



The red-capped robin, a declining species, occurred only in revegetation plots of several hectares and at least eight years old.

## Road-testing revegetation

A SURVEY of bird species at 132 revegetated sites in the New South Wales southern tablelands has yielded heartening news about the success of a decade of tree-planting efforts coordinated by Greening Australia.

'After completing 400 survey forms and sighting 9500 birds, we calculated how many of Australia's 750 bird species show up in revegetation sites in our region,' says Nicki Taws of the Canberra Ornithologists Group and Greening Australia.

'We were pleasantly surprised to find that 103 species, almost one seventh of all Australia's bird species and most of the land-bird species that regularly occur in our region, were recorded in revegetation. This was beyond expectations.'

In the past decade, Greening Australia has direct-seeded some 5000 kilometres of treeline on 400 properties in south-eastern NSW and the ACT. It now helps communities in the region to grow and plant more than 50 000 native trees, shrubs and grasses a year to address biodiversity, salinity and water quality issues. Similar activities occur throughout Australia.

The survey was conducted two years ago by members of the Canberra Ornithologists Group. It was part of Birdwatch, a project using the diversity of bird species to assess the contribution of revegetation to regional biodiversity.

The project, conceived by Sue Streatfield of Greening Australia, has been supported by the Bushcare Program of the Natural Heritage Trust and by CSIRO. Julian Reid and Dr David Freudenberger of CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems provided advice and analysed the survey data.

A booklet outlining the Birdwatch findings to date has been produced by Greening Australia. *Bringing Birds Back* includes photos and notes on the 'top 20' bird species recorded at revegetated sites.

The superb fairy wren holds the number one position: it appeared at 85% of revegetation sites and was the third most commonly recorded breeding species. Unlike some species, it wasn't fussy about the size or shape of the revegetated area.

The booklet offers 10 'birdscaping' tips for landholders. They cover subjects such as habitat requirements for particular species,

windbreak design, and the need for patchiness, layering and internal space in vegetation communities.

Greening Australia and CSIRO will continue the bird survey work to see how the picture changes and they plan to include other groups of fauna in future surveys.

*Bringing Birds Back, A Glovebox Guide is available from Greening Australia, (02) 6253 3035.*

*Steve Davidson*



Experienced birdwatchers surveyed 132 sites in to help determine the contribution of revegetation to regional biodiversity.