

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, 17 September 2020 (by Zoom)

1. Welcome

President Esther Gallant welcomed members to the meeting and expressed her pleasure that so many people were joining in as guests (in total there were about 50 participants). She noted that the National Parks Association of the ACT Inc (NPA ACT) is a non-profit environmental organisation which aims to protect the natural environment and anyone is welcome to join the association.

Esther paid respects to the traditional custodians of the land and their elders, past and present.

2. Announcements

The Young Photographer Competition closed on 11 September 2020. A large number of images were entered in the various categories and winners will be announced at an event at the Southern Cross Club Woden on Friday 9 October 2020 from 11:30am to 1pm. Bookings are required by 5 October.

3. Presentation by Dr Michael Mulvaney – *Wither the Little Eagles*

Esther welcomed Dr Michael Mulvaney, Senior Conservation Planner with the ACT Government, to present an update on the Little Eagle research study.

Michael noted that the work is conducted by an informal, collaborative study group which draws on the members' expertise in scientific research, field work and resources. Affiliated organisations are Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government; CSIRO Land and Water; Ginninderry Joint Venture; and the Research School of Biology, ANU. The project does not have dedicated funding and Michael thanked the NPA for the funds that have been provided to date.

The Little Eagle, *Hieraetus morphnoides*, is the second smallest eagle in the world and has both pale and dark morphs. Between 1992 and 2014 researchers noted that there had been a 25% decrease in numbers in the ACT. Little Eagles are listed as Vulnerable in NSW.

When this research study commenced in 2017, it was generally thought that there were only 3 breeding pairs of Little Eagles remaining in the ACT. Following the research work undertaken, it is now known that there are at least 14 nesting territories within the ACT and 4 nests just outside the ACT/ NSW border. There may be more nests not yet identified as they are hard to find.

Wildlife cameras have been located on some nests and have shown that there is a lot of competition for nesting sites, and predation by Wedge-tailed Eagles has been observed. Radio tracking has shown that Little Eagles leave the Canberra region in winter and fly long distances, for example to Darwin, Melbourne and Ulladulla. So far each bird has flown to the same destination each year.

The research study is only in the second year of monitoring fledglings, but so far the breeding success in the ACT is low. This may be associated with the recent low rainfall, and the study team is hoping that the current wet year will help them to be more successful. All Little Eagle fledglings now have leg rings, and ACT Parks and Conservation would like to be informed if anyone sees any of these birds.

Other findings of the study include:

- There is generally around 25 km between nests
- The female spends ~37 days on the nest, and during that time the male provides all food
- Potentially one male may mate with more than one female
- Female birds check out other Little Eagle nests
- Little Eagles share foraging sites
- Pesticides are an issue
- The species is probably long-lived
- There is potential for Little Eagles to predate the Grassland Earless Dragon, a threatened species, as they occupy some of the same habitat.

Little Eagle habitat is grassy woodland, and a key question for the study is the possible impact of urban development in the birds' range. Research to date indicates that the Little Eagle is relatively

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

adaptable as it has a variety of nesting sites and can avoid urban development by flying over the area. Large areas of development may be a problem, for example, as is occurring in the Molonglo Valley.

Micheal noted that there is still much that is unknown about the Little Eagle, but that the information found in the research study together with work being undertaken by the University of New England, should eventually lead to the preparation of a Little Eagle National Action Plan.

Excellent information on the Little Eagle and the study can be found at:

<https://littleeagleresearch.blogspot.com/>

Esther thanked Michael for the excellent update on the Little Eagle study and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 9:00 pm.

Next general meeting – Thursday 15 October 2020.

Chair: Date: