered*.