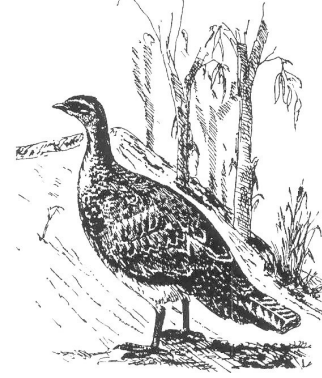




Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – June 2010

Conserving Biodiversity

The Outrage of Litter

Do we have to have this! Litter dumped in the bush. Littering is the deliberate action of depositing items of waste rather than using the correct means of disposal. It is one of the most visible and frequently encountered signs of pollution in the community. It has social and environmental consequences as litter tends to “stick around” until someone makes the effort to clean it up or until it rains and it finds its way into our local water ways. Aesthetically, litter degrades our ‘special’ places which has social and economic impacts on our society – who wants to visit parks and reserves that have more litter than flora and fauna?!

Over 10,000 birds, whales, seals and turtles are killed worldwide by plastic rubbish each year. When the animal dies and decays, the plastic can then repeat the deadly cycle before it breaks down in 20 to 1000 years. Cigarette butts take up to 5 years to breakdown, aluminium cans are up to 500 years, glass is estimated to hang around for 1000 years and polystyrene will still be here in 2000 years! Cigarette butts also have the serious potential to spark a fire which is a deadly hazard in rural landscapes such as Wedderburn.

What can you do to help? If you spot someone littering you can call the EPA Litter Report line **1800 LITTER** (1800 548 897).

Article by Susie Deason, Regional Education Officer
Central Murray Regional Waste Management Group



Nature Notes for April

Autumn has been announced by the appearance of the early orchids of the region – appropriately named, Autumn Greenhoods. These striking orchids, as well as midget greenhood orchids have been seen in large numbers at many locations. The wetter weather of recent months seems to have contributed to a wonderful proliferation of these orchids and also holds a lot of promise for wildflowers blooming in the coming months. A hint, when observing notable or unusual plants, such as these orchids - have a good look at them, take photos, because they may not be there the next day when you return. The orchids are palatable to many animals, and sadly we have found simply bare green stems the very next day where previously there were beautiful orchids. There are a number of other plants drawing attention to themselves by flowering at present. The spreading wattle one of the earliest to bloom, has masses of pale yellow flowers. Guinea flowers, also yellow, started to bloom earlier in the month, but did not keep it up for long. The critically endangered group of spiny rice flower plants are also flowering, much earlier than usual. Yellow paper daisies are flowering too. They usually bloom much later in the year. The change in season has also brought a proliferation of moths, butterflies, insects (and locusts). All of these creatures are intent on mating and



laying eggs. The numbers of insects have provided increased food sources for many birds, as have the grasses that are in seed, and the trees currently in blossom. We have been entertained at several sites by the antics of grey fantails and restless flycatchers. Diamond firetails and southern whiteface birds are busy feeding on grass seeds. Lots of interesting plants, birds and animals to be seen in our area – keep your eyes and ears open.

Wedderburn Conservation Management Network “Observers”
Photo: Autumn Greenhood Orchid

Photo Point Monitoring Workshop

What are these people doing? They are demonstrating one method to create shade which might enhance photographing the seed trial site at their feet. On 21st April, the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network conducted a workshop on Photopoint monitoring. It was attended by members of WCMN, Friends of Kooyoorra, Parks Victoria, and Department of Sustainability and Environment. Professional photographer Alison Pouliot presented a stimulating and educational workshop which covered theoretical and practical aspects of Photopoint monitoring - a method of taking replicable photographs as a tool for natural resource management. Two field locations were used to experiment and practice different photographic methods. At Skinners flat participants learned about the effects of light, using different camera settings, how much sky was necessary to include in a photograph, and the importance of taking photographs that realistically

illustrate requirement for taking the photograph. The second field site was at the Korong bushland reserve. This presented very different photographic challenges with vegetation, lighting, shadow and colour. Participants also had the opportunity to refine their skills in macro photography as several plants were flowering at the time. The Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN)



“Observers” will have the opportunity to put into practice the skills they learned at the workshop, having volunteered to assist DSE Biodiversity Officer Julie Whitfield to monitor seed trials of the Velvet Daisy Bush for the next six months. Photograph captions: People making shade are:- from Left to right - Peter Watts, Jade Logie, Alison

Pouliot, Jean McLymont, Jeanette Schultz, Alison Jeavons, Parks Victoria Ranger Nick Van Den Brock and Presenter Alison Pouliot.

Article by Annette Robertson

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Circa 1987 whilst returning from Perth to my home near Esperance, I saw a pair of Mallee Fowl emerge from some trees about 60 meters ahead and to my right. The male bird launched into flight and headed straight toward the car and thankfully he chose to hit the radiator grille and not the windscreen.

With my speed dropping to approx' 80 kmh plus his flight speed he lost all his feathers on impact and no doubt broke every bone because whilst removing him from the mangled front grille he felt like a balloon full of jelly. This must surely count as the supreme sacrifice for the protection of its mate.

Article by Campbell Holmes, Secretary, Korong Historical Society, Wedderburn

Volunteer weekends at the Bush Heritage Reserve in Wedderburn

With the change of seasons comes the start of another series of volunteer working bees at the Nardoo Hills Reserve of Bush Heritage Australia. Tasks include controlling invasive weeds like Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) and Paterson's Curse also fencing. A moderate fitness level is required as some of the work involves the carrying of knapsacks over hilly terrain. Wear sturdy shoes and bring a hat. The first weekend is scheduled for the 29nd and the 30th of May, the second for the 12th and the 13th of June. Four more weekends will follow in the months after. These weekends are increasingly popular, so places need to be booked. Please contact Heidi Fisher at Bush Heritage to register your interest and to make a booking:

hfisher@bushheritage.org.au ; phone: 8610 9102

Article by Jeroen Van Veen

TAFE Students settle on Wedderburn

Wedderburn has become a regular destination for TAFE students from Melbourne and Bendigo studying Conservation and Land Management. This March the Diploma students from North Melbourne TAFE (NMIT) camped out at one of the Greenhouse Balanced properties at Mt Korong to conduct their annual practical field work monitoring biodiversity. This is the second year running the NMIT has chosen Wedderburn for this exercise. At the same time the certificate IV students of Bendigo TAFE (BRIT) camped at the Greenhouse Balanced property near Skinners Flat to assist with Malleefowl and Macropod Grazing Surveys as well as other tasks. This is the first year BRIT has been out to Wedderburn for a camp, but they enthusiastically announced that they want to come back again next year to make it a regular event. BRIT staff mentioned that they were very impressed by the conservation efforts of the local community.

The NMIT students at Mt Korong conducted wildlife surveys using driftnets, hartraps, motion-sensor cameras and tunnel cameras as well as ordinary binoculars to spot numerous new reptile and mammal species for the Greenhouse Balanced property. The Yellow-footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) was finally officially recorded there, as well as one of the Southern Freetail Bats (*Mormopterus sp 1*). These Bats are quite difficult to handle as they are the only bats found at this site that attack the other species of bat they are trapped with so they need to be kept separately to avoid damage and stress to the others. They also like to have a go at those large human hands when being held and their teeth are razor-sharp. To further complicate things, these smallest of mammals can carry a virus that is very dangerous to humans and only the properly inoculated NMIT staff could handle them safely.



The Southern Freetail Bats come in two different versions, the long penis version (*species one*) and the short penis version (*species two*). In order to differentiate between the two to make a correct identification, the surveyor needs to measure said organ. This must be a daunting experience for the little animal, especially since the measuring equipment seems so large. Five of the individuals found were male and one female. All males were the same *species one* and it was therefore assumed the female was of the same species as well. The amount of bats was very good. Two hartraps were active for one night and they caught over 50 bats of 5 different species. NMIT staff member Peter Holman said it was one of the best bat trapping nights he has been involved with for a long time. It was very interesting to see the number of bats increase compared to last year and that the new species popped up this year, while it was completely absent from the traps last year.

In the meantime, the BRIT students on the Western side of town mapped out Bridal Creeper infestations around the Skinners Flat area so these can be sprayed in the next few weeks. They also set out macropod dropping transect lines which will give the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (WCMN) a reading on the numbers of kangaroos present this autumn in the district. On their final day the BRIT students did a Malleefowl (*Leipoca ocelata*) search in the Watson-Paterson block of the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve by walking together in a grid formation through the dense scrub that makes up this block, while looking for mounds. No new mounds were found on this occasion. That means that the WCMN and the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group (VMRG), who supervised the survey) can now concentrate on other areas around Wedderburn for further surveys. Many thanks to all NMIT and BRIT students that participated in a week of hard work.

Jeroen van Veen (Greenhouse Balanced)

Further Success for the Loddon Plains Landcare Network

The Loddon Plains Landcare Network succeeded in building on previous financial success when on the 21st May at a Loddon Plains Landcare Network Executive meeting, Beth Mellick, CEO of the Norman Wettenhall Foundation, presented the Executive with a cheque for \$30,000. This funding will be used to employ a project officer for the network whose responsibilities will include the gathering of information from all member Natural Resource Management groups. This information once gathered will be considered by a Committee of Management, still to be elected, with a view to forming priority projects within the network area. The present Executive is now in the process of arranging for the election of members to this ongoing Committee of Management.

Article by Michael Moore

Sighting of a Young Malleefowl

I am extremely pleased to be able to report seeing a young malleefowl on my Old Boort Rd block at Wedderburn. It was about third grown, therefore I assume this year's chick. I saw it in the grassy woodland area near the plantings that were done 4 years ago.

Earlier monitoring of the nest on my block showed the birds had opened the nest mound (earlier than other years by my records) and exposed a large amount of shell and egg membrane indicating a successful year. Membrane was collected for DNA testing. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to monitor the other active mounds for shell and membrane but assume conditions were such that all mounds were equally productive. Wendy is starting baiting soon as I have noticed a fair bit of fox activity. I just hope the chick, and any brothers or sisters are thriving.

Article by Doug Pocock

A Reminder and a Request

The Request - All the information that is contained in this newsletter and more can be found by "googling" wedderburncmnnews.blogspot and clicking on the first site listed in the search results. We would encourage those who get this newsletter to consider this method of receiving our information. If you can use this service successfully then please let us know and we can reduce our circulation costs and save trees at the same time. If you have difficulty with using this service then we can help, but one way or the other we would still want to maintain your interest in our work.

The Reminder – to all members, annual fees of \$5 are now due.

Thanks in advance Michael Moore

What is the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network?

The WCMN is a network including interested individuals, 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 Secretary, Michael Moore – 54943542

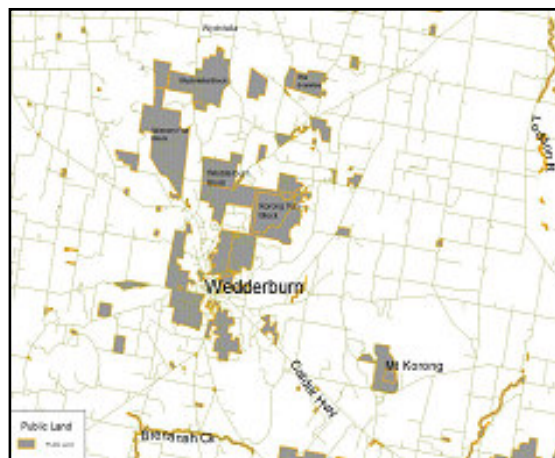
Website addresses

<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