



# Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – January 2013

Conserving Biodiversity

## Humidity brings butterflies

A humid morning, makes walking in the bush a little slower, but in nature the humidity also brings on an enormous amount of activity with butterflies and moths. We encountered two orchid butterflies just beside the white line on the Calder Highway. Wonder how long they would stay there with vehicles passing by at 100km an hour?

Leaving the highway we proceeded down a bush track and immediately began to notice many different and very active butterflies and moths.

We observed five different species in the space of a few hundred metres. Of course we were keen to take photographs of every different moth or butterfly, but they were so active we soon gave up on this rather difficult task. Spotting so many different insects compensated for the rather uncomfortable weather conditions during an hour's walk.

Increase in humidity and insects has also increased the activities of birds and much entertainment can be had watching birds catching insects on the wing. Some non-indigenous plants such as bracelet honey myrtle are flowering in profusion near our garden. We have counted up to ten different insects feasting on the nectar at one time.

In the forest spring is certainly over, but a few late flowering plants are still evident such as the locally common broom bush. With no rain, the ground is dry and animal tracks are easily seen on the ground. As we set off on our morning walk we often see tracks of goannas, birds, snakes, lizards and at present a lot of hares. It's always an interesting start to contemplate what creatures have passed along this track since the last time we were there.

So once again walks in the natural environment continue to provide diverse and interesting observations, which any one can do.

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network "Observers"  
Photograph of Orchard butterflies on bitumen road (Calder Highway)



## WCMN Christmas Event – Bats of the Wedderburn Area

The WCMN's 2012 Christmas event took place on Wednesday 5 December 2012 at the Empire State Hotel in Inglewood. Dinner was followed by a presentation about bats by Micaela Jemison, a bat ecologist from DSE's Arthur Rylah Institute in Heidelberg. Micaela is the protégé of renowned bat expert Dr Lindy Lumsden.

The 33 people who came along raved about the quality and diversity of Micaela's presentation, and were captivated by George Junior, the tiny Southern Freetail Bat that Micaela brought along for people to meet. Micaela explained the main



differences between microbats (suborder *Microchiroptera*) - which are the main focus of her work - and the larger bat species such as flying foxes. She also discussed the different types of microbats such as tubenoses, long-eared and freetail bats, and how they navigate using echolocation. Participants particularly enjoyed learning about local species such as the Lesser Long-eared and Gould's Long-eared bats, and the Chocolate Wattle Bat.

Feedback from participants indicates that they would be interested in a follow up workshop or field day on bats, especially identifying and improving habitat.

Article and photographs by Karly Learmonth – WCMN Facilitator



## Frogs

We have had a couple encounters with the curiously named Pobblebonk or Eastern Banjo frogs. It is not uncommon to find these frogs buried in the soil in our vegie garden. These frogs breed in the nearby dam (and they certainly do a lot of loud calling when we get rain). Several beautiful specimens were unearthed during the process of harvesting a bed of potatoes, then a few days later we found another swimming in a sheep water trough.

Hot weather has prompted the yellow gums to shed last year's bark. The trees look very stunning now with smooth pale trunks. Hot weather has implications for wildlife as well. Once the temperature exceeds 35 degrees the birds begin to take shelter under the decking of our widest verandah. We have seen ten magpies at once sheltering there. It is also a favourite spot for blue wrens. In the late afternoon, after a hot day, sizeable groups of very colourful Eastern Rosellas are enjoying feeding on seed on the dry ground.

Plenty of people are reporting sightings of reptiles and unusually large numbers of goannas have been seen in the area. We have had a few encounters with eastern brown snakes.

Bushfires bring some opportunities.

During recent fires, we noticed the smoke was preceded by a large group of wood swallows which appeared to be feeding on insects borne on the wind from the fire.

We have had a small rabbit around our garden. An unwanted pest. Last week we found half a small rabbit, something had eaten it. We have seen three foxes in the daytime over the past fortnight. We may have been pleased to find half a rabbit, but not so pleased to find a large pile of wood duck feathers near the dam.

Biodiversity in nature is demonstrated in many ways. Look at your own place and see what you can come up with.

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network "Observers" - photograph of "Pobblebonk" or "Eastern Banjo" frog



## Nardoo Hills Camp Brief Report - November 2012

This weekend camp was on a reserve owned and managed by Bush Heritage Australia located 12 km north west of Wedderburn. Results were partially successful in so far that a single Southern Freetail Bat *Mormopterus* species 4 (undescribed) was captured, but otherwise disappointing regarding terrestrial and arboreal mammals. This bat was one of three mammal species Jeroen van Veen, Bush Heritage's Field Officer at Nardoo Hills Reserves, was hoping for us to find on the reserve; the other two not found being Fat-tailed Dunnart and Sugar Glider.



**Southern Freetail Bat – Max Campbell**

***Morethia boulengeri* – Andrew McCutcheon**

In addition to the Southern Freetail bat, 10 Little Forest Bats *Vespadelus vulturnus* and 5 Lesser Long-eared Bats *Nyctophilus geoffroyi* were captured after 10 Harp Trap nights over three nights, 16 bats in all. No mammals or any other fauna were recorded by eleven MSGV remote sensing cameras deployed over three nights for a total of 24 camera nights. All 49 nest boxes installed by MSGV in 2006 were empty. No cage or Elliot traps were set.

Spotlighting revealed 6 Ringtail Possums, 15 Brushtail Possums and a single Eastern Grey Kangaroo on two surveys; one over a short distance near our camp site and the other along a two kilometre section of Mt Kerang road in Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve immediately east of Nardoo Hills. Of these, only 2 Brushtail Possums were spotted within Nardoo Hills Reserves, the remainder were in Wychitella NCR. An interesting aspect to this, as explained by Jeroen has a lot to do with past land use. In the case of the three blocks that make up Nardoo Hills, all were previously grazing properties resulting in significant loss of ground cover vegetation and shrub layer. In the case of Wychitella NCR the area was selectively logged in the past without deliberate removal of shrubs and ground cover. It appears from this spotlight survey that past logging has had much less impact compared to grazing in this area regarding arboreal mammals.



**Hillcrest Herb-rich Woodland, Nardoo Hills**



**Masked Woodswallow – Andrew McCutcheon**

Other mammals seen or heard over the long weekend include a small number of Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroos (about 10 of each) and 2 Black Wallabies. Of the 55 species of birds recorded White-browed and Masked Woodswallows were the highlight. All the other species recorded are what would be expected to occur in this reserve. Reptiles seen include two skins, *Morethia boulengeri* and a Jacky Lizard.

Article by Andrew McCutcheon – Mammal Survey Group of Victoria Inc.

### Northern Plains CMN joins the LPLN

The Northern Plains Conservation Management Network (NPCMN) is the newest group to become a member of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network.

The NPCMN works with communities, government agencies and non-government organisations within the regional landscape to protect, enhance and promote grassland and woodland ecosystems. This is done through recognising and supporting a workable balance between biodiversity conservation and sustainable farming. The network administers and promotes the implementation of land management techniques such as pest plant and animal control, fencing and revegetation with the aim of increasing habitat quality and extent.

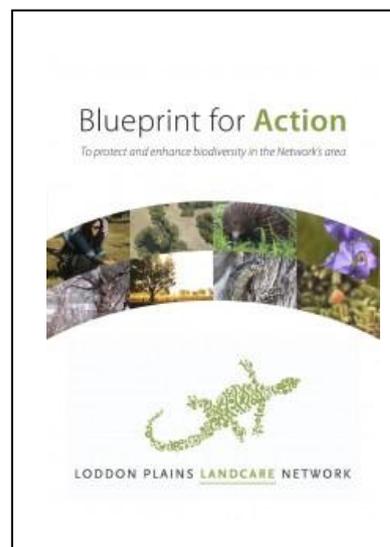
The NPCMN focal ecological communities are the nationally critically endangered Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains and the nationally endangered Buloke Woodland of the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression Bioregions.

Beau Kent, NPCMN Facilitator said:

"We are very much looking forward to forging a strong and inspired partnership with the LPLN into the future to help secure and manage our remaining native flora and fauna."

Article by Anthony Gallacher – LPLN landcare facilitator

***The LPLN have completed their Blueprint for Action (shown above) and have a new website which can be visited using the address given below. The WCMN welcomes the NPCMN on board.***



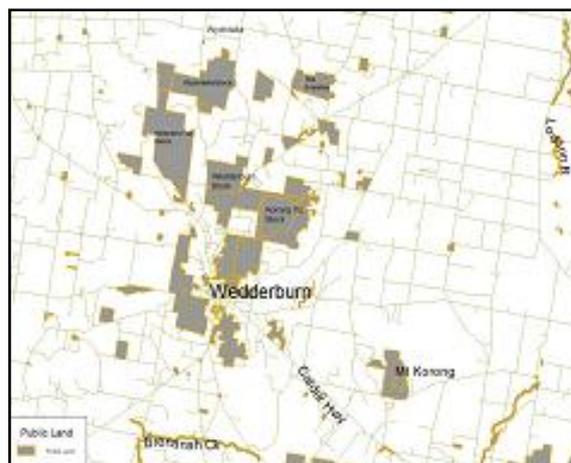
The WCMN is a network including interested individuals and both public and private land managers who come together to promote a shared aim. That shared aim is to work with the community in general to promote profitable, productive and sustainable human enterprises while conserving and indeed enhancing 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, Karly Learmonth- 0429 356 285**  
**WCMN President, Michael Moore – 54943542**

#### Website addresses

- [www.wedderburncmn.org](http://www.wedderburncmn.org)
- <http://wedderburncmnnews.blogspot.com/>
- [www.lpln.org](http://www.lpln.org).

LPLN- Loddon Plains Landcare Network



The WCMN Area of Interest

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

