

WTA Workshop Session Outcomes

A MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE: WILDLIFE FEEDING AT O'REILLY'S

Facilitator

Daryl Jones, Griffith University

With: Matt Perry, O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse, and Scott Hetherington, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Supplementary notes:

(see also powerpoint presentations under presentations section).

Daryl Jones:

- Consistent message from parks agencies to public in N. hemisphere countries is to encourage wildlife feeding backyards. In Australia it's the opposite.
- Dependency of wildlife on feeding has been cited as a major concern but there is no good evidence for such an effect – in most cases research has shown that supplementary food provided by public is just a 'snack' – although there are some cases where dependency could be an issue for juvenile animals.
- At O'Reilly's, there has been limited research on impacts of feeding on birdlife. However one study showed that seeds provided by visitor feeding are only a small part of the diet of the birds concerned (Sanz and Green 2005).

Scott Hetherington:

The Commercial Wildlife Licence (Wildlife Interaction) was introduced March 1 2004 in Queensland. It aims to manage the risks and consequences of wildlife interaction, especially with regard to feeding. It only applies in situations where there is commercial gain involved, but applies both on and off parks. Obtaining a license (to permit interaction to take place) requires an approved Interaction Plan. Key components that QPWS are encouraging in such plans are: education of visitors; consideration of the ecological role, including on non-target species; and monitoring.

The situation at O'Reilly's (Scott Hetherington and Matt Perry):

- A draft Interaction Plan is in the process of being developed by QPWS and O'Reillys to manage wildlife feeding there. The bird feeding component is most difficult to address. There has been a problem of some tour operators bringing inappropriate food, potentially causing health problems for the birds.
- Some suggestions being considered for a new approach to management are: to build a new area for visitors to feed birds so that there is control over feeding, having scheduled feeding times, and having all feeding being interpreted by O'Reilly's guides.

Actions

There was general discussion and questions about the issue, but no actions were generated.