



Northern  
Territory  
Government



# Summary Paper Management Program for the Magpie Goose

*Anseranas semipalmata*

in the Northern Territory **2009–2014**

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**F**locks of Magpie Geese are an iconic part of the Northern Territory. Once widely distributed across northern and south-eastern Australia, their range has contracted from the south-east since European settlement. Magpie Geese are most abundant in the floodplains of the western Top End with total Northern Territory populations estimated at 1 million to more than 2 million birds.

Both a totemic animal for Aboriginal people and an important seasonal source of food, it is estimated that Aboriginal people currently harvest up to 60,000 birds per annum for food on their traditional lands. Other sections of the community also see hunting as important, with a practice of such harvest since the early 1900's and amounting to an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 birds taken by non-Aboriginal hunters in recent times.

To ensure the sustainability of the harvest by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, this harvest has been managed via a species management program since the mid-1990's. The management program incorporates both Aboriginal traditional and non-Aboriginal use of Magpie Geese and encourages management practices that favour all waterfowl, particularly the Magpie Goose, and that protect all wetland habitats.

### **Objectives of the program**

Magpie Geese are protected in the Northern Territory. The management program incorporates both Aboriginal traditional and non-Aboriginal use of Magpie Geese and encourages management practices that favour all waterfowl, particularly the Magpie Goose, and that protect all wetland habitats.

Our goal is to ensure the long-term conservation of wild populations of Magpie Geese and their habitats. The four principal objectives of the Management Program are to:

1. Maintain viable wild populations of the Magpie Goose.
2. Promote the long-term protection of the wetland habitats on which Magpie Geese and other wetland fauna depend.
3. Facilitate, where appropriate, the sustainable use of Magpie Goose populations.
4. Provide ongoing refinement of Magpie Goose management through review of the management program.

The current management program is substantially similar to previous versions, but after review, a number of new or refined actions have been included to achieve the objectives above.



### **Lead Shot**

Lead shot poses an ongoing threat through lead poisoning of humans, wildlife and habitat. The use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting during the annual waterfowl hunting season has therefore been completely banned. Negotiation with Aboriginal people to promote the use of non-toxic shot for the traditional harvest is a priority.

### **Waterfowl Hunting Plan**

A specific Waterfowl Hunting Plan will be in place by 2011. This recognises and endorses the non-Aboriginal harvest of magpie geese during the annual waterfowl hunting season by focusing on the particular issues associated with waterfowl hunting.

Some issues associated with waterfowl hunting are outside the scope of the Magpie Goose Management Program and will be included in the proposed Waterfowl Hunting Plan.

This includes such issues as access to public land for waterfowl hunting, the interaction of waterfowl hunters and the residents of rural areas where waterfowl hunting occurs, and commercial activities associated with waterfowl hunting.

### **Harvest Limits and Monitoring**

There are new maximum sustainable harvest levels of Magpie Geese which have been modified in line with the most recent information available in the scientific literature. These new levels are set at a maximum off-take of 14% of the estimated total population in any single year and a mean off-take of 10% in any three year period. These maximums include harvest from both commercial and non-commercial (hunting) activities. Current harvest levels from all sources are estimated to be no more than a maximum of 6% of the total population. An additional 1% can be taken to mitigate horticultural damage where this can be shown to be a problem and appropriate alternatives are not available.

An associated need to review and redesign the monitoring programs for magpie geese to ensure these harvest levels are not exceeded was also identified. Such reviews of both the population and harvest monitoring programs will be an early priority for the Management Program.



*The use of non-toxic shot has been mandated for the waterfowl hunting season across the Northern Territory*



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To view the entire Management Program for the Magpie Goose in the Northern Territory 2009–14 go to <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/programs/approved.html>

