

Scrub-bird Secrets



Alan Stuart
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Photo: Allan Richardson

Tonight

- Scrub-bird recordings
- Scrub-bird studies
- Scrub-bird family life
- Some uncracked secrets



Male Rufous Scrub-bird (photo: Allan Richardson)

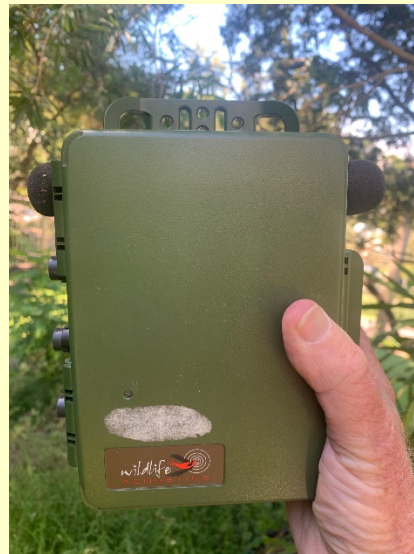
Rufous Scrub-bird habitat in the Gloucester Tops
Photo: Alan Stuart

Scrub-bird recordings

- Multi-year study of singing behaviour
 - By fixed-position recordings at some territories
- Recording call types by individual birds
 - By following them with a hand-held recorder

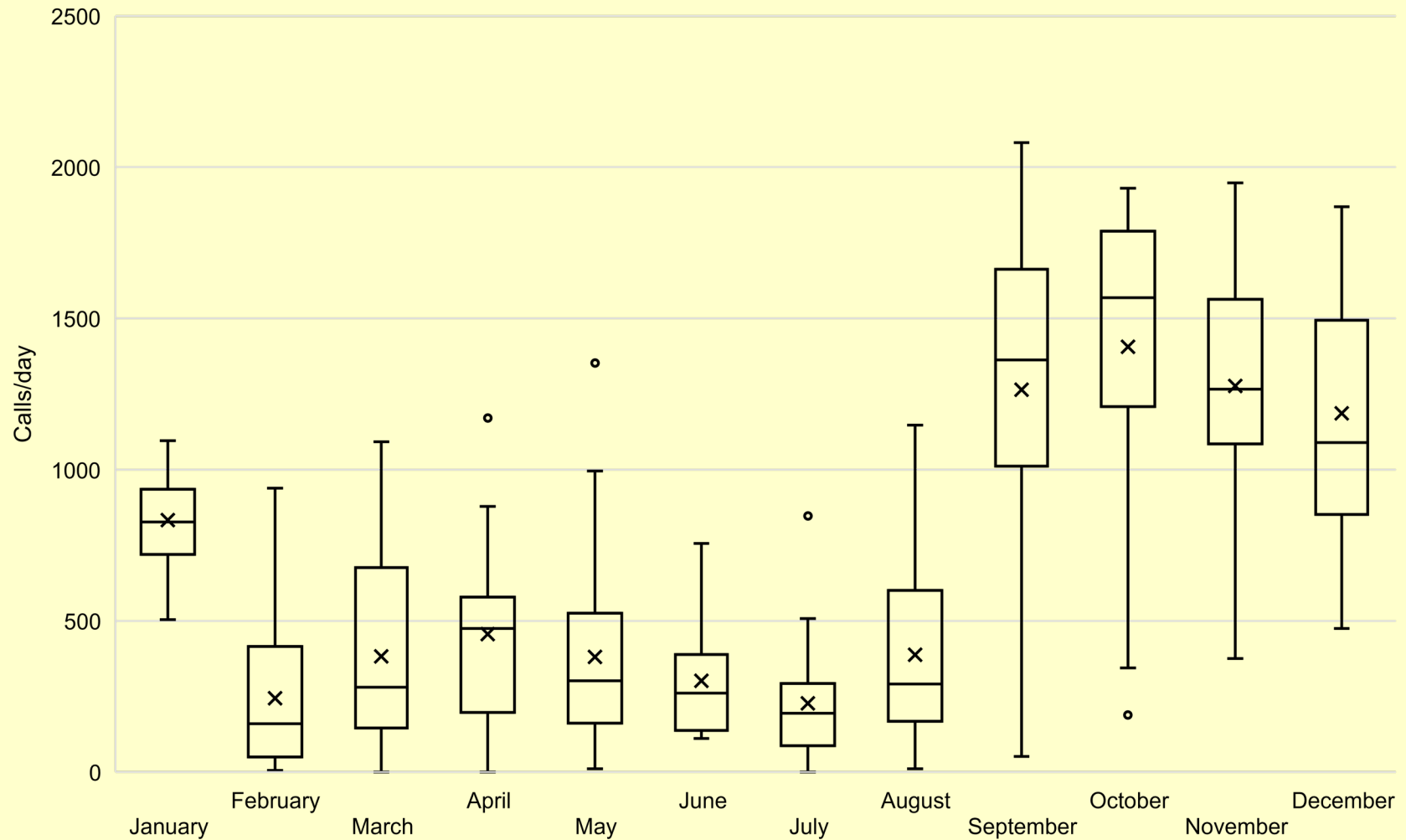


Fixed position Song Meter (model SM3)



Hand-held Song Meter (SM4)

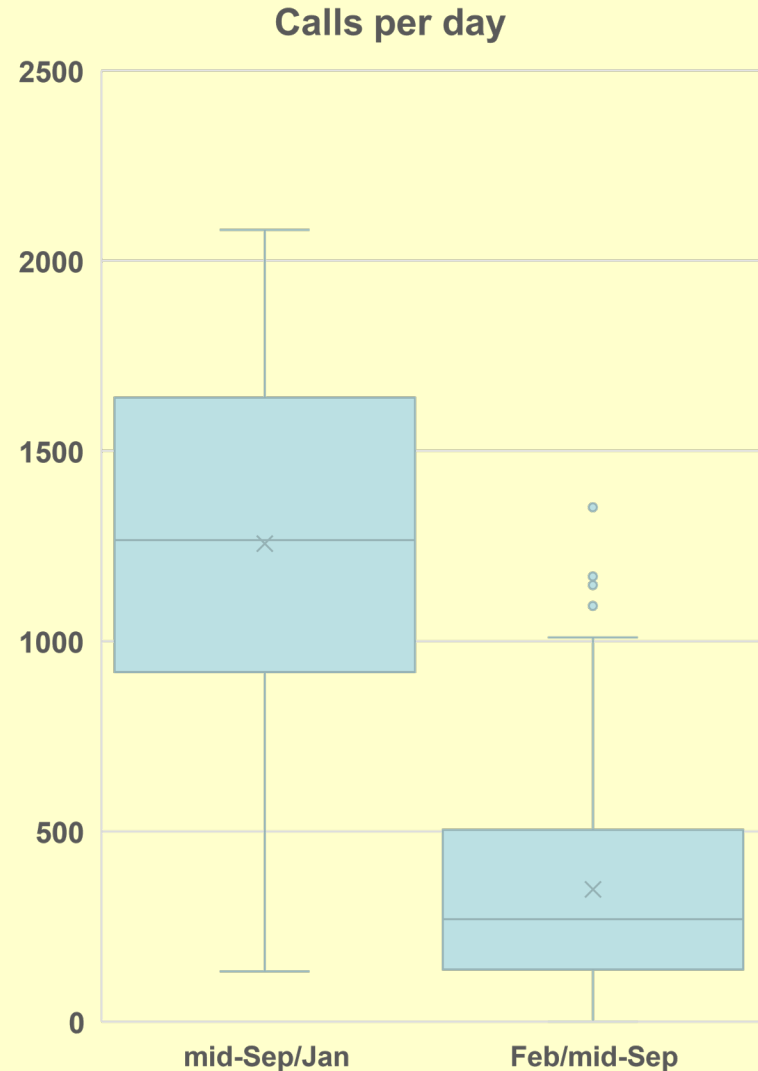
Singing behaviour



These are the combined results for five Rufous Scrub-bird territories

Singing behaviour

- Daily singing behaviour is unpredictable Feb-Aug
- Substantial change from mid-Sep
 - More calls per day
 - Also more 20-minute periods with singing activity



Song and calls

- Male



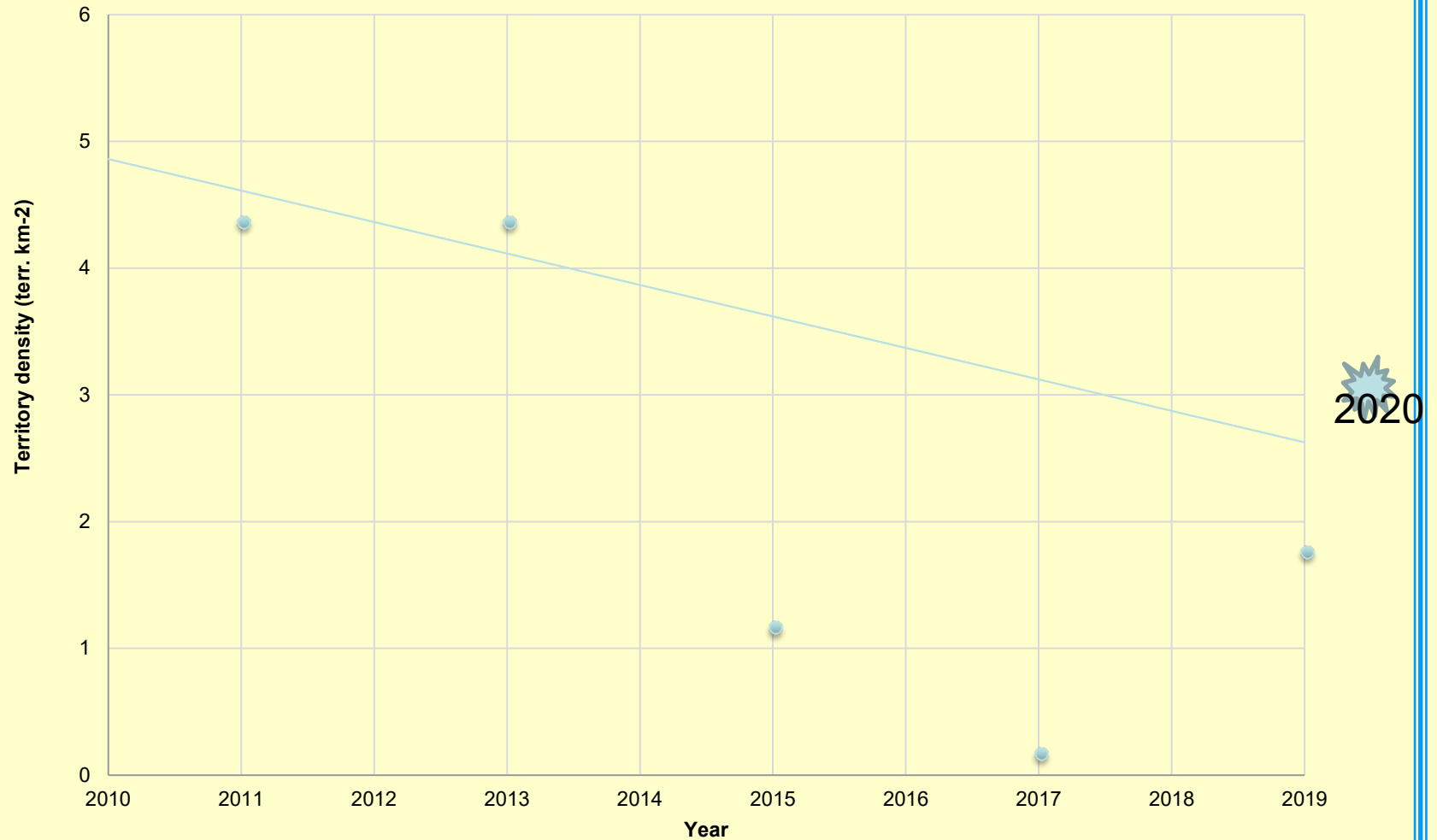
- Female



Scrub-bird studies

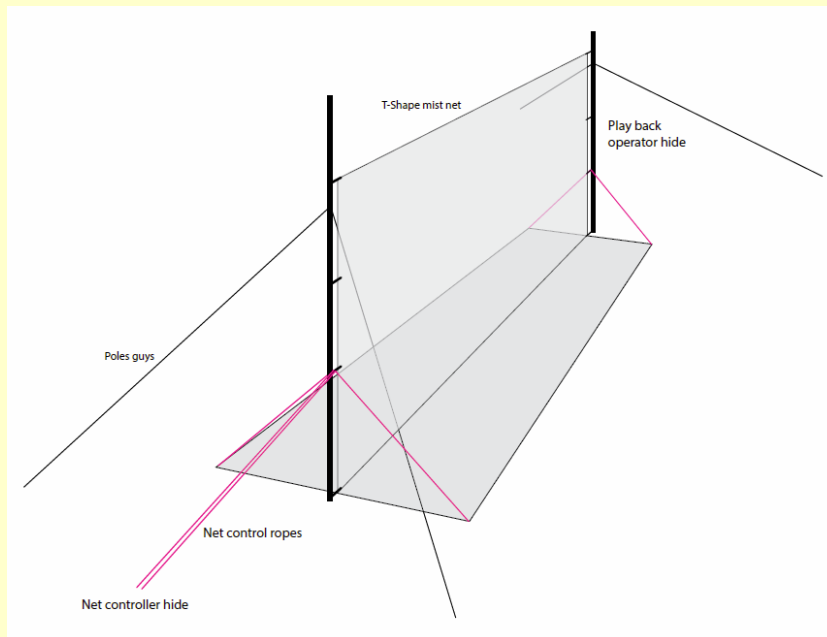
- Population trend
- Catching scrub-birds
- Attempts at radio-tracking
- Colour-banding

Population trend



Catching scrub-birds

- Scrub-birds don't fly
 - Thus can't be caught in a conventional mist net
 - We use an inverted-T net (developed for Noisy Scrub-birds)



Inverted-T net (sketch: Rob Kyte)



Inverted-T net in position (photo: Rob Kyte)

Radio-tracking

- Is a Rufous Scrub-bird's territory larger than its singing area?
 - Essential knowledge for scrub-bird conservation
- Two attempts at radio-tracking
 - #1 Transmitter stayed attached for ~ 1 minute
 - #2 Transmitter stayed attached for ~ 2 days



Rufous Scrub-bird fitted with radio tracker



Shortly afterwards!

Colour banding

- All three males have been banded and colour banded (+ biometrics recorded)
- Colour bands sometimes visible in the field
- Every sighting of a band provides important information about:
 - Territory size
 - Habitat requirements
 - Longevity



4+ years old Rufous Scrub-bird

Scrub-bird family life

- Male
- Female
- Dependent young

Uncracked secrets

- Territory size
- How long does a male hold a territory?
- Breeding biology, e.g.
 - Females: where, how many?
 - Nest design and location?
 - Dispersal by young birds
- Predator defence strategies?
 - Near-flightless bird in a world of cats, foxes and quolls
- Can we identify individual birds by their calls?

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