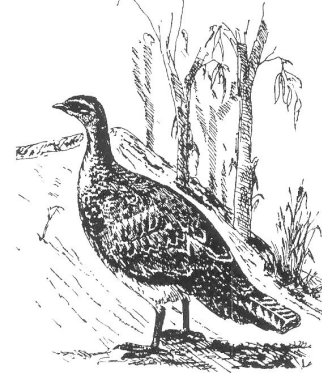




Network News



Newsletter of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network – April 2009

Conserving Biodiversity

Koorong Bushland Reserve - Wendy Murphy, Wedderburn CMN Ranger

The Koorong Bushland Reserve is located on the corner of the Calder Highway and Roberts Rd almost opposite to Mt Korong. It is only just over 4 Ha in size, but is of great significance in the surrounding fragmented landscape. It is a very important representative of the Plains Woodland (endangered) / Grassy Woodland (vulnerable) vegetation community. It has unsurpassed ground layer quality with very few weeds and high species diversity. It has particularly good populations of *Arthropodium fimbriatum*, or the Nodding Chocolate-lily, but I guess most concern for the Wedderburn CMN is the plantings of the nationally threatened *Olearia pannosa* spp *cardiophylla*, or the Velvet-daisy Bush. There is only one known plant of this species in the whole Wedderburn CMN area, which is found a short distance away.



Velvet Daisy-bush

In early December of last year, road works were occurring along a vast stretch of the Calder Highway between Wedderburn and Inglewood.

Unfortunately Vic Roads made a mistake in writing out their open stack site numbers in the contract, (where road base and screenings are stored before use), which caused their contractors to use the Koorong Bushland Reserve. This site has been closed for many, many years, but was used by heavy machinery and trucks over a period of about a week. This caused severe compaction of the area where the screenings were placed and

also damage to some of the surrounding vegetation. Fortunately though, none of the Velvet-daisy Bush plantings were harmed. But due to Vic Roads' error in writing the contract, they were willing to survey the damage and assist in repairing any damage.

In March I organised a meeting between their two Environmental Officers, Jade Logie of Parks Victoria Inglewood and myself. After discussing our concerns and what we would like seen done, Vic Roads agreed to pay for the ripping of the damaged area and to revegetate it. It was hoped that they may also pay to fence the Reserve,



Dampiera Species

but they didn't feel that was necessary. So in the near future you will see works being done in this small, seemingly insignificant patch of bush, probably one you have never taken much notice of before, but hopefully now that you know of its importance you will look at it in a whole new light.

Thanks must go to Richard Goonan of DSE, David Martin and Jade Logie of Parks Victoria and the Vic Roads representatives for their time and input into this situation.

Flora and Fauna Survey at Mt Korong – Michael Moore

Students from a Melbourne TAFE college carried out a flora and fauna study at a property in the Mt Korong region recently purchased by the company Greenhouse Balanced. The company is in the process of revegetating the landscape of the property with various species of trees and shrubs native to the area. In carrying out this valuable work the company aims to contribute to the sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere and simultaneously enhance the environment to ensure the future of the various species which inhabit the area. An important aspect of conserving biodiversity is finding out which species actually do inhabit an area in question, hence the study. The study resulted in amongst other things the capture and photographing of various species of bats as shown. *Photographs by Jeroen Van Veen*



Chocolate wattled bat



Gould's wattled bat



lesser long eared bat



Little Forest Bat

Little forest bat

Also identified during the survey was a Mitchell's short snake – see photo right. This discovery was unexpected as the snake is generally uncommon especially for the area in question. It forages nocturnally feeding mostly on lizards and is not considered dangerously venomous to humans.

Melbourne volunteers at the Nardoo Hills - Jeroen van Veen

With winter approaching, so do busier times at our area's reserves. Not only do the native plants and animals spring to life once (or should that read "if?") the rains arrive, so do the rabbits and the weeds. Rabbits



Mitchell's Short Snake

start breeding as soon as there are the first green shoots on the ground and weeds pop up quicker than many of the natives.

At the Bush Heritage reserve in the Nardoo Hills there is one big extra weapon in the fight against the weeds: Volunteers. Bush Heritage Australia recruits volunteers for many of its reserves nationwide. They have an extensive list of members who contribute through regular fees and donations, but also through labour. At the more remote and larger reserves in outback Queensland or Western Australia volunteers usually work in small teams for spells of a week or longer, but at the Nardoo Hills the arranged volunteer weekends are usually two days, with an early finish on Sunday so people can still make it back home comfortably.



This year there will be six volunteer weekends with all of them booked out well in advance. The Nardoo Hills reserve is a popular destination for Bush Heritage volunteers as it is one of the few reserves within one day's drive from Melbourne, where most come from. The main jobs they will be engaged in is weed control

(Patterson's Curse, Wheel Cactus and Horehound), fence maintenance, wildlife monitoring and tree planting, but the team supervisor makes sure there is also some time for a bit of bird or wildflower watching. The first of this winter's weekends will be at the end of April. The managers of the Nardoo Hills reserve are looking forward to welcoming these hard workers back for another season. Without them the task of bringing some of the runaway weeds under control would be so much harder. Also, some of the volunteers have been coming back for quite a number of years now and it is good catching up.

Ecological Thinning – Peter Morison

A trial research project involving ecological thinning of mallee is soon to happen on private property on the Old Boort Rd. The aim is to improve the quality of the vegetation by allowing understorey species to grow. Many mallee areas that were formerly cleared have regrown as pure eucalypt stands with no understorey present. The absence of understorey plants reduces the value of the bushland to fauna species such as malleefowl. Ecological thinning in this case involves the cutting and poisoning of some of the mallee resulting in a reduction or thinning of the mallee thus allowing space for understorey plants to come through.

Ecological thinning trials will also be undertaken in the Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve later in the year. Parks Victoria will be involved with this work.



Progress of Restoration 1

Diane Bunnnett, Project Manager

A Stand of mallee with no understorey plants

It is pleasing to be able to report that the initial stages of fencing at both sites of the Restoration 1 project is complete and on time. The fencing of 600m at Stephenson's and 1500m at Hamilton's has been completed

by the Drought Employment team. The next stage of the project is direct seeding with native plant species;



The drought team at work fencing off erosion affected land in turn this will be planted out with native plants

however this will depend on rain. This in turn will enrich the biodiversity of the area.

Wendy Murphy continues with the Fox baiting program.

The Drought Employment Program, a regional funded program by the Victorian Government and managed through the North Central Catchment Management Authority, has been a huge success. Employing farmers to completed environmental works such as fencing, “cutting and pasting” and removal of weeds

on public land and in water ways. However after only three months the program has now

exhausted its funding and will come to end at the end of April. There is so much environmental work out there I believe these teams could have a full time job.

The Wedderburn CMN Website – Michael Moore

The Wedderburn website is nearing completion but can be viewed in its present state at the address (URL) given at the end of this newsletter. It has taken a bit of time to get the site going but the results so far appear to have been worth the effort. From the home page which basically describes the structure and function of the WCMN one can go to other webpages of the site dealing with the network, its focus area and: *threats to the environment, projects in progress, endangered plants, endangered animals, information for landholders / land managers* and *a members page* which will be given over to members notes, stories, comments and photographs etc. Presently work is continuing on a gallery of biodiversity in our focus area. There are links on the site to many useful environmental agencies including: DSE, Parks Victoria, Trust For Nature, Birds Australia, Bush Broker, Greenhouse Balanced, Australian Bush Heritage, Australian Plants Society Vic., Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group and others.

At this point in time it is not possible to get to the website using Google. A search using Google will result in a page which is well out of date and is in the process of being edited to bring it up to date and incorporate it into the main WCMN website. It is hoped that people will visit the site and comment as they see fit. Constructive criticism and positive suggestions are most welcome. Comments can be made via the contact numbers below for the moment.

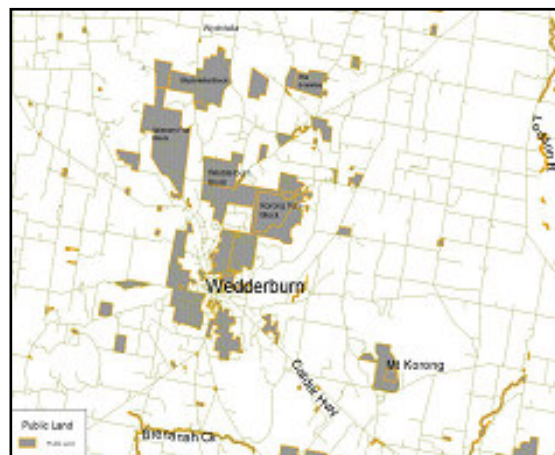
What is the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network?

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 address

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



The WCMN Area of Interest