

Conserving the Turquoise Parrot in the Warbys

Turquoise Parrot Images by Chris Farrell

In the last couple of decades or more the Turquoise Parrot has become an increasingly regular sight at Kurringai Cottage Taminick and other parts of the Warby Ranges. These parrots are primarily birds of open woodland habitat, especially the undulating areas that border larger forest patches such as the Warby–Ovens National Park.



In the 19th Century this parrot was apparently quite common along and adjacent to the Dividing Range – Northern Victoria to Southern Queensland. But habitat clearance: loss of their principal food source – seeds of various native grasses, herbs and small shrubs; loss of nesting sites; other changes to ground-layer vegetation such as grazing by livestock and rabbits most certainly contributed to this parrot's decline. This parrot was considered by Ornithologists in the 1920s to be extinct.



Len Robinson was photographing birds in the Taminick Gap area in the 1960s at the Colsons (Ray and Graham) and also at the neighbouring Kurringai property, owned then by the late Clive and Doreen Nason. Len stayed there sometimes. Graham Colson, who is today part of the Turquoise Parrot Project in the Warbys told me that Len Robinson was placing nest boxes there in the 60s. They all had occasional sightings of Turquoise Parrots in the Taminick area. Some as long ago as the 50s.

The Nasons were cousins of my Aunt Jill Rossiter and when I commenced regular visits to Taminick I recall the excited discussions of these early sightings. By 1971 I was regularly staying with my Aunt who had built her house on Kurringai land by then. In 1994 my Aunt died and left her home and surrounding land to me. As my Aunt was a committed conservationist, field naturalist and bird observer I decided in 1995 to open Kurringai Cottage, as she called it then, to like-minded guests to share this special place.

Ray Purches (who sadly died in 2015) and Rose Purches, became managers of Kurringai Cottage and since then have been involved with conservation of this property. They understood that the Turquoise Parrot was special. To attract birds they continued planting mostly local vegetation and conserved the grasses that the Turquoise Parrots love. Ray introduced diaries to encourage guests to write of their wildlife observations throughout their stay. Jane Delainimati, Rose and Rays daughter, undertook the huge task of collating these observations.



During the breeding season Turquoise Parrots need to drink regularly to ensure a moist consistency in the food regurgitated to the young at the nest. As the Cottage dam no longer has a consistent supply of water and even though we have bird baths, sometimes they may be empty. Rose installed a very small pond and a ball valve attached to a tap closeby to ensure a water supply for the Parrots and all the other wildlife of the Cottage.

Chris Farrell, Wildlife Photographer, on one of his stays at the Cottage, observed a young Turquoise Parrot being fed by its parents. So we had the food and the water – this was the catalyst for Rose to organise new nesting boxes.



In 1990 Len Robinson had started a more formal project to install recovered hollow logs (from clearing) to provide nesting boxes for this Parrot. Ray and Len installed two at Kurringai Cottage.

Hollow logs are hard to find so today projects to increase community awareness of the conservation issues of this bird also include making artificial nest boxes to place on properties of local landholders. The Practical Parrot Action Project is mentored by Chris Tzaros under the Broken Boosy Conservation Management Network.

Several artificial and recovered hollow logs are there today and have been installed at the Cottage recently by Graham Colson and Chris Tzaris.



Photos of nest boxes at Kurringai Cottage by Rose Purches

Story compiled by Jillian Rossiter, 2009

Reference: *Turquoise Country - Communities caring for the threatened Turquoise Parrot* by Chris Tzaros of Birds Bush and Beyond.

Turquoise Parrot photography on this page by Chris Farrell

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Chris Farrell has written three books along with Peter Rowland *A Naturalists Guide to Reptiles of Australia*, *A Naturalists Guide to Mammals of Australia* and *Australia's Birdwatching Megaspots*.

These books may be purchased online: www.australiaswildlife.com