



# Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – September 2014

Conserving Biodiversity

## Ephemeral Spring Soaks in the Mount Kooyoora and Mount Korong area

In Victoria, following intensive rainfall events in September 2010 and January 2011, those living and working in and around Kooyoora State Park and Mount Korong – two of the most prominent landscape features of the north west goldfields – struggled to avoid persistent boggy areas; wetlands that inexplicably appeared seemingly from nowhere, but endured 6 to even 12 months after the rain stopped. Even a cursory look at satellite imagery (right) taken just after the deluge in January 2011 reveals their extent. A preliminary assessment of the Kooyoora granitic pluton alone tallied over 112 separate soaks covering nearly 90 ha scattered across Kooyoora State Park as well as the surrounding public and freehold land.



According to DEPI's EVC mapping, natural spring-soak woodlands occur predominantly in Victoria's North East in the Northern Inland Slopes bioregion across the Warby Ranges and in Chiltern/Mount Piper National Park; and in the Central Victorian Uplands bioregion. These are naturally restricted or rare wetland habitats appearing as persistent seepage zones around the break of slope often in or near natural topographic drainage features, and as such, support unique vegetation and often rare and endemic species.

Whether the soaks in the Kooyoora/Mt Korong area are the same as those in the North East of the State or not, the lack of recognition of spring soaks in the north western goldfields inevitably brings invisibility, which in turn results in vulnerability to inadvertent destruction and gradual decline. Currently, many spring soaks are threatened – especially on freehold land, but also within the Kooyoora State Park. Sites on freehold land are being used as water sources, pasture and even cropland, and while many have been more-or-less destroyed, some likely remain in good condition and could be better protected with recognition, education and resourcing. Sites on unreserved public land are also vulnerable. And sites within the State Park itself are being adversely affected by vehicle compaction and trampling associated with informal camping, as well as burial under “slugs” of granitic sediment from poorly aligned upslope tracks. Weed invasion and gully incisions are likely additional key threats elsewhere.

For those unfamiliar with the Kooyoora spring soaks, a particularly large one immediately to the right of the main entrance to Melville's Caves (photograph bottom right) is worth checking out; it's an area of Blakely's Red Gum (*E. blakelyi*) grassy woodland where Narrow Goodenia (*Goodenia macbarronii*) has been recorded hundreds of kilometres outside its range. And this is only the beginning of the extraordinariness of these habitats. It turns out there are numerous outlying plant records in the Kooyoora region associated with the soaks and nearly half of all threatened plants recorded in Kooyoora State Park are restricted to these soaks or the related rock pool environments.





This site also perfectly illustrates the complex heterogeneous ground layer typical of these spring soaks: a primary wet zone dominated by aquatic and semi-aquatic sedges, grasses and forbs; intermingled with either grassy woodland (dominated by Blakely's Red Gum and various tussock grasses such as Common Tussock Grass, or, in less modified patches, an often dense shrub layer of Prickly Tea-tree and, more rarely, Golden Spray. During dry periods, the primary wet zone dries out completely leaving bare ground or litter with scattered vegetation cover; creating a (misleading) impression of bareness and lifelessness.

It is critical we address the absence of understanding and conservation around spring soaks in the north western goldfields as soon as possible by undertaking systematic assessment of remnants on both public and private land across both the Kooyoorra and Mount Korong granitic plutons. Such an assessment will help: describe the ecosystem's extent, composition (flora and fauna), structure and function; determine the condition, threats and management requirements for each site; determine the significance of the ecosystem and need for formal (legislative) protection its associated biota; establish a baseline for monitoring future change and the success of future conservation efforts; and raise awareness amongst land managers and the local community. The WCMN will be holding a field day led by Paul Foreman on the 26 Oct to highlight the problems (and possible solutions) associated with these rare ephemeral ecosystems.

Article and photographs – Paul Foreman (complete article available on request)

### **WCMN Eucalyptus Harvesting Site Project**

In two previous newsletters I wrote of the work that has gone into the restoration of a decommissioned eucalyptus harvesting site located along the Old Boort Road close to Wedderburn. The main steps in the restoration process i.e. ripping bands to reduce runoff, slashing and seeding with native grasses and shrubs have now been completed.

It has been heartening to observe the involvement of many young people in the project with twenty eight students from Bendigo TAFE, Bendigo Senior Secondary College and Wedderburn College all playing significant roles in the progress of the project which has been described as “cutting edge ecological research”.

The WCMN has worked with Conservation Volunteers Australia who have an ongoing partnership with Bendigo Senior Secondary College and each year students undertaking the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) conduct their structured workplace learning with the organisation. Through this arrangement the project has had 5 Foundation Level Students and 5 Senior VCAL students from the Karen Community. These students have been involved in various aspects of the project. Bendigo TAFE students have been involved in pre-treatment monitoring along with students from Wedderburn College.

Year 9 Wedderburn College Duke of Edinburgh Award students are presently involved in photo-point monitoring of the project and setting up patches throughout herbicide treated and untreated areas to assess the growth progress of the direct seeding.

Article and photographs – Michael Moore

Photographs – top – students from the Karen Burmese Community with instructor Adam Smolak  
bottom – year 9 Wedderburn College students carrying out photo-point monitoring







# Sunday picnic in the Sunday Morning Hills



Wedderburn CMN and the Kooyoora Connections Project cordially invite you to a picnic...

Come along and help us celebrate the permanent protection of a beautiful 300 ha property in the Sunday Morning Hills, through the work of the Kooyoora Connections Project. Enjoy a picnic lunch whilst learning about the significance of Buloke woodlands.



- Listen to Ron Murray and Sarah James of Kinja, two musicians celebrating the cultural heritage of their ancestors in a blend of Indigenous Australian and Celtic music
- Learn from Bush Heritage Australia ranger, Jeroen van Veen, about the unique habitats of the local area
- Join Garry Cheers, a respected flora & fauna consultant, for a woodland birds walk

**WHEN:** October 12th, 2014, 10.30am to 3pm

**WHERE:** Cassinia Environmental's Sunday Morning Hills property, Glenalbyn. See back of flyer for location map and directions.

Vic Roads Reference: 43 D2

A morning tea & a light lunch will be provided. Please wear sturdy walking shoes, bring a sunhat, binoculars, sunscreen, a bottle of water and a camp chair. **FREE EVENT**

RSVP is essential to the North Central CMA by 5 pm Tuesday 7 October on (03) 5448 7124 or email [info@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@nccma.vic.gov.au)



Australian Government



**NORTH CENTRAL**  
Catchment Management Authority  
*Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People*



This project is supported by the North Central Catchment Management Authority, through funding from the Australian Government.





**LPLN News:** Students from East Loddon College did a fantastic job planting 2000 trees in the Calivil Reserve – photograph above by Anthony Gallacher, for more details go to [www.lpln.org](http://www.lpln.org).



Images of nature by new WCMN member Robin Sharn

**Notices**

- Please note that you can receive this newsletter by email, contact Michael Moore as below. All newsletters are available for reading on the WCMN website.
- The Friends of Kooyoorra will be running a photographic day at Melville Caves on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2014 – see Friends of Kooyoorra website for details.

Please note that 2014-15 membership fees are now due and can be paid via the WCMN website.  
 Individual membership \$5      Family membership \$10.

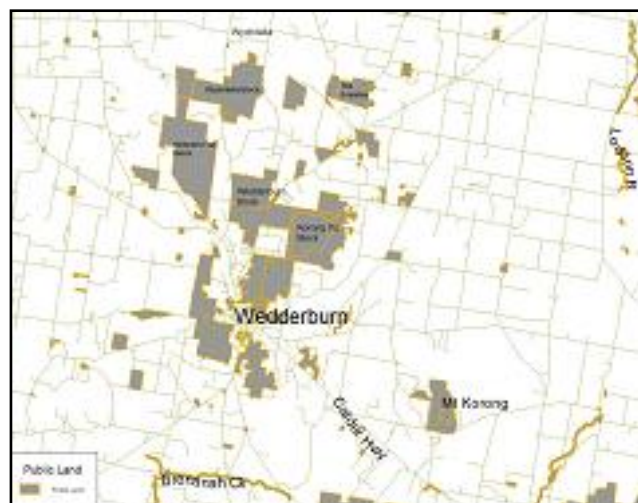
Payment may be sent to:  
 WCMN Treasurer  
 PO Box 65  
 Wedderburn 3518  
 Victoria

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://www.wedderburncmn.org)  
[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’.

