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Ibis Management Strategy Summary

July 2019

What's the reason for the strategy?

A strategy has been prepared to manage overabundance of the bird species, Australian White Ibis, at Freshwater Lake Reserve, Delfin Island, West Lakes to mitigate complaints from the local community about the size of the population.

The main complaint from the community about the presence of Ibis is the noise and smell produced by the colony particularly during the breeding season.

Due to the numbers of ibis there is an increasing amount of droppings on the island and around the lake, and some neighbours have reported that the noise of the colony keeps them awake at night.

To develop the strategy Council engaged the expertise of species ecologists from Seed Consulting, Professor Darryl Jones, an expert in human/wildlife conflict and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW).

Can't you just get rid of the ibis?

The strategy identifies that management of ibis is a complex matter and is underpinned by the fact ibis are a native species and therefore protected.

Ibis will never be eradicated from Freshwater Lake Reserve. Investigations and consultation have determined that it is not ecologically possible to achieve total elimination of the Ibis from the reserve and that adopting an approach of living with wildlife is necessary.

Ibis relocation, that is, capturing the birds and releasing them elsewhere, has proven to be unsuccessful at places where this technique has been employed. An unintended consequence of this intervention is the creation of an ecological void which then becomes re-populated by more ibis than existed in that location initially. Council has decided that culling, relocation, egg disruption, tree removal or any other forms of species eradication will not occur.

Interstate experience demonstrates there must be a holistic management strategy and Council is planning a range of actions to manage the ibis population and their impacts.

What action will occur?

Council is proposing to use disruptive techniques that will limit the population from growing and reduce opportunities for ibis to roost and breed. Disruptive techniques include:

- Introducing flags and/or lighting in key roosting and nesting locations at Freshwater Lake Reserve; and
- Continued annual tree pruning of the Canary Date Palms around Freshwater Lake.

What are the disruptive techniques and how will they work?

Ibis are a social species and they derive a sense of safety from roosting and nesting in the presence of other ibis, which is why they form large colonies or social groups. Ibis are also a conservative bird species, which means they are alert and sensitive to changes and disruptions in their nesting and roosting sites.

Exploiting this knowledge of ibis has guided the selection of using flags and lighting in roosting and nesting locations as management techniques to limit population expansion and make the location less appealing to the ibis.

Pruning of the Canary Date Palms will continue to reduce the roosting potential of the ibis. This strategy has contained the physical spread of the colony to the front lake nearest West Lake Boulevard. You may notice pruning works over the coming weeks, these works are funded from Council's recurrent budget.

Council will investigate different types of flags and lighting and consider which are best suited to the Freshwater Lake Reserve and local area. You may see a few different versions being trialled in the reserve later this year.

To measure the effectiveness of disruptive techniques a count of the birds will occur before, during and after each method is used. Contingent on which of the trialled methods proves most effective, a full rollout of that disruptive method will occur.

Have the ibis displaced other birds? Aren't there less ducks than before?

It has been cited that ibis have displaced other bird species, and particularly caused a reduction in the number of ducks at Freshwater Lake Reserve. The range of bird species at the reserve is considered very diverse with a range of species present, including feral species of duck such as Peking ducks.

Duck numbers overall have reduced from a previously problematic and over-abundant level arising from bread feeding by visitors. Through education, this type of undesirable practice has reduced, bringing the population into balance.

We will also continue to discourage the feeding of birds through community education and the negative impacts such as potential increase in the numbers of Ibis.

What about all the bird droppings?

A clear message received from West Lakes residents was that the amount of bird droppings on the paths and bench seating make Freshwater Lake Reserve unattractive.

In response to this the cleaning schedule for the reserve has been changed and wet sweeping of the paths now occurs on a monthly cycle. The bench seats are also being inspected on a weekly basis and cleaned as necessary.

Is there more information available?

The full strategy can be found at:

<http://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/minutesAgendas/Agenda%20-%20Asset%20Management%20Committee%20-%202015%20July%202019.pdf>