



Corella's – Counting the Cost

In the Western Australian Wheatbelt, white corellas have reached plague proportions on the back of our nation's largest export grain producing region. Flocking in hundreds, even thousands, these tenacious birds cost our communities dearly, affecting business and industry, local councils and residents.

The environmental cost through the destruction of native trees and their capacity to out-compete endangered black cockatoo species for precious nesting hollows cannot be quantified. Easier to measure, is the cost to our community, though there still remains a lack of data on this.

This fact sheet reveals data the Wheatbelt Corella Collective has been able to gather in consultation with its members and through community participation in a corella impact survey.

Local Councils and Government

Sporting and Recreation Surfaces

Central to the identity of rural communities are their sporting fields and parklands. Corellas are responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars damage per year, a cost borne by local councils. Corellas are indiscriminate about damaging turf whether it be synthetic or natural. They tear up turf on football ovals, bowling greens, cricket pitches, playgrounds and parks.

The average cost of natural turf replacement is \$17/m². Councils report the need to do this annually, the cricket pitch alone in Toodyay is \$1,500 per year to repair while the Shire of Northam recently repaired their hockey pitches at a cost of \$5,000. In Merredin, the shire spends more than \$2,000 a year repairing the tennis courts and hockey field.

In Mukinbudin, the shire estimates that corellas account for an additional \$20,000 per year to maintain lawns and gardens.

Lights and Electricals

Light fittings and electrical cables are also targeted by corellas. The Shire of York reports that it recently cost them \$10,000 recently to repair the lights at the local bowling greens and this is the second time they have had to do this in the past few years.

Electricity poles are also vulnerable to attack by corellas. The combined cost of fittings along the electric network includes conductors, crossarms, insulators. Replacement of fittings and conductor retensioning averages at \$12,900 depending on which components required mending (Ausgrid 2024).

The Shire of Merredin recently replaced the CCTV cabling on their recreation centre costing \$1,975. In Northam the recreation centre suffers the birds eating the rubber washers and deck tights on the roof, creating leaks. They have also had to repair lights and cables and added metal conduits on new lighting towers.

A Telstra representative reports spending \$50,000 repairing damaged infrastructure on a satellite dish.

Swimming Pools and Waste Water facilities

In Northam, corellas cost the shire to maintain the public swimming pool. They have spent \$1,850 to repair the pool solar blanket. \$56,867.80 was expended to install and supply netting to exclude the corellas from the pool so they could not attack the solar blanket, and that netting has required the further expense of \$4,500 in repairs.

In Goomalling the birds foul the towns' waste water treatment facility requiring additional purification processes.

Other

There are other costs to rural communities, not as easy to quantify, such as the impact on local small business, tourism and the staff time required by councils to deal with complaints from residents about the birds.

Private Residents

Damage reported by residents through our survey include broken television aerials (up to \$500 per aerial plus installation), respraying vehicles (approximately \$6,000 dependent up on vehicle size) and the loss of thousands of dollars' worth of trees and shrubs they have planted in their gardens.

The birds are particularly noisy around dusk and dawn, causing sleep problems for shift workers, the very young or unwell. People report that the noise prevents them from being able to use their outdoor entertaining areas and homes positioned near roosting sites can be devalued as a result of the birds.

The Agricultural Industry

A report to the Western Australian Parliament by Rafferty 2008 regarding Muir's Corellas, found that in 2008, corellas were costing cropping operations up to \$50,000 per annum, and feedlots up to \$130,000 per annum. Corellas eat seed and germinating plants, causing an average of 25% productivity loss. In feedlots, corellas were taking at least 1 tonne of grain per day. They also consume hay and their faeces contaminates stockfeed and water.

Cooperative Bulk Handling reports that the tarpaulins used to cover grains are readily damaged by corellas. These tarpaulins cost \$4000-5000 to replace. Corella faeces also contaminates grain, downgrading its value.

References:

Ausgrid (2024): Private poles and powerline repair costs. <https://www.ausgrid.com.au/In-your-community/Private-poles-and-powerline-repair-costs> accessed 19/3/24

Rafferty, Dennis (2008): Report on Agricultural Impact of Muir's Corella 30 June 2008.

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