



Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – October 2013

Conserving Biodiversity

Naturally Loddon- Wedderburn bush by bike

On Sunday 13th October we enjoyed an interesting ride around Wedderburn, cycling along dirt tracks through bush & grasslands & visiting many of the Wychitella Conservation blocks.

We left the Wedderburn Community House on a route that took us through Hard Hill Reserve, Wychitella NCR, Skinners Flat & then the Bush Heritage site on Mt Kerang. Here Jeroen talked about the history of the site while we had a well deserved rest & ate some lunch.

Then up to the summit of Mt Kerang for amazing views from Pyramid Hill to the Pyrenees.

Along the way the wildflowers were spectacular, especially the purple haze of the Chocolate Lily (*Dichopogon strictus*). We also saw the Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) & Golden Pennants

(*Glischrocaryon behrii*).

Back to Wedderburn through the Wychitella NCR, by now the rain had ceased but the wind was making hard work of the ride home. A special mention must go to Oscar (11 years old) for showing us how old & slow we really are!

Thank you to Jeroen & Katrina from Bush Heritage for a wonderful adventure, and hopefully there will be more starters next time.

Diane Henderson & Peter Goegan

Photograph – Chocolate lilies at Mount Kerang



Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (CMN)

Photographic Exhibitions

The Wedderburn CMN has recently concluded two successful photographic exhibitions held in separate venues within the town. The first exhibition, entitled the Weird and Wonderful Wildlife of Wedderburn was held in the Coach House Gallery during the month of July and attracted 324 visitors including primary and secondary students from Wedderburn College. The second exhibition, held on the 7th and 8th of September as part of the Naturally Loddon Festival, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the inception of the Wedderburn CMN. This exhibition saw forty two interested visitors wonder at the fantastic wildlife photographs of local flora and fauna.

Both exhibitions had as their objectives the provision of information on the sheer diversity of local flora and fauna and the promotion of their conservation by the local community. Both



exhibitions involved photographs taken by local photographers, including some great shots by younger enthusiasts. Parks Victoria contributed to the exhibitions by making available their fascinating displays of animals and their *mystery boxes* which caused quite a stir when unsuspecting visitors were invited to place their hand into the boxes and guess the nature of the contents!

Information concerning local threatened species and the past, present and future work of the Wedderburn CMN was on display and occasioned numerous enquiries.

Michael Moore

Wedderburn CMN projects successfully funded

The Wedderburn CMN has been successful in obtaining funding from various sources for conservation projects described below.

Conserving Malleefowl at Wychitella NCR

The Wedderburn CMN has obtained funding from *Communities for Nature* for this project which aims to go some way towards addressing the issue of a lack of a solid understanding of just what is happening with the population of malleefowl in the Wychitella NCR and what our efforts concerning conservation of the birds is actually achieving. In the more technical terminology we will be trying to set up a comprehensive population benchmark against which to assess the success of current and future conservation actions. In order to do this it was decided to select areas, known to be populated by malleefowl, and carry out line searches for malleefowl mounds. All newly discovered mounds would be added to the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group's data base of known mounds that are monitored annually, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the population's status in the district over time. This part of the project has been completed and all such mounds recorded. Parks Victoria, Conservation Volunteers Australia, the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group, and the Wedderburn CMN all contributed funding, time and effort in this part of the project. In order to expand the area surveyed it is proposed that Wedderburn CMN members be trained in the use of hand held GPS devices and further searches carried out.

Another aspect of this project is somewhat more experimental in nature and involves selection of unused malleefowl mounds for revegetation. The selected mounds are characterised by a lack of structural diversity, leaf litter and food resources in the shrub layer which limits their suitability as breeding sites and exposes chicks to predation. The experiment aims to determine whether such revegetated mounds, long unused, would be reworked by malleefowl. It has been noted that



malleefowl prefer to reopen old mounds rather than create them from scratch and also that they prefer areas which are denser with respect to bush. The mounds have been identified and revegetated (see photos) with local species of plants. It is planned to monitor the mounds by means of photopoint monitoring over time.

A final part of this project was the location and fumigation of fox dens found throughout the line searched areas. The searches did not locate any dens.

Article – Karly Learmonth and Michael Moore

Photographs – Kate Lee

Habitat restoration within a decommissioned eucalyptus oil harvesting site

The Wedderburn CMN has obtained funding from the 2013 – 14 *Community Environmental Grants* for this project.

Malleefowl habitat at Wedderburn has been greatly reduced and fragmented by past land clearing for agriculture, mining, eucalyptus oil production and subdivision for housing. Eucalyptus harvesting in particular has resulted in large expanses of Blue Mallee monocultures which are less than optimal habitat for fauna. This project aims to restore a decommissioned eucalyptus oil harvesting site in a key strategic wildlife corridor to natural bushland, increasing the extent and connectivity of habitat for local fauna such as Malleefowl which occupy and breed on adjacent land.

The 37 ha site will serve as a demonstration plot for future Mallee restorations. An experienced consultant has begun a detailed survey of the composition, structure and condition of the demonstration site and selected control sites. The consultant will, when this work is completed, prepare a report describing the field survey results, and in consultation with Parks Victoria make recommendations for the rehabilitation of the site. The consultant will also develop and implement a monitoring program based on landscape function analysis and vegetation condition. This monitoring program will involve the training of community members to enable them to implement the monitoring program in the future. A contractor will be engaged to implement on ground works in line with the consultant's recommendations.

The project will formulate and implement best practice recommendations to restore a suitably diverse range of species to the site which will provide a critical habitat linkage between two major blocks of Wychitella NCR and pioneer a route to restoring similar sites in the future.

The Mallee restoration project is a key aspect of the WCMN's long term Malleefowl Action Plan which includes monitoring mounds, restoring and expanding habitat, controlling predators, installing road signs and engaging with the broader community. It is anticipated that publicising the project's successes will encourage greater community interest and involvement in Malleefowl protection in the Wedderburn district.

Article – Karly Learmonth and Michael Moore

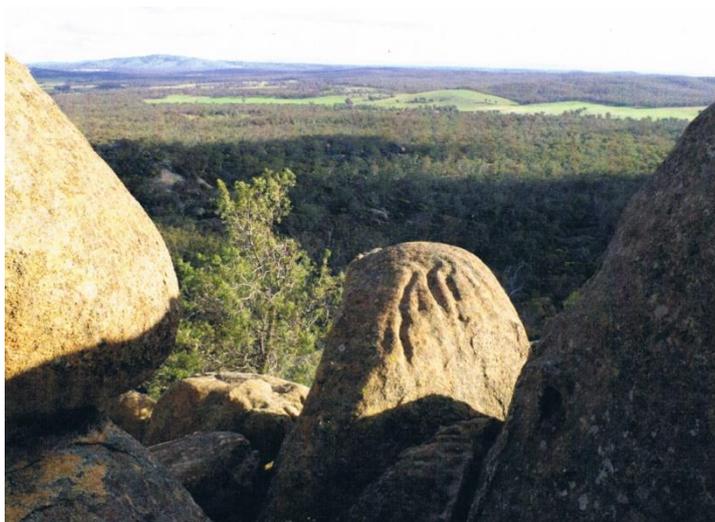
Photographs – Wendy Murphy

Kooyoora Connections – a joint Wedderburn CMN / North Central CMA project

This five year project funded by the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* initiative for approximately \$1.8 million will be managed by the North Central Catchment Management Authority in consultation with the Wedderburn CMN and other partners. The project aims at increased connectivity between Kooyoora State Park and Wychitella and Mt Korong Nature



Conservation Reserves. The project will build on the achievements of previous projects and will target the EPBC Act listed Endangered Ecological Communities; White Box -Yellow Box - Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodlands, Grey Box Grassy Woodlands and Buloke Woodlands of the Riverina and Murray – Darling Depression Bioregions. Benefits of the project will include the protection and restoration of; approximately 250 ha through Trust For Nature covenants, approximately 280ha through direct seeding and tube stock planting and 530 ha through reduced grazing by erecting approximately 27 km of fencing. There will be improved management of weeds over 140 ha and reduction in pest animals over 500 ha. There will also be direct investment in protection of the Robust Greenhood and the Yellow Lip Spider – Orchid and indirectly other species such as the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Malleefowl and Spiny Rice-flower will benefit. The project will also include communication activities, field days and workshops. The Dja Dja Wurung, traditional owners of the land, will be involved in many aspects of the project.



Article Nick Layne and Michael Moore

Photograph – Nick Layne

Notice

Please note that 2013-14 membership fees are now due.
Individual membership \$5 Family membership \$10.
Payment may be sent to:
WCMN Treasurer
PO Box 65
Wedderburn 3518
Victoria

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 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 President, Michael Moore – 54943542

Website addresses

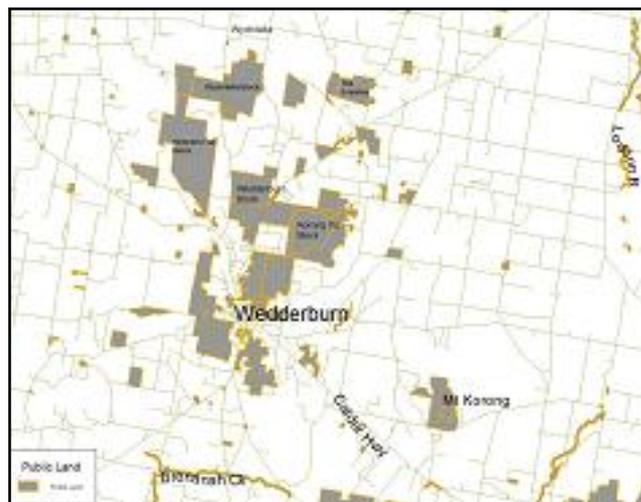
www.wedderburncmn.org

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

www.lpln.org.

LPLN- Loddon Plains Landcare Network

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



The WCMN Area of Interest



NORTH CENTRAL
 Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People



CARING
 FOR
 OUR
 COUNTRY