

Trees For Habitat

JUNE 2026

Site report - Murtho

Trees For Life has been working in collaboration with local landholders and the Murraylands & Riverland Landscape Board in the Murraylands region of South Australia since 2022 to create vital habitat for the vulnerable Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides*).

“Regent Parrots depend on safe, sheltered flight routes and reliable access to foraging sites within range of their breeding colonies along the Murray River, which they return to each year,” says Zoë Beer, Landscape Ecology Project Officer at the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board.

The goal of this project is to create, bolster and connect sites which supply food resources for Regent Parrots in that critical breeding period and beyond. In addition, a whole suite of other threatened mallee and woodland birds, reptiles and insects can benefit from these plantings.



Site details



Site size: 40 hectares



Project commenced: 2022



Planting method: Direct Seeding

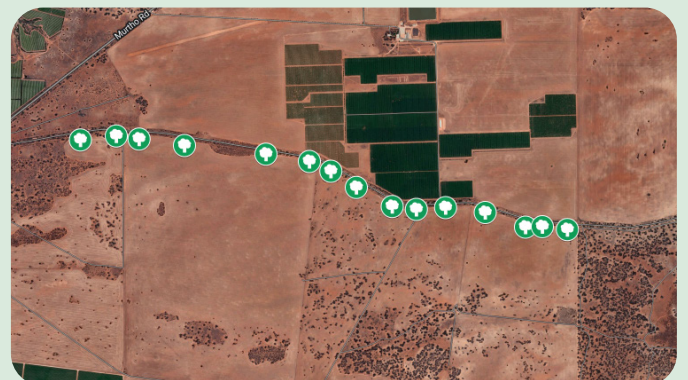
Impact



Total Trees For Habitat planted: 40,000



Number of species planted: 25





Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*)

Regent Parrot Photos by Alan Pettigrew



The site soon after direct seeding



Now: seedlings growing strong

Landscape

Regent Parrots rely on a mix of connected habitats, including River Red Gum and Black Box woodlands, floodplains and nearby Mallee. These different habitat connections are essential for feeding, breeding and safe movement across the landscape.

In the Riverland where this site is located, old growth River Red Gums along the riverfront provide ideal nesting hollows. Mallee woodland provides protection and food sources for birds. However large swathes of land are now used for agriculture, viticulture and horticulture.

Species planted

25 species were chosen for direct seeding at Murtho to replicate the Murray Mallee open woodland ecosystem which studies have shown to be heavily frequented by Regent Parrots.

All seed was collected within the northern Murray Mallee region.

Once established, these species will create a diverse and robust habitat for local wildlife, including the Regent Parrot.

Species direct seeded:

- Acacia species: *brachybotrya*, *collectioides*, *hakeoides*, *ligulata*, *nyssophylla*, *oswaldii*, *sclerophylla*, *wilhelmiana*
- Callitris species: *gracilis*, *verrucosa*
- *Casuarina Pauper*
- *Dodonaea viscosa agustissima*
- Eucalyptus species: *cyanophylla*, *dumosa*, *gracilis*, *incrassata*, *leptophylla*, *oleosa*, *socialis*
- *Leptospermum coriaceum*
- *Melaleuca lanceolata*
- *Pittosporum angustifolium*
- Saltbush species: *Atriplex semibaccata*, *Enchylaena tomentosa*
- *Senna artemisioides*



Progress

Soil on the site has not been disturbed since direct seeding took place. This has assisted native understorey plants such as Vittadinia, Saltbush and Maireana to naturally regenerate.

Fast-growing pioneer plants like Acacias and Dodonaea are thriving. Acacias provide shelter, perches and access to ground-feeding for small woodland birds. Trees For Life Executive Manager Stuart Gonda says, "I'm really pleased with how resilient these species have been through recent dry conditions."

As the slower growing species such as Eucalypts progress, these shrubs will thin out and create more space for understorey plants and grasses to establish. The eventual outcome will be three thriving strata of native vegetation that support biodiversity and wildlife.



Above: Successfully germinated Dodonaea, Acacia and Eucalyptus connecting with remnant mallee woodland at the Murtho Trees For Habitat site.



Melaleuca lanceolata

Melaleuca lanceolata

This mid-storey species grows up to 4m high and will provide dense cover for the Regent Parrot. It also provides multiple sources of food through its buds and the insects it attracts.



Leptospermum coriaceum

Leptospermum coriaceum

A native shrub reaching 1m - 3m tall. It provides Regent Parrots with cover, food and a place to roost as they use the wildlife corridor to move between sites.



Eucalyptus dumosa

Eucalyptus dumosa

This drought-tolerant species will grow to become one of the taller trees in the seeded area. It will provide the Regent Parrot with cover from predators and areas to nest.



A Regent Parrot nest

Hope for the future

Landholder Peter Freeman says, “Regent Parrots are a beautiful bird. We do seem to have a consistent population so it’s worth encouraging. I’m hoping we’ll start to see Regent Parrots nesting [on our property]. That’s what I want.”

Zoë Beer from the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board notes, “Tracking and monitoring confirms that these birds have their patches and flight paths that they faithfully return to, sometimes multiple times a day, during the breeding season. Males venture out in flocks to forage and bring back food for the nesting female and young developing chicks.

“This informs where in the landscape we work with Trees For Life to increase the availability and quality of these patches. We hope this could be key to improving breeding success and growing the population.

“The aim is connectivity and scale, linking habitat in a way that supports the parrots’ needs between breeding and foraging sites.”

What’s next?

In 2026, we will be direct seeding a new 20 hectare site at a Nature Foundation property in Pooginook, adjacent to the Pooginook Conservation Park.

This will further improve the Regent Parrot’s chances to thrive, along with other wildlife such as the southern hairy-nosed wombat.

We invite you to continue to invest in the program as we scale our impact.



Jessica McKelson (CEO, Trees For Life), Peter Freeman (landholder), and Stuart Gonda (Executive Manager, Habitat Improvement Services, Trees For Life).

Thank you to our Supporters

Trees For Life CEO Jessica McKelson says,
“The habitat we are creating for Regent Parrots along the River Murray would not be possible without Trees For Habitat supporters. This is a long-term project and we are delighted to be creating positive change, with your ongoing commitment.”

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Project Partners

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board
South Australian Regent Parrot Recovery Team

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