



# WildEyre takes flight

The challenge of protecting precious wild species and habitats in an area that covers 1.2 million hectares of the West Coast has been taken on by five agencies and groups under the banner "WildEyre".

Those groups are: The Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board, the Wilderness Society, the Nature Conservation Society of SA, Greening Australia and the Department for Environment and Natural Resources.

The project will be showcased at the Eyre Peninsula Field Days in Cleve from August 10 to 12 as part of a display by EPNRM.

EPNRM biodiversity program manager Andrew Freeman said the project encompasses 1.2 million hectares of coastal, agricultural and bush land, including some of the largest tracts of bush in the state's agricultural districts.

"It's a pretty ambitious project, covering from Point Drummond in the south to Point Brown in the north," he said.

Matt Turner from the Wilderness Society said WildEyre would raise the profile of the West Coast as a region that has high value conservation assets that need to be looked after.

Emma Coates, from the Department for Environment and Natural Resources, said WildEyre was a partnership between government and non-government groups.

"We are working with land managers, community members and traditional owners to help develop the conservation action plan for the region. We have held workshops in regional centres with more than 65 people attending to have a say in the priorities for this area."

Since the project's inception, it has gained funding from both the Australian government's Caring for our Country program and the state government's Complementary NRM Fund, ensuring that a number of significant outcomes have been achieved.

The plan was finalised in June 2009, with a summary brochure distributed to stakeholders. Todd Berkinshaw, from Greening Australia, said on-ground activities have included the collection of more than 100kg of native seed for revegetation, worked with landholders to protect priority remnant vegetation and controlling weeds such as box-thorn in coastal areas.

Four West Coast habitats identified in the plan have been given priority for work this year. They are she-oak grassy woodlands, with work being done around Calca and Colton and sub-coastal wetlands, coastal dunes and cliff tops, such as project sites



**PROTECTED:** The WildEyre project will help to protect habitat for the crimson chat.

that have been chosen north of Elliston and around Baird Bay.

Streaky Bay-based coastal management officer Louise Mortimer of EPNRM said seven landholders in the WildEyre region had received funding totalling \$130,000 this year.

"This money supports activities that improve the management of these habitats, such as protecting remnant vegetation by putting up fencing to exclude stock, revegetation of degraded sites through direct seeding of endemic species and fencing to manage access to sensitive coastal areas."

Elliston EPNRM officer Rob Coventry said it was great to be involved in on-ground work that was a priority for the board, but difficult to manage for individual landholders.

"WildEyre has given us the scope to undertake much-needed weed control along priority coastal areas that are vastly more difficult to access than a typical paddock," he said.

"It creates great multiple benefits for the whole community and reinforces the efforts landholders and local councils have been making over the past 15 years or more."

There is plenty of science behind the project, with native vegetation specialists undertaking detailed bushland condition assessments of the vegetation communities in 50 sites across the region.

Tim Milne represents the Nature Conservation Council of SA on the WildEyre team and is co-author of the Eyre Peninsula Bushland Condition Monitoring manual.

"These assessments not only give us a snapshot of the current health of our habitats, but allow us to see change over time, and attribute it to events such as drought or management changes made through the project," he said.

"It is important to have long-term monitoring for a project like this, as both the team and the wider community need to see that the investment is worthwhile, that habitats are improving and that their efforts will help conserve this area for future generations".