

Report of detection of the presence of Sooty Owl, *Tyto tenebricosa* on 31.01.15

This report details the detection of Sooty Owl by volunteers from Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO), on the night of 31.01.2015.

Volunteers were, David Caldwell, Owen Hanson, and Vaughan Sanderson.

The location of the detection was in state forest on Pines Tk near Bendoc, at GPS coordinates; 0659988 5882132 +-8m. This location is at the boundary of coupe 893-507-0013.

Weather on the night of 31.01.15 was overcast with intermittent rain, occasionally heavy. Wind varied from still to strong gusts, throughout the survey period.

The method of detection was call-playback of owl calls via an mp3 player and a megaphone.

Audio of owl responses to playback was recorded using an Olympus LS-12 Linear PCM Recorder.

Calls were played back from 2225 to 2250 hrs.

The order of calls was as follows:

Powerful Owl (Male territorial) – approx. 2 min.

Silence – 2min.

Sooty Owl – screech, 'bomb-drop' – approx. 2 min.

Silence – 2 min.

Masked Owl – screech – approx. 2 min.

Silence – 2 min.

Sooty Owl (Adults Trilling) – approx. 2 min.

Total survey time including recording owl responses was from 2225 to 2322 hrs.

A Sooty Owl was first heard following playback of Masked Owl screech. This was at approximately 2247 hrs. The Sooty call was a territorial screech at a bearing of 130 degrees, and an approximate distance of greater than 50 metres.

Following the playback of Sooty Owl trilling (2250 – 2252 approx.), the owl was heard to call again, this time with trilling, at 2258. This call was at a bearing of 120 degrees and at a distance of approximately 30 metres or less.

Shortly after this the owl came much closer, to within 10 metres or less, this afforded several opportunities to record its trilling at close range. The owl moved from tree to tree, sometimes in lower branches, near to the playback location. It was observed in flight on one occasion.

Audio recordings were taken at various intervals from approximately 2259 till the end of the survey at 2322 hrs.

Two audio files are included with this report. The trilling owl can be clearly heard at the following time indices;

S.O. trilling 31.01.15.wav

00:00

01:34 -01:52

02:44 – 02:57

06:14

S.O. trilling2 31.01.15.wav

00:05

00:23

01:56

Summary

It is clear from this survey that this Sooty Owl inhabits the unlogged forest comprised of the five scheduled coupes at this location, a significant intact forest area.

This inference is based upon the direction from which the owl was heard. This is also upheld by the fact that surrounding areas comprise unsuitable habitat for Sooty Owls, as they are either pine plantations, or have been severely degraded by logging in the very recent past.

The Sooty Owl is listed as vulnerable and it is reliant on old growth forest and large, hollow bearing trees for survival. On the Errinundra Plateau this habitat is already severely fragmented. Further fragmentation has a direct impact on feeding and housing, and reduces the species ability to survive, as breeding is also impacted.

Please inform me of any actions as a result of this report.

Sincerely

David Caldwell

On behalf of Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO)

evilzombiedave@gmail.com

Ph: 0351540109