

November 2025



Wedderburn Conservation Management Network

Annual Report of Achievements

Prepared by Trudy Nelsson
SECRETARY WCMN

■ We acknowledge the Djaara people as the Traditional Owners of the Wedderburn district and recognize their continuing connection to country. We pay our respects to their culture and their elders past and present.



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About This Report

This 2025 Annual Report reflects a year of meaningful progress, collaboration, and growth.

Who we Are

The Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) is a community-based organisation dedicated to protecting and restoring the unique Box-Ironbark and Mallee landscapes of north-central Victoria. We work with landholders, Traditional Owners, volunteers, and partner organisations to enhance biodiversity, share knowledge, and foster a deeper connection with Country.

Together, we’re nurturing healthy landscapes, inspiring communities, and a resilient natural future.

WCMN – Annual Report 2025

The Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) continues to make strong progress in protecting biodiversity, supporting inclusive environmental education, and strengthening partnerships across the region.

Despite challenging dry conditions, 2025 has been a year of growth, adaptation, and collaboration.

Presidents Report

It is my privilege to present the President’s Report for the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) for the 2024–2025 year.

This has been a year of deep connection — with community, with Country, and with the species and landscapes we are working so hard to protect. Our volunteer network continues to grow, and our events remain oversubscribed, demonstrating the strong and shared passion for conservation across the Wedderburn and Wychitella districts.



Our Connect with Nature program was successfully delivered, providing hands-on environmental education through plant identification workshops, seed collection and propagation, weed management field days, cultural learning, and citizen science programs. These activities have strengthened ecological literacy and empowered community members of all ages to contribute meaningfully to conservation.

Central to our mission is the protection of the endangered Malleefowl, our signature species. We continued ongoing mound monitoring and ground-truthing of newly identified mounds, expanding our knowledge of local populations and habitat condition. The Connecting Spirit Workshop was another significant pillar of this work — bringing people together to learn about Malleefowl ecology, cultural perspectives, and the importance of collective stewardship.

This year, we proudly strengthened partnerships that are vital to Malleefowl recovery:

Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) – providing LiDAR imagery and logistics for ground truthing, and supporting us in cultural knowledge sharing and Country-first management

National Malleefowl Recovery Group (NMRG) — ensuring our monitoring aligns with national conservation strategies and providing hands on experience and guidance

These collaborations enrich our approach and ensure our actions contribute to outcomes at both regional and national scales.

Our Nest Box Program continued to flourish through partnerships with the Wedderburn Men’s Shed and Lively, with forty beautifully crafted and painted boxes installed across member properties to support hollow-dependent species including Brush-tailed Phascogales, Sugar Gliders, Antechinus and woodland birds.





A highlight was our Bosisto’s property monitoring day with TAFE students and teachers, local ecologist Gary Cheers, and WCMN volunteers — a perfect example of citizen science in action. Students gained valuable field experience while contributing real data to guide future conservation decisions.



Our ongoing partnership with Lively remains one of the most rewarding elements of our program delivery. Through our regular All Abilities Nature Activity Days, adults with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to explore the outdoors, contribute to real conservation projects, and build confidence in a supportive environment. Whether creating seed bombs, planting native species, discovering wildlife, or simply enjoying time in nature, participants bring incredible enthusiasm and joy to each activity. These days not only foster inclusivity and personal growth but also help strengthen social connections and community belonging — reflecting our belief that everyone has a role to play in caring for Country.

Across all projects, we remain grounded in mutual respect for Traditional Owners and the cultural significance of these landscapes. Our work acknowledges that caring for Country is strengthened when we listen, collaborate, and walk forward together.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and generosity of:

- Our hardworking committee and volunteers
- Local landholders who open their properties and share their knowledge
- Our partner organisations including Djandak, Parks Victoria, NMRG, TAFE institutes, Lively, and local ecologists
- Our funders and supporters, whose contributions make our programs possible

Together, we are improving habitat resilience, restoring damaged systems, and ensuring that the Malleefowl, and so many other species, have a secure future in Central Victoria. Our achievements this year reflect the strength of community led action and the spirit of cooperation.

Thank you all for your passion, commitment, and belief in what we can achieve together. I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.



James Nelsson

President

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network

Treasurers Report

The main sources of income for 2024-25 were as follows: a grant of \$16,000 from Connect with Nature, sales and other revenue of \$7,000 from Bush Heritage for Mallee fowl protection, and a grant of \$500 from the Northern Catchment Management Authority. In addition, an amount of \$454.55 was reimbursed for expenditure from Biolinks Alliance.

Following the registration of the WCMN as a deductible gift recipient on 27 February 2025 the first donations were received in May. The balance of the donations account, inclusive of interest was \$760.27 at the end of the financial year.

The main program expenditure (in order of quantum) were as follows: Connect with Nature field activities (\$6,687.24) (38%), Nest box construction (\$2,149.48) (12%), Mallee fowl protection (\$1,788.97) (10%), Cactus control measures (\$1,368.97) (8%), and Biolinks Alliance conference (\$397.53) (2.3%).

General operating costs were \$5,071.4 (inclusive of general expenditure, operating costs, insurance and memberships). This is in addition to other minor costs, comprising the 2023-24 AGM, education and training and community engagement costs (\$600.07).

The opening balance for the 2024-25 financial year was \$11,820.39, with a net profit of \$6,651.16 for 2024-25 and a closing balance of \$18,471.55. Adjusted for GST of \$161.76 this reconciled to cash at bank of \$18,309.79. This result compares favourably to the previous financial year of \$11,820.39





The main sources of income and expenditure for the 2024-25 financial year are outlined in the table below.

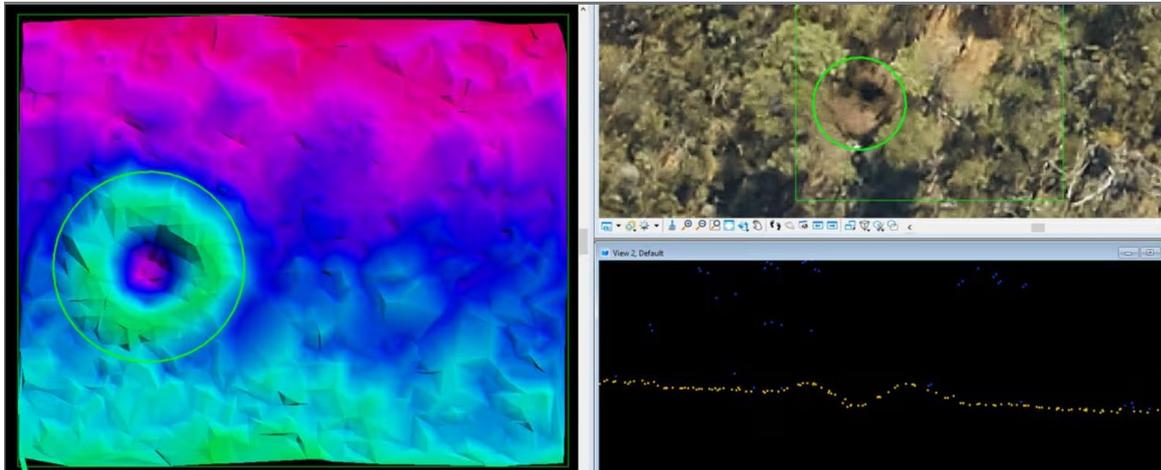
2024-5 WCMN Summary Financials		
Income		
Sales	Bush Heritage Mallee fowl (Wychitella NCR)	2,000.00
Other revenue	Bush Heritage Mallee fowl	5,000.00
Grant	NCMA	500.00
Grant	Landcare (Connect with Nature 2024-25)	16,000.00
Donations	Various donors	760.00
Interest	Bendigo bank	0.27
		24,260.27
Expenditure		
	Connect with Nature 2024-25	6,687.24
	Cactus control	1,368.97
	Biolinks Alliance (reimbursement)	-454.55
	Biolinks Alliance conference	397.53
	Community engagement	172.37
	Operating costs	2,565.06
	Mallee fowl	1,788.97
	Education and training	112.75
	General expenses	1,202.74
	AGM	314.95
	Membership/insurances	1,303.60
	Nest boxes	2,149.48
		17,609.11
	Net profit	6,651.16
	Opening Balance	11,820.39
	Net profit	6,651.16
	Closing Balance	18,471.55
	GST	-161.76
	Cash at Bank	18,309.79

Conservation and Research

Malleefowl Conservation – Wychitella Region

Protecting and monitoring Malleefowl populations remains a key priority for WCMN. Our work focuses on safeguarding nesting sites, restoring habitat, and engaging the community in citizen science initiatives.

Monitoring of existing mounds and tracking of bird movements is ongoing, with recent sightings recorded along roads and tracks throughout Wychitella. Djandak’s LiDAR mapping has added valuable spatial detail, and ground-truthing has now been completed, with results currently being analysed to guide ongoing habitat management. Their support is also strengthening cultural knowledge-sharing, bringing people together to learn about Malleefowl ecology, cultural perspectives, and the importance of collective stewardship.



The fox baiting program, critical for protecting Malleefowl, has been successfully coordinated in partnership with Parks Victoria. Special thanks to James Stewart, whose support has been instrumental in implementing baiting across the Wychitella Reserves and targeting key mounds to reduce predation risks.

The monitoring season is now underway, with volunteers actively conducting surveys across priority sites. Earlier in the year, several volunteers attended the VMRG annual monitoring weekend at Wyperfeld, gaining valuable training in monitoring protocols and hands-on experience at Malleefowl mounds.

Community involvement remains central to these efforts, and WCMN looks forward to sharing progress and insights at the AGM, where Shana Nerenburg will present a talk on Malleefowl conservation and the collaborative efforts that continue to protect this iconic species.



Habitat Restoration and Revegetation



Tree planting and habitat restoration activities have continued across several local properties, strengthening ecological connectivity. With over 150 wire guards made and utilised in various plantings on private and public lands.

Community planting days continue to be well attended, with grants providing funding for toilet hire, Landcare lunches and BBQ's, plants, fencing and OH&S equipment, all in support of ongoing restoration. WCMN recently secured project funding for a new revegetation project near the Wychitella NCR, with a grant from Landcare Victoria. This is a multi-faceted project including rabbit control, warren ripping, rabbit proof fencing, weed control, direct seeding and overstory planting and guarding.

Nesting Box Program

This year, the WCMN continued to expand and monitor habitat for native hollow-dependent fauna. In partnership with the Wedderburn Men's Shed and Lively, forty high-quality nesting boxes were built and beautifully painted by volunteers for installation across member properties. These boxes provide much-needed shelter for species such as Brush-tailed Phascogales, Sugar Gliders, Antechinus, and a range of native woodland birds - helping to counter the ongoing loss of natural tree hollows.



A highlight of the program was a field visit to the Bosisto's property, where TAFE students and teachers joined WCMN volunteers and local ecologist Gary Cheers to carry out nest box inspections. Students gained hands-on experience in wildlife monitoring techniques, while contributing valuable observations that support our conservation goals. Insights from these surveys will continue to inform future nest box placement, design improvements, and our broader efforts to support threatened species within the district.

Volunteers and Community Spirit

Our volunteers continue to be the driving force behind every WCMN achievement. From early mornings monitoring Malleefowl mounds to afternoon planting sessions, citizen scientists, landholders, and community members have generously contributed their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm.

Volunteers supported over 30 community outreach field-days, helped prepare and install nest boxes, assisted with flora surveys, monitored Malleefowl mounds, ground truthed new mounds, Fox baited, undertook weed control and maintained strong stakeholder and partner engagement throughout the year. Their energy, curiosity, and dedication inspire others and remind us that lasting conservation outcomes depend on shared effort and local pride.

To strengthen skills and ensure safe and effective conservation work, WCMN supported our volunteers to undertake chemical user training for weed and pest control to support safe and effective on-ground work. and provided opportunities to attend the VMRG annual monitoring training weekend, deepening their understanding of monitoring protocols and species protection, ensuring our monitoring continues to meet high scientific standards.



Volunteer Contributions

Our volunteers once again made an outstanding contribution throughout the year, dedicating many hours to **Malleefowl** mound surveys, data entry, mapping, and fox-baiting activities. Their work supported the ongoing **Djandak** partnership and strengthened collaboration with **Parks Victoria** and **local landholders**.

Together, these efforts represent over **\$80,000 of in-kind support** — an incredible community investment in local biodiversity and the protection of our threatened species.

The Hidden Contribution of Time and Resources

Behind every field day and project milestone lies a quiet but vital contribution, the many hours of volunteer administration that keep WCMN running smoothly. From managing the finances, coordinating meetings, writing reports and funding applications, to managing communications, compliance, and community engagement, these unseen efforts are the backbone of our organisation. This hidden donation of time and resources ensures that projects stay on track, partnerships thrive, and opportunities for our community continue to grow. It reflects the deep commitment of our volunteers to protecting and restoring the landscapes we all care about.





We extend a **Heartfelt Thanks** to everyone who participated in our events, meetings, undertook administration, offered their land for restoration, or simply shared their observations and stories from Country, your contributions make all the difference.



Education and Community Engagement

Connect with Nature

WCMN's community engagement programs continue to foster connection with nature and conservation awareness. Workshops, field days, camps, and inclusive activities with Lively have reached a wide audience across the region.

The *Connect with Nature* program delivered over 45 field activities this year, including, Seed collecting, Flora Walks, Malleefowl shuffles, Homeschool Network Camps, Djandak monitoring field days/weeks, Bendigo TAFE Camps, and inclusive Lively activity days. Participants took part in bushwalks, flora surveys, seed dispersal, weed control, nest box installation, and cultural learning with the Djaara Rangers.





Wedderburn Conservation Management Network Inc (WCMN)
 ABN 89382486782

A highlight was the *Returning Spirits to Country* workshop, co-delivered by Djaara and DEECA, celebrating shared knowledge and long-term stewardship.



WCMN also hosted a well-attended Plant Identification Workshop at Wetlands Gatjin Dja, led by Dan Frost, from Seeding Victoria, and Trudy presented at DEECA’s “Making Environmental Volunteering Accessible” webinar, showcasing our inclusive approach to conservation.

Surveys sent to participants following these events indicated high levels of satisfaction and learning outcomes, with many respondents reporting increased knowledge of local flora and fauna, improved understanding of threatened species like the Malleefowl, and a strengthened connection to their local environment. Participants also highlighted the value of hands-on experiences, cultural learning, and collaborative fieldwork in enhancing their engagement and motivation to support ongoing conservation efforts.



“Being outside, doing something real – that makes a difference to how the group feel. The group would come back every week if they could. They’re always excited to come out to Wedderburn” – Phil, Lifely Carer.

“The kids were able to see what’s involved in environmental science - monitoring techniques and equipment, and fauna display”, Home school parent

These insights confirm the importance of inclusive, interactive programs and help guide the design of future events to maximize educational impact and community involvement.



Communication and Outreach

Sharing our stories is an important part of inspiring others to care for Country. In 2025, WCMN refreshed and regularly updated its website - www.wedderburncmn.org - providing a platform for members and the public to access information about local projects, species, and events.

Social media updates and photo stories have highlighted community achievements, planting days, and educational activities, reaching a wider audience across the Loddon region.



WCMN has also contributed regular stories to local newspapers, including the *Loddon Times* and *The Scoop and Scuttlebutt*, celebrating local conservation efforts and keeping the community connected and informed.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnerships remain at the heart of WCMN's success. This year saw strengthened collaboration with Seeding Victoria, Djandak, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, DEECA, Bush Heritage Australia, Trust for Nature, Lively, Home School Network and local community. These relationships have reinvigorated community conservation and created new opportunities for shared learning and habitat protection.



Advocacy and Community Voice

This year, WCMN continued to strengthen its advocacy for healthy landscapes and community-led conservation. Representatives attended the Friends of Parliament House event, ensuring that the challenges and successes of our local conservation efforts were heard at a state level.

We provided written submissions to the Loddon Shire, calling for stronger, more coordinated weed control on roadsides and public reserves. We also engaged directly with our local Members of Parliament, highlighting issues around invasive species, the protection of threatened species, and the need for long-term investment in on-ground action.



Through these efforts, WCMN continues to champion our region's biodiversity and advocate for increased support for the volunteers, landholders, and communities who drive conservation from the ground up.

Charitable Status and Fundraising



This year marked an important milestone for the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network.

WCMN is now formally recognised as a Charitable Not-for-Profit organisation with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, enabling us to accept tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses. This achievement strengthens our ability to secure long-term funding and deliver more impactful conservation outcomes.

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Our recent community events, including Connect with Nature weekends and inclusive field days, have helped raise awareness of our not-for-profit status. At each event, participants were encouraged to contribute voluntary donations, with all proceeds directly supporting local biodiversity projects, educational activities, and on-ground restoration.

These contributions — combined with growing community recognition — reflect a strong sense of ownership and shared responsibility for protecting our natural landscapes, while enabling WCMN to continue fostering conservation, education, and cultural engagement in the region.



Lessons Learned

This year has provided valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges of community-led conservation.

Scientific Rigour and Monitoring:

Maintaining robust, evidence-based monitoring protocols for species such as the Malleefowl has reinforced the importance of scientific rigour in guiding on-ground decisions. Accurate data collection, consistent methodology, and detailed reporting have ensured that our interventions, from nest box placement to habitat restoration, are effective and measurable.

People Management and Volunteer Coordination:

Coordinating volunteers across multiple projects and events highlighted the value of clear communication, flexible participation options, and inclusive practices. Engaging participants of all ages and abilities, from Lively activity days to TAFE and homeschool programs, showed that meaningful conservation outcomes rely on nurturing enthusiasm, fostering skills, and supporting contributors at every level.

Navigating Bureaucracy:

Working with government agencies, applying for grants, and securing DGR status reinforced the need for patience, persistence, and strategic planning. Understanding regulatory requirements, reporting obligations, and bureaucratic timelines has strengthened our organisational capacity and improved relationships with funding and oversight bodies.



Adaptability and Resilience:

Unseasonal weather, dry conditions, and delays in program activities demonstrated the importance of flexibility. By pivoting to alternative activities and leveraging local partnerships, WCMN maintained momentum and continued delivering meaningful conservation, education, and cultural outcomes.

These lessons will guide future project planning, ensuring WCMN remains resilient, scientifically informed, and community-driven in all conservation initiatives.



Looking Ahead

In 2026, WCMN will continue to:

- Expand Malleefowl monitoring and fox baiting across priority sites.
- Support revegetation and habitat restoration under new grant funding.
- Deliver inclusive environmental education and community field days.
- Continue to advocate for sustainable land management, community participation, and the long-term protection of threatened species and habitats.
- Strengthen cultural and conservation partnerships with Djaara and Djandak.

Through teamwork, respect for Country, and shared passion, WCMN continues to demonstrate how community-led conservation can connect people, place, and biodiversity, for generations to come.



“Farewell, Landcare Sam”

— with 14 years in the Ute, and throughout the shire, our four-legged volunteer, who never filled in paperwork,

always showed up for the real jobs: cuddles and pats, lunch supervision, rabbit patrol, and scaring off foxes

— all before expertly rolling in something dreadful right before the group photo.”

