



# Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – December 2011

Conserving Biodiversity

## Eagles, Flowers, Reptiles, Insects!

The last “Nature notes” referred to “Birds abounding” well they still are! Recently, the Observers were privileged to join a small group of local people who were guided by a local farmer on a tour of his property. The purpose of the tour was to view three Wedge Tailed Eagles nests. All three nests had juvenile birds in them, but each bird was at a different stage of development. It is reassuring to interact with farmers who value the habitat and presence of these magnificent birds and the tour also highlighted the importance of preserving the large trees necessary to support the huge nests that Eagles use.

Green Mallee trees are flowering in profusion, which is providing plenty of food for insects and birds. The purple coloured flowers of the violet paperbark and totem poles has been adding some interesting colour to the bush as well.

This may be a very good year for reptile sightings. Already lots of snakes out and about, but also an increasing number of people report sighting goannas, of both varieties seen in this district. Both adult and juvenile goannas have been seen.

On a recent quiet walk across a paddock an observer heard an unusual and quite loud buzzing noise. Looking skyward did not reveal the source, but with careful tracking a large ground burrowing wasp was discovered, the buzzing noise it was making while building its burrow was clearly heard from several metres away.

“Nature Notes” highlights a variety of interesting sightings scattered over several weeks. Hopefully, the readers are encouraged to get out and about and see more for themselves too.

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network “Observers”

Photograph – Juvenile Wedge Tailed Eagle on nest.



## Box Gum Grassy Woodland Project still going

The Wedderburn CMN’s 3 year Caring for Our Country funding for Box Gum Grassy Woodland protection is still available to any landholder within the WCMN’s focus area. Over the past two years about a dozen landholders, both private and public, have taken the opportunity to protect, enhance and link Box Gum Grassy Woodlands and Buloke Woodlands. Works have included fencing, revegetation, weed control and rabbit control.

Much of this land was farming land, but after the floods at the beginning of this year, many of the landholders decided that these areas were better off being put to protection and enhancement of the remnant native vegetation, as it was too wet or difficult to work.

If you have Yellow Box, White Box, Blakely’s Red Gum, Bulokes or Grey Box on your property and would like to see it protected, enhanced or linked to other patches of remnant vegetation, please contact Michael or Wendy via the details at the end of this newsletter.

Article – Wendy Murphy



## The Box Ironbark Ecology Course

This course was held again this year from the 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> of October at Nagambie in Victoria. Six members of the Wedderburn CMN attended this well respected environmental experience. The following is a brief description of the course taken from a DSE publication followed by a report of one day of activities by a WCMN member. The WCMN considers it important that our members have opportunities such as this to increase their knowledge and understanding of the environment.

### *Extract from a DSE publication*

“The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is convening the popular Box Ironbark Ecology Course this October at Nagambie for the thirteenth consecutive year.

Leading scientists and experts will come together to share up-to-date thinking and research about box ironbark landscapes in changing conditions, focusing particularly on the relationship between soils, plants and animals in these landscapes.

This field based course will emphasise ecological understanding and teach field techniques that improve observation and data collection skills.

“We are pulling together a wide range of people with diverse expertise across the spectrum of box ironbark ecology in this International Year of Biodiversity.

Topics to be explored include landscape management to enable ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation, soil health assessment and management, and the impact of human use on box ironbark



### *Extract from WCMN member Report*

On arrival we broke into 6 groups with instructions to spend 2 hours walking over a 300 acre Trust for Nature property south of Violet town, and make an inventory (assets and threats). Following this, all groups joined together in the marquee to pool results and discuss a management plan for this property.

We were oriented with a lecture on the theory of land management for ecological restoration.

By the time of the group session to consider actions appropriate for this property, all 30 participants had developed strong and diverse views. Because lunch and packup time was looming the passionate forum had to be shut down before any resemblance to consensus was reached.

We were reminded again of the key point in the lecture of the need for an adaptive management strategy ie the management of the property must be constantly monitored and reviewed well into the future. The following is a description of the history of the property and our inventory.

Over the last 150 years the property has been in turn a gold mine, a dairy farm and a sheep farm. Concurrently it has been a timber/firewood lot. A water course with large red gums lining it runs through the property. The rest is Box Ironbark country with a tiny patch of mallee at the top corner of the property. Significant regrowth is occurring in patches around old vegetation. The cleared part of the property is covered in indigenous grass which is very thin on the upper slopes. There is no real weed problem, probably because the soil is so poor.

Also our leaders suggested that the original pre European top soil was now completely gone so that the current top soil layer was really the second soil layer.

Another perverse inventory item was the dams. Healthy aquatic invertebrate populations were found in the dams and reminded us that the pre gold rush creeks were mainly a series of clear water holes. However we had observed significant overgrazing throughout the property and we decided that the permanent water provided by the dams was supporting excessive kangaroo and rabbit populations which in turn put excessive



pressure on the fragile soil. Overall, we learned a tremendous amount and this was only the end of the first day – a very worthwhile experience.

Article by Barrie Taylor

### **Fox Baiting Resumes**

The Wedderburn CMN is undertaking fox baiting in the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve. FoxOff baits containing 1080 are being used. The blocks being baited are the Skinners Flat block, Wychitella block and the Wedderburn block. People are encouraged to keep a close eye on their pet dogs and to keep them on leads at all times if utilising the Reserve. The WCMN have been conducting fox baiting programs for seven years in these blocks primarily for the protection of the breeding malleefowl and the emerging chicks. Monitoring results suggest that fox numbers have been reduced and malleefowl numbers have risen. Wendy Murphy is conducting the baiting and is keen to hear from landholders about their experiences with foxes including sightings and den locations. Her contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Article – Wendy Murphy



### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Landcare Grant**

The Wedderburn CMN was successful in gaining a North Central CMA 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Landcare Grant to conduct works along the Nardoo Creek Walking Track. Dedicated community people have done work along the path in previous years, but due to aging volunteers and the floods in January, the walking track has become overgrown and damaged.

Works to be funded include plantings of native vegetation, track repair, weed works, a history of the walking track and a community BBQ. All this is scheduled for late March and it is hoped that many Wedderburn community groups will be involved. As they say, many hands make light work. This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase and improve a great Wedderburn community asset.

Article – Wendy Murphy

### **Alison Pouliot Fungi Workshops**

The Wedderburn CMN will again host two fungi workshops conducted by Alison Pouliot. These workshops are scheduled for Saturday June 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday June 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Parks Victoria office in Inglewood.

The Saturday workshop will be an introduction to the fungi world workshop and the Sunday workshop will be a more advanced workshop. Places are limited to 23 people each day, so please if you are interested let Michael Moore or Wendy Murphy know. Last year's workshops filled very quickly with people travelling from all over the State to attend. There will be a small charge, but more details will be made available closer to the event.

Article – Wendy Murphy



### **Thanks to all**

Jill MacFarlane would like to send her thanks to all who showed their concern for her by sending cards, messages and flowers during her recent stay in hospital. Jill is making good progress.

### **Spring firewood collection period ends**

**29 November, 2011**

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is reminding Victorians that the firewood collection season closes tomorrow (30/11/11) in State forests and parks across the state. DSE Executive Director Forests and Parks Lee Miezis said: “The Victorian Government introduced consistent state-wide firewood collection seasons when it abolished permits for firewood collection. Firewood collection seasons reduce the environmental and safety risks associated with firewood collection.” – this complete article can be viewed on the blog – see details at the end of this newsletter.

## Progress of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network (LPLN)

The LPLN, a network of ten Landcare groups, two Friends groups and the Wedderburn CMN continues to make progress towards the realisation of a biodiversity blueprint for the northern part of the Loddon Shire. Leah Cripps, the Project Officer for the network, has completed her work of gathering a tremendous amount of information from all groups and presenting this information in the form of maps, photographs, lists and written descriptions of the area of interest. This information will act as baseline data for assessing future environmental progress.

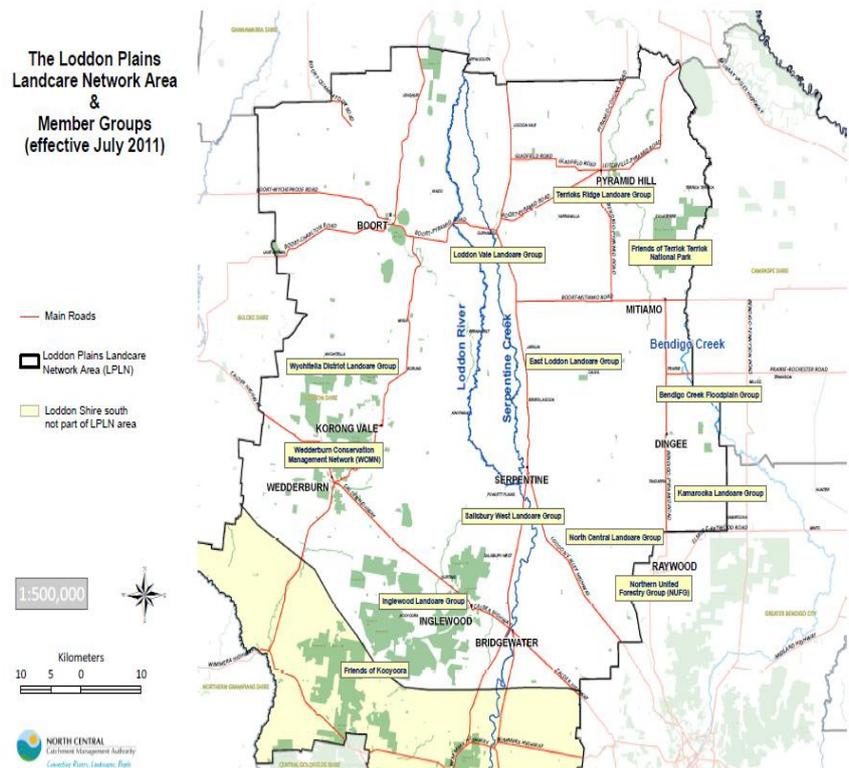
Funding for this aspect and immediate future planning has been provided by the Norman

Wettenhall Foundation and the North Central Catchment Management Authority.

This baseline information has been assessed by a reputable environmental scientist and the Committee of Management of the LPLN. It is now planned to hold workshops around the area to involve the community in establishing priority projects for which further funding will be sought.

The network applied to house one of the newly announced local Landcare Facilitators and has been successful in this application. This Facilitator will work closely with the LPLN Committee of Management to assist in bringing plans to fruition.

Article – Michael Moore



**The WCMN** is a network including interested individuals and both public and private land managers who come together to promote a shared aim. That shared aim is to work with the community in general to promote profitable, productive and sustainable human enterprises while conserving and indeed enhancing the biodiversity of their area of interest.

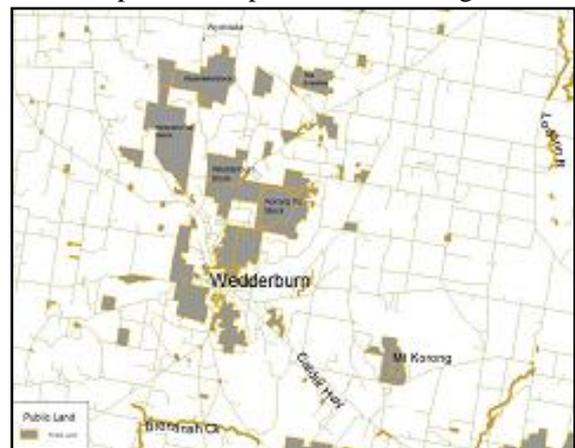
For further information concerning any items in this newsletter or other aspects of the WCMN contact **WCMN ranger, Wendy Murphy - 0438384053** **WCMN President, Michael Moore – 54943542** **Website addresses**

<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/january/web/index.html>

<http://wedderburncmnnews.blogspot.com/>

<http://lplnnews.blogspot.com/>

LPLN- Loddon Plains Landcare Network



The WCMN Area of Interest

‘Proudly supported by the Victorian Government Landcare Grants Program’.

