



Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network - October 2008

The Weather and the Malleefowl – Peter Watts

Like the farmers they like an early break in the weather to commence their nest preparation for the breeding season. In a good year i.e. May or June break in the weather they will dig out a mound and start scratching up material for a nest, later to be scratched into the mound which is completed in September. This year the two pairs of malleefowls found in the Wychitella area only started scratching up material a few



Peter Watts up close and personal

days before the break in early August, very late. But this activity is needed for there has been very few eggs laid in the last eight years, in some of these years none. This year there is activity at a mound that has not been used for at least twelve years. This nest was found by the late Bob Johnson of Wychitella so I have called the mound after him.

Wedderburn CMN Ranger Report – Wendy Rose

Since beginning back at work in July I've been busy returning to the fox baiting programs. The first baiting occurred from July 31 to August 21 with no baits being taken although there was evidence of fox activity in the baiting area. The second baiting began on August 28 and is due to finish on September 21 with 18 baits being taken so far. Hopefully a few foxes have been removed from the landscape and this will make the bush a safer place for the two malleefowl chicks that were recently released into the wild. I was present at the release of the birds and spent some time assisting with the tracking of them.



Goanna interested in the camera – Photograph Wendy

On September 25th and 26th I supervised a group of Californian Conservation Corp volunteers. They were an enthusiastic lot and I had them doing malleefowl mound line searches in the Railway Block and the Wychitella Block. I was even given a set of badges by one of them as a souvenir.



Getting up for a better look – Photograph Wendy

There is a lot to see out in the bush at the moment and it is well worth the time to take a quick drive along the tracks through the Wychitella NCR and look at all the wildflowers and birds. It's a fantastic display of colour and sound.

A lot of my time will be spent on continuing the fox baiting programs and also visiting landholders in the south and east of our area of concern in hope of extending links from our current Wedderburn / Wychitella “donut” to the Kooyoor State Park to the south.

The WCMN Bus Tour – Michael Moore

The WCMN bus tour was held on the 24th August this year with twenty-one people attending. We had a number of people from the Friends of Kooyoor Group, Jean McClymont the projects officer of the Salisbury West Landcare Group, Alison Jeavons of Greenhouse Balanced, members of the WCMN and other interested individuals.

The bus left from the traveller`s rest car park in Wedderburn at 10.00 am and proceeded to a site called murder bend where we saw the effects on the bush of trail bikes, a dismal sight of destruction. We were given a talk at the site by Suzie Deason, Parks Vic. Ranger, on the efforts being made to halt the damage.



Inspection of a malleefowl nest site – Photo, Suzie Deason Parks Vic.

Next stop was a visit to a site where members of the WCMN had planted cuttings taken from the recently discovered velvet daisy bush plant, the only one known in our area of concern.

The plants appeared to be holding their own in the present climate of drought. Other sites were visited which illustrated the efforts and progress of the WCMN with respect to revegetation both by planting of tube stock and by direct seeding. Both Peter Morison, of the DSE, and Jeroen Van Veen provided running commentaries as we travelled along. We viewed some excellent results of both techniques before having lunch at the Wychitella Pub which went down a treat.

Another highlight of the tour was a visit to a site on the south side of Mt. Korong owned and revegetated by the carbon offsets company, Greenhouse Balanced. The acting WCMN ranger Jeroen Van Veen had played an introductory role in this company`s purchase of the property. We were advised of the company`s progress in revegetating the land by Alison Jeavons. Alison indicated that they had directly seeded with a large number of species native to the area. The views of Mt. Korong from this property were spectacular.

We also viewed some Kangaroo/Wallaby exclusion enclosures which had been set up to gauge the effects of the increasing populations of these animals on the bush. Finally we were informed by Peter Morison of the progress of the malleefowl chicks which had recently been released into the bush in an effort to increase both the numbers of this endangered species and the gene pool of the existing population. Overall the tour was judged to be informative and enjoyed by all.

New rare plant found – Peter Morison

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network members Annette Robertson and Lynton Schriever have found a rare plant in the Wedderburn area. The Spiny Rice-flower (*pimelea spinescens subsp. spinescens*) is found only in Victoria and at only a few remaining sites across the state. It is listed as critically endangered in Australia. The plant previously grew in the more fertile land much sought for agriculture and now occurs only on a few roadsides. Roadsides are not secure for the long-term protection of plant species and can be graded or sprayed without warning. With a large taproot and rice-sized seed its possible the plant had some aboriginal bush uses.

The Wedderburn plants will have seed collected from them this spring by the CMN, propagated at a couple of nurseries and planted into suitable sites in the area. This adds to another rare plant the Velvet Daisy Bush that the CMN is planting back into the area.

The Spiny Rice-flower grows on land associated with Grey Box trees. Anyone with such land who is interested in planting out some of the plants on their land should contact Lynton Schriever or Annette Robertson on 54943650.



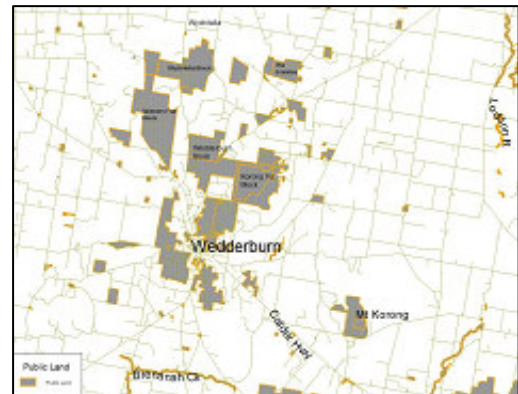
Lynton Schriever and Deanna Marshall (DSE)
examining the spiny rice-flower plant



Whole plant in flower
Photo Norm Stimson (Enviro Images)

What is the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network?

The WCMN is a network of people including interested individuals and both public and private land managers who have 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.



The WCMN Area of Interest

The role the WCMN plays in achieving this aim is that of acting as a resource base. A resource base which attempts to provide a focus for:

- Communication of information to and from the general community about the current status of environmental assets in the area of interest
- Community input into decisions made about possible responses to threats to such environmental assets
- Communication with specialized sections of the community concerning the management of such things as; pest species, endangered species, grazing pressure problems, revegetation and enhancing already declining habitats etc.
- Informing landholders of incentives to participate in achieving the shared aim
- Arranging practical, “hands on”, responses to environmental issues involving participation by members of the general community

In fulfilling this role the WCMN relies upon informed opinion and research from its wide network of sources to guide its prudent use of resources in helping to achieve the aim shared by all.

The WCMN is supported by:

North Central Catchment Management Authority
The Department of Sustainability (DSE)
Parks Victoria
Loddon Shire Council

For further information concerning any items in this newsletter or other aspects of the WCMN contact: **WCMN ranger, Wendy Rose - 0438384053**
Or WCMN Secretary, Michael Moore - 54943542