



Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – February 2012

Conserving Biodiversity

Insects are most entertaining

Still not able to get out in the bush much, but around home, there is heaps of interesting activity. Mud Daubing wasps continue to toil away adding to the nest every day over quite a few weeks. There must be a lot of insects for them to encase in the nests this year, as the mud constructions are particularly big. One nest seems to have a new chamber added every couple of days. Although the large bright yellow and black Mud Dauber is the most visible, and makes a very loud noise in flight, there are several other varieties of wasp also building mud nests at present.

The Praying Mantis is a most fascinating insect. They also have a commonly seen and very interesting looking frothy green egg case. It was exciting indeed to discover and spend quite some time observing a Praying Mantis still making its egg case – underneath the armrest of a chair on the verandah (where most observations are



Praying Mantis with egg case



Mud Dauber wasp on nest

currently taking place)

Dragonflies once again appeared for two days prior to the recent rains. They seem to be one of nature's signs, heralding rain or wet weather.

At this time of year Yellow Gums are shedding their bark in long ribbons. When it rains the new bark turns a vivid green and orange and the colours are just amazing. Local trees seem to be having a hard time with large areas being defoliated by Sawfly larvae.

The nest boxes that housed large number of Striated Pardalotes this year are now silent. The Pardalotes seem to have vanished, however the family group of Blue Wrens have returned. They spend quite some time around the shady area where the Goanna lives. Bit of a worry.

There is certainly lots of nature to observe and marvel at, even if still only around home territory. Keep looking!

Wedderburn Conservation Management network "Observers"

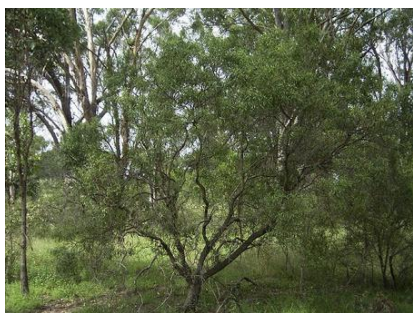
New Rare Plant find at Wedderburn

Intrepid bush-ranger Jeroon van Veen (pictured aside) has made an exciting discovery recently on a new Greenhouse Balanced property. He has found a native plant called waterbush (*Myoporum montanum*). It is the first official record of the plant in the Wedderburn area. The Waterbush is a long-lived shrub to about 4m tall living up to 50 years. Most records in Victoria are from further north either the Shepparton-Rutherglen area or Mildura area.

Myoporum montanum is listed by DSE as rare or threatened in Victoria.

David Cameron of the Department of Sustainability and the Environment has undertaken an IUCN assessment for its status in Victoria and has assessed it as Critically Endangered.





The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) assessment is a methodology used to systematically assess threatened species in a consistent manner. Information about the assessment process and methodology can be found at: <http://intranet.iucn.org/webfiles/doc/SSC/RedList/RedListGuidelines.pdf>. The introduction provides a good outline of the tool. More information can also be found about the IUCN at: <http://www.iucn.org/>

Article – Peter Morison

Coming Up In March

The Wedderburn CMN will be holding two major community events in March.

On March 22nd, the WCMN and North Central CMA will be holding a Grasslands Management Workshop in Serpentine. Guest speakers will include Eris O'Brien a grassland manager at Mitiamo and Tim Barden from Ko-Warra Native Grasses near Echuca. A field trip to a local farm will be held as part of the workshop. Details are still being finalised and will be circulated more widely shortly.

After being approached to assist with restoration works along the Nardoo Creek Walking Track in Wedderburn, the WCMN was successful in obtaining a grant through the 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants to do weeding, tree planting and general tidying up work along the section of the Nardoo Creek Walking Track from Tantalla Street to Reef Street. A free BBQ will be provided on the day and any community member is welcome to come along and help out. Again, more details will be provided closer to the date or you can contact Wendy Murphy on 0438384053.

Article – Wendy Murphy

Bendigo TAFE students learning on the job.

On March 7th, 8th and 9th, 21 students from Bendigo TAFE will be visiting the Wedderburn CMN area to assist with works. On March 7th, they will be assisting the WCMN to set up 24 kangaroo monitoring transects, 12 to the north of Wedderburn and 12 to the south. These sites have been monitored annually since 2007. On March 8th, they will finish off any remaining transects then assist with removing an old fence on Cassinia Environmental, (ex Greenhouse Balanced), land. On March 9th, they will join a WCMN member in conducting bird surveys on his property, as well as visiting a kangaroo enclosure plot, which is designed to allow monitoring of the grazing effects both macropods and rabbits have on native vegetation. This stay will hopefully help the TAFE students learn several monitoring techniques as well as expose them to a variety of environmental works conducted by groups such as the Wedderburn CMN.

Article – Wendy Murphy

Off On Leave

As motherhood approaches for the third time, I would like to let the wider Wedderburn CMN community know that I will be going on maternity leave beginning March 30th. I will be having a year off trying to keep up with three children under the age of five. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people I have had the pleasure of meeting through my work as the Wedderburn CMN Ranger over the years, and to say I have enjoyed every moment of working with such a wonderful and diverse group. I wish the person who will be taking on the role all the best, knowing he or she will have the full support of the group and I will be back on deck in a year. I hope to attend some WCMN events in the meantime, so will see people around during my time away.

Article – Wendy Murphy



Alison Pouliot Photopoint Monitoring Workshop

17 people participated in the free photopoint monitoring workshop organised by the Wedderburn CMN on Friday February 24th. Many environmental groups were represented at the workshop including members from WCMN, Kara Kara CMN, Friends of Kooyoora, Bendigo Field Nats as well as DSE staff.

Photography experience ranged from those who had just purchased a camera to those who were well adept in camera use, and Alison managed to cover the whole suite of questions asked as well as calling on participants to provide their experiences and knowledge.

The morning session was designed to gauge what kinds of projects people were working on and to introduce participants to the different features of their cameras and in which situations they are best used. The group were quick to pick up on the concept of exposure, depth of field, contrast and the best positioning to take photos, especially when incorporating people or animals in to the picture.

Lunch was a mouth-watering choice between roast lamb and red emperor fish after which participants discussed data management and storage before embarking on a field trip out to the Wedderburn Town Lake. This enabled people to put in to practice what they had just learnt and to actually get one on one Alison help from in using their cameras and finding functions.

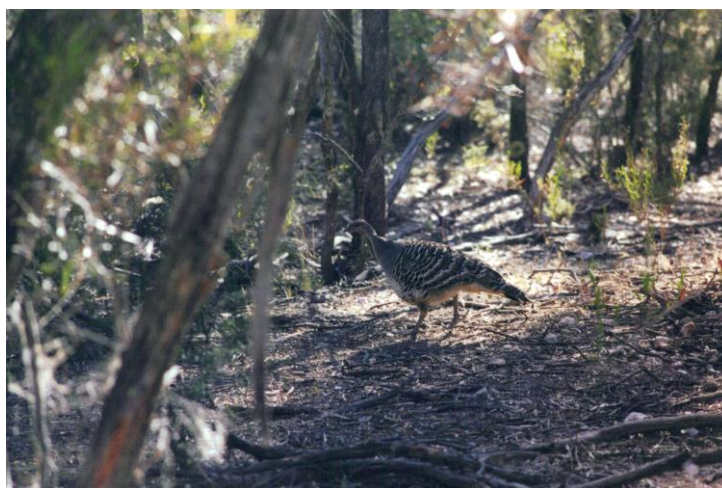
Thanks must go to Alison for providing her expertise and willingness to hold the workshop in Wedderburn as well as to the venue managers Gary, Bob, Myra and staff at the Wedderburn Goldseekers Motel for their wonderful hospitality. It all made for a fantastic event. For further details on Alison's work visit her website at www.alisonpouliot.com

Article – Wendy Murphy



Progress of the Malleefowl Program

The WCMN has now been involved with the conservation of this endangered species since 2003. The malleefowl was selected as the iconic species for the WCMN at the inception of the network and a great deal of time and effort has been put into the conservation of this isolated population of birds in the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve. *The Monitoring Project*, carried out in collaboration with Parks Vic, using non-invasive cameras mounted at an active mound is now in its second year and has proved to be successful in many aspects. Peter Watts a member of the WCMN and



keen malleefowl conservationist has spent many hours over both seasons carrying out this work.

At the beginning of the current breeding season new improved cameras, obtained through funding from Birds Australia, were located at the mound. After some time spent experimenting to optimise their performance these cameras have been used to observe such aspects as; the number of eggs laid, the hatching of chicks, visitors to the mound including predators and behavioural changes during the breeding season. Peter has found it possible to establish a predictive calendar of events which in turn makes for greater efficiency in observation. A short film of the breeding behaviour of the birds from last season has been made and used to increase community awareness of the endangered status of the birds. It is intended that a better quality film, using footage from the new cameras, be made for this purpose. A vast amount of film that may possibly be used for a more detailed study of mound behaviour has been archived.

This form of monitoring however does not give evidence as to the general wellbeing of the malleefowl population and other monitoring techniques have been employed to try to get an overall idea of trends in the population of the birds. One such important technique employed by the WCMN in conjunction with the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group is that of line searches for malleefowl mounds. Such searches have located new, unknown mounds. Ideally, if all mounds were known and monitored on a regular basis then we would be in a much better position to understand the population dynamics of the birds. As mentioned in a previous newsletter the WCMN and Partner organisations await the outcome of an application for funding made to Communities for Nature to assist in line searching. The establishment of an ongoing association with TAFE students has also helped greatly in these efforts and in the monitoring of browsers mentioned below.

The latest technique under consideration is that of searching for mounds using a helicopter. Towards the end of last year a helicopter from the Dept. of Sustainability and the Environment was booked to make trial flights over selected parts of the Wychitella NCR. It had been arranged that two observers from the WCMN would attempt mound sightings visually from onboard while the helicopter would also use its infrared equipment to locate mounds. Unfortunately this event has had to be postponed until later this year. Concurrent efforts aimed at conservation of the birds have been taking place such as; fox, cat and rabbit control in areas within and surrounding the known habitat of the birds, ongoing monitoring of browsing competitors such as kangaroos and wallabies and efforts with respect to habitat expansion, linkage and enhancement.

Vegetation transects have been completed and the collected data awaits the conclusion of analysis in an effort to understand better the habitat requirements of the birds.

Finally the WCMN will be attempting to obtain tax deductible gift status as an organization in an attempt to source further funding for its conservation work. Such status would be a financial encouragement for Corporate and Philanthropic organizations to contribute to the support of such work. In order to achieve such status it is necessary for the WCMN to fulfil certain requirements concerning its membership and in this regard I wish to draw your attention to the brief note of explanation concerning membership which accompanies this newsletter.

Article – Michael Moore

Progress of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network (LPLN)

The Loddon Plains Landcare Network has appointed Anthony Gallacher as the new Landcare Facilitator for the Network as of the 1st March 2012. Anthony was selected from nine suitably qualified applicants for the position. More information concerning Anthony's role with the network will be posted on the blogs indicated below in the next few weeks.

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 indeed 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 ranger, Wendy Murphy - 0438384053

WCMN President, Michael Moore – 54943542

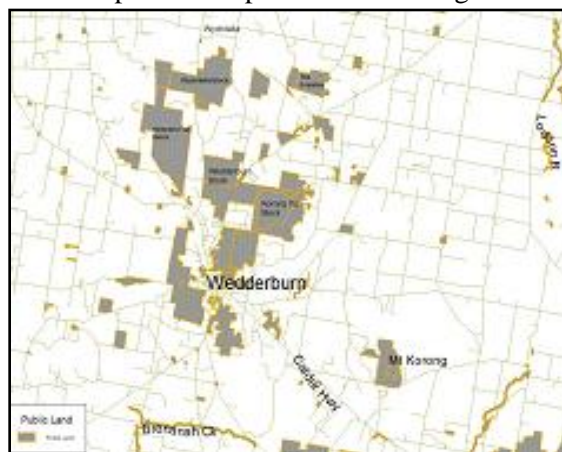
Website addresses

<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/january/web/index.html>

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

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

LPLN- Loddon Plains Landcare Network



The WCMN Area of Interest

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



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