



Regent Honeyeater, Whiplash

Jeongwoo Park

Report 3 of 3



Report 3

3. Not only number

3.1. Multidimensional Aspects of Conservation as Applied Ecology

To sum up the upper two parts of the essay, Taronga Zoo and Ross's team's work on Regent Honeyeater is a textbook example that demonstrates ethologists' role in conservation. Although there are multidimensional aspects of conservation, traditional approaches to conservation as well as public awareness were mostly about number or density. It holds to the reintroduction in particular, even though recent projects in frontiers do care for the rest of the things. Regent Honeyeater's case, as an example of mature conservative initiative, shows there are vast things to consider. In this last part, I would like to introduce some conservative measures other than song tutoring.

Firstly, the axiom in handling the genetics of the zoo reintroduction program is to minimize the relatedness of breeding individuals. Undoubtedly preventing genetic drift and inbreeding depression has been considered the most important aspect and challenge to the zoo reintroduction program, as the zoo population tends to be founded by a limited number of individuals. For this purpose, In Taronga, they select breeding individuals based on (at least) pedigree (as everyday measure) and recently using genetic technology. Not to mention they strictly regulate individuals out of breeding, especially in breeding season, by keeping them according to their sex. For example, the Blue Mountains Bushwalk only consist of males.

Second, they consider ethology. They not only teach them song, but they also teach other sets of natural behaviors like nesting. Also, before reintroducing them, they keep them in the crowded multi-species aviary for several months, providing experience to cope with other species.

Lastly, zoo reintroduction program cannot success when there are no habitat-based conservation and community engagement. Regent Honeyeaters were selected as focal species because they can take a role of umbrella species. Regent Honeyeater Initiative, leaded by Birdlife Australia is also engaged in Eucalyptus-dominated forests recovery and community engagement. Especially, bringing song back to the regent honeyeater have exact analog to the aboriginal group losing their song, making a room for cooperate on this conservation program.

3.2. Overview of Behind of Scene

As I am from the ethologist's background, I asked Monique the specialist for us in the Taronga about the song tutoring programs again and again during the very first day. I think maybe it was not her expectation what would be going on in this project. To be honest, I also think it was not the plan for the program-running authorities. During the interview on first day and the second day, she was very passionate about expressing all the other conservation measures running on the Regent Honeyeaters. This indeed covers many important points and invaluable comments, I felt a little embarrassed because it may hamper the main storyline of the unique features of this species.

Some of them, like genetic control measures, I think it's too common and basic to emphasize in the project as it's necessary things to do in reintroduction program. But some other comments were unexpected but very valuable. For instance, the aspect of reintroduction in demography, which is non-linear effect of the population density on individual fitness, was novel things for me to consider.

After thinking a while, I chose to put them in the last part, with the message of "Conservation is not all about numbers". This message not only summarize the diverse aspects of the Regent Honeyeater's case, but also represents my 'complaints' to some of the 'immature' conservative initiatives running.

One of my Darwin leader colleagues asked me why I don't emphasize the relationship with Indigenous people more. For my excuses, I would like to say: "I'm sorry, I don't have much knowledge about the context and there's no chance of going through within this short week". As compensation, I put the advertisement with a summarized, poetic phrase of the analog.

Let's finish this article with the citation: "Aunt, I've heard that your language has already gone extinct... In the end, it's just you and one other person left. The two of you might be the only survivors in the world who can still speak this language" _ Only Two People, Youngha Kim.

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