



Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – February 2016

Conserving Biodiversity

Cultural Heritage Day at Wedderburn College



In the last part of the school year last year the students from Wedderburn College were treated to a special day of cultural activities with representatives from the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. The day was a joint venture between the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network and the North Central Catchment Management Authority.

The day kicked off with a general talk about Dja Dja Wurrung people and the land. The students then had an opportunity to mix up some traditional ochre paints using powder from the sacred ochre pit and oils. The kids painted the assistant principals face, and he was admired in his war paint. In the second session the students learned traditional song, men and women singing their respective parts. They then went on to learn different traditional dancing moves such as the lyrebird, bundgil (eagle), emu, and the snake. By the end of the session there was a dance off which was performed with great enthusiasm! For the grand finale the dancing was coupled with the song. The students learned a lot and were praised for their enthusiasm!

The Wedderburn College, Wedderburn CMN and the North Central CMA look forward to partnering more in the future with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation to deliver more activities around Aboriginal Heritage.

Article – Minda Murray, photographs – Carolyn Stewart

Mt Korong Eco-Watch (MKEW)

Mt Korong Eco-Watch (MKEW) is an ecologically minded community group that has a long-term commitment to landscape wide conservation. MKEW is affiliated with the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) and the Loddon Plains Landcare Network (LPLN). Many of MKEW members own interconnected properties adjoining



Mt Korong Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR) and are passionate about conservation and the surrounding local communities. Some of these properties are a mixture of remnant vegetation and revegetation from direct seeding that used local mid-story and over-story plant species. Most have conservation covenants and are referred to collectively as the Korong Ridge Conservation Estate. MKEW's long-term vision for the Korong Ridge Conservation Estate is to create a rich, biodiverse conservation property. The emphasis is landscape-wide conservation and restoration of biodiversity, including long-term threatened-species management, to be achieved through community engagement, involvement and education. Our hope is to be involved with the local community, engage with people and reconnect them with nature.

The Korong Ridge Conservation Estate already makes an important contribution to conserving some of the regions native vegetation communities, including Low Rises Grassy Woodland, a vulnerable Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) and Hills Herb-rich Woodland, which is a depleted EVC. The Korong Ridge Conservation Estate provides habitat for many native animals and plants that depend on these communities, but years of stock grazing have taken an ecological toll leaving a paucity of many of the elements that give an ecosystem structure and resilience.

MKEW is proposing to increase the local biodiversity, by re-introducing many of these important habitat foundations to both enable and encourage the return of the local threatened species. The introduction of nest boxes and understorey vegetation will be undertaken to provide some of the elements required to restore, enhance and "re-wild" this once extensive and biodiverse, woodland ecosystem.

Recently, with the sponsorship from the WCMN and funding through DELWP, we moved a little bit closer to achieving these aims. MKEW successfully applied for two grants that will contribute to us reaching this goal. One grant is for the provision of indigenous understorey tube-stock to be planted across the conservation estate. The second grant is for the construction of a nursery, so that we may become self-reliant in the production of indigenous understorey plants for the ongoing restoration of this precious ecosystem. We will enhance the habitat of Korong Ridge with targeted understorey planting of locally provenanced species, with a focus on increasing diversity and an underlying emphasis on endemic threatened plant species.

Like **Korong Ridge Conservation Estate** on Facebook and find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1625495864346111/>

Article – James Nelsson and Kate Lee



Blood, Sweat and Cactus

Many hands make light work, or so the saying goes. In the case of the highly invasive Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*), it's more apt to say many hands make work *possible*. Because there is no doubt about it, getting rid of this nasty plant is hard yakka, and it is only due to the fact that so many people are putting in that the Wedderburn district is slowly winning the fight against the prickly foe.

The last 12 months have seen more effort gone into Wheel Cactus eradication around Wedderburn than ever before, with record numbers of people involved. Here is a little update on what has been happening.

Mt Buckrabunyule

Janet Richardson and her hard working colleagues of the Wychitella Land Care Group have received welcome support from the Loddon Plains Landcare Network. The coordinator of this network, Anthony Gallacher, has been successful in coordinating the control effort region wide and



in organising many working bees at Buckrabunyule, where the most dense of all the district's infestations is located. Amongst the many groups of people involved have been Bendigo TAFE students, Green Army teams and drought relief workers of the local Catchment Management Authority. Officers from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) have assisted local landholders with compliance issues. All this work means that the cover of cactus at Buckrabunyule has diminished over the last year, and that the seed production will be much lower in 2016.

Mt Egbert

The North Central Catchment Management Authority has contributed significant funding to cactus control work at Mt Egbert. Indigenous Dja Dja Wurrung work crews have worked tirelessly to reduce cactus numbers throughout the conservation block and the Isaac and Gibson families have worked hard on the surrounding farmland. Loddon Shire have paid for a lot of cactus control work along the local roadsides near Mt Egbert and the results are beautifully clean weed-free tree lines along Old Boort Road and the roads towards Borung. The Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) and the Shire have sent out letters to all the absentee landholders in that area, offering assistance in cleaning up their blocks, but unfortunately nobody as yet has taken up the offer.

Mt Kerang

The area around Mt Kerang has seen another year of intensive cactus work, with Bush Heritage Australia running regular volunteer working bees and the Round and Hargreaves families putting in an extraordinary control effort. Bank Australia recently has joined in the effort here, by donating \$1,000 worth of cactus stabbers to Bush Heritage.

Mt Kooyoora and Mt Korong

The Friends of Kooyoora group, amply supported by Parks Victoria, has targeted wheel cactus at Mt Kooyoora State Park for a long time now. The Mt Korong Eco-watch



Group has organised working bees this year to collect cactus saplings that have started popping up more frequently of late in that relatively cactus free ridge. This alert group of locals is not going to wait until the cactus problem gets out of hand on their patch.

Yet to be done

More than 200 different people have helped out on cactus work of one kind or another in Wedderburn in the last 12 months. That is extraordinary, and possibly one of the largest combined weed control efforts in regional Victoria. But, the fight is not over. A similar effort will be needed this year and over the next few years again before we can take a breather. We need to get the last remaining *reluctant* landholders with cactus on their land to join the fight.

Article - Jeroen van Veen, Bush Heritage Australia

Aboriginal Objects

An Aboriginal Object is an object that relates to the Aboriginal occupation of Australia (before or after occupation of Australia by people of non-Indigenous descent), is of cultural heritage significance to Aboriginal people or is an object, material or thing that is removed or excavated from an Aboriginal place. Some examples include artefacts such as stone tools, grinding stones and axes. There are also secret or sacred objects, as well as Aboriginal places. The Victorian



Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) holds the details of known Aboriginal places and objects within Victoria. Aboriginal cultural heritage is irreplaceable; therefore it is important that it is recorded, managed and protected. Some people may have collections of Aboriginal heritage or

have a place of Aboriginal cultural significance on their land. It is not illegal to have collections of Aboriginal objects, but it is much appreciated if people can contact the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation to register them. Registration involves recording and photographing objects and the information is entered on the Register via a simple form submitted to the Heritage Registrar, Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (OAAV). It is also possible to hand back or repatriate collections and artefacts, which can be arranged through Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation or via OAAV for objects held or collected from outside of Dja Dja Wurrung's RAP boundary. In registering and/or handing back Aboriginal objects, you are assisting Dja Dja Wurrung people to protect their heritage, and is a worthwhile and respectful step to take. If you suspect you have found human remains on your property, it is important that the location is not disturbed and nothing is touched or removed. The State Coroner must be notified immediately by contacting the Coronial Admissions and Enquiries Desk on 1300 309 519. Discovery of human remains is managed by the Coroner's Office who will advise any further directions. If you have an Aboriginal place on your own property, it is not subject to Native Title. Often if an Aboriginal place is identified and recorded, it may not require changes to land management practices. Some places may be best protected through mutual agreement between the landholder and Traditional Owners. Threats to Aboriginal objects or places may include land development, erosion and pest plant and animal activity. A lot of Aboriginal places which have survived many decades of agricultural land use generally will not be further disturbed by continuing land use practices. In many cases, sound land management has helped preserve Aboriginal places. Objects and places retain cultural heritage values that are of vital importance to Dja Dja Wurrung people, who maintain their spiritual connection with them. In helping to protect cultural heritage, you are helping Traditional Owners in preserving cultural heritage and looking after country.

Article - Minda Murray

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.

Please note that 2015-16 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

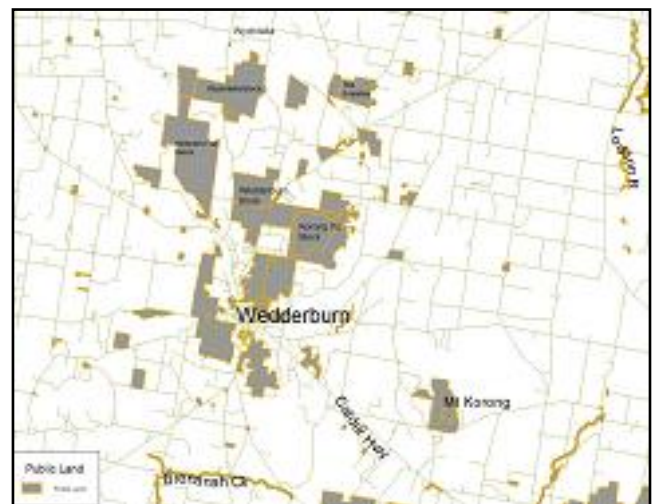
Website addresses

www.wedderburncmn.org

www.lpln.org.

LPLN- Loddon Plains Landcare Network

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The WCMN Area of Interest

