



Mid Murray Landcare SA

PO Box 10 CAMBRAI SA 5353
Phone (08) 8564 6044 Mobile 0427 590 344
Email: admin@midmurraylandcaresa.org.au



Activity Update February 2020

This activity update is for the month of February and provides a few snapshots of some of the activities Landcare staff and volunteers have been up to.

The aim is to keep the community informed of what we do in the local region. The majority of our projects are guided by the types of projects we can apply for with the funding that is available.

If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive this free update please email Aimee Linke.

Meldanda

- ◆ Caltrop has been prolific since the welcome rains and the Mid Murray Council has kindly assisted and sprayed the large campground, around the seed orchards and the Astronomers paddock.
- ◆ Our volunteers Andy and Sheralee have been spraying other areas by hand and have done some ant control, particularly on paths and the small campground area.
- ◆ We have been setting up another seed orchard as part of the Irongrass Grasslands project with Nicola Barnes, Grassland Ecologist from Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin and Andrew Fairney from Seeding Natives Inc.. The new seed production area (SPA) will be used to grow, low growing saltbush species, daisies, lilies and other herbs. The seed collected from the SPA will be used in conjunction with the native grasses to improve the resilience and biodiversity of *Lomandra effusa* grasslands. Many of these grassland areas are grazing properties and the plants we are growing will contribute to the fodder value of these grasslands as well as improving their capacity to retain soil moisture and improve underground health of the soil profile.
- ◆ Volunteer Trevor Carmichael moved wheelbarrow loads of rocks that were dug up when setting up the seed orchard to the dry creek in the Fire Retardant Display Garden.
- ◆ Volunteers Brenton and Sheralee picked up some second hand furniture from Nazareth School. This included some white boards, a storage cupboard and some school desks to use up in the back shed. Thanks to builder Greg Kirk for considering us with this opportunity.
- ◆ Mid Murray Landcare Chairman and Project Manager met with the Cambrai school principal, staff and school governing council Chairman to discuss future management arrangements at Meldanda, that will allow it to prosper financially whilst honoring the bequeathed requests.



Figure 1 caltrop seedling



Figure 2 drilling holes for posts



Figure 3 rolling out the weed mat

Community Nursery

- ◆ Local landholders frequent the nursery which is usually open Monday and Tuesdays when the volunteers are on hand. Landholders this month buying plants from the nursery have come from Nildottie who have been happy with the way the local plants they have bought before are growing in their gardens. Another customer north of Sedan bought 50 *Eucalyptus gracilis*, a landholder from Angas Valley and another from near Meldanda are returning customers.
- ◆ It's great to be able to provide local plants to local landholders and also provide a plant id service as required.
- ◆ Volunteers Cryss and Sharon potted on *Allocasuarina verticillata*– Sheoak. The seed of this plant was very fertile and germinated readily. These plants were grown in anticipation of fire affected areas, it is one of the food sources for the Glossy Black Cockatoo, it is also nesting material for Diamond Firetails.

Committee & other

- ◆ Kept committee informed of relevant correspondence, workshops, and other information. Managed the office, volunteers, staff, and all necessary administrations including monthly accounts, reports and MYOB up to date.
- ◆ Treasurer Lyn Carmichael and Aimee Linke registered with MyGov and did the BAS forms online.
- ◆ Held our monthly meeting at Meldanda on the 13th of February.
- ◆ Chairman Chris signed a support letter for a funding bid by the Mid Murray Council for 'Blanchetown Revitalisation Development Project Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program (MDB EDP Round 2)'.
- ◆ Project Manager Aimee Linke visited Bowhill to help with some plant identification for Shane McGrath in their bushtucker garden they are creating in the WAB Memorial Park.

Funding

♦ From 2020-21 the 'NRM Community Grants' will be replaced by the new 'Grassroots Grants' program which is part of the Minister's Landscape SA reform. Due to this change there won't be a call for new NRM Community Grants in March 2020 as there has been in previous years. This is our Landcare groups primary source of funding for salary. The call for projects under the Grassroots Grants program is expected to occur later this financial year, and due to the transition from one grant program to the other there is likely to be a gap in funding at the start of 2020-21. As a current recipient of an SAMDB NRM Board 'NRM Community Grant' our group is fortunate enough to be offered an extension of our current project to minimise the impact of this change. Without this support small groups like ours would not survive.

<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/natural-resources-management>

Future Woodland Trees

- ♦ A project supported by SAMDBNRM to provide landholders with free tree guards to protect naturally regenerating trees from grazing animals. The purpose of this project is to establish trees in our landscape that will be there to replace the old trees once they die. Naturally regenerating trees often have a much greater success rate than a planted one, they also seem to grow faster.
- ♦ This month we have had 2 local landholders from the Keyneton area pick up tree guards to protect their trees, one has cattle and the other sheep. It is great that these trees will have the opportunity to avoid the pressures of grazing until they are mature.
- ♦ It was believed that some species of tree like *Allocasuarina verticillata*, Sheak, were once widespread across the hills, these days there are very few remaining trees, they are highly palatable, kangaroos and sheep particularly like to eat them. There was some germination of this species, after the 2014 Eden Valley fires and it is great to be able to support a simple on ground project for graziers.



Figures 4, 5 and 6 Sheak and gum tree seedlings being protected, photos courtesy Georgie Keynes

River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve

♦ Discussions have been had about expanding current Dark Sky Committee to ensure the ongoing success, promotion, protection from light pollution and reporting requirements.

Microbats

- ◆ Spent a day with work colleague Nicola Barnes working on the metrics of bats, we have started the development of a dichotomous key that can be used in Insight to assist with bat call identification.
- ◆ Leant some bat detectors to volunteer Dennis Matthews to do some bat monitoring up at Gluepot.
- ◆ Volunteer Don Lester has made us some bat boxes for a landholders with property near the Marne Valley CP.



Figure 7 one of the bat boxes

Irongrass

- ◆ As mentioned under the Meldanda heading we have been establishing another seed production area to grow lilies, herbs, low growing saltbushes and daisies. The plants have been selected on certain characteristics and will provide additional fodder in grasslands throughout the year.



Figure 8 installing the poly belt



Figure 9 our helping hands

- ◆ The seed boxes in the nursery have been productive and volunteers are regularly collecting seed from species like *Vittadinia*, *Setaria* and *Boerhavia*. The *Boerhavia* has been interesting to watch, a prolific seeder, has a sticky/hairy seed that would aid in dispersal, they also germinate readily.
- ◆ Volunteers Sherallee and Cryss have also been harvesting native grass seed from the seed orchard and *Enchylaena tomentosa*, a great all-rounder saltbush species.
- ◆ Nicola Barnes and Aimee Linke visited a project site where Seeding Natives was sowing native grass species as part of a fire recovery project. We were interested to see the direct seeder in action to assist with our planning of other on-ground applications for the project.



Figure 10 Nicola Barnes inspecting the seed mix

Western Pygmy Possum

- ◆ Went out in the field with Rowena Danks from Murray Mallee LAP to gps the locations of some WPP boxes that were put up on a property between Bowhill and Murray Bridge. It is a beautiful conservation area of Mallee, the landholder has been doing a remarkable job protecting the land and controlling the weeds. We saw some Mallee Fowl feathers while we were walking, and the landholder has had Western Pygmy Possums nesting in his bat boxes before.
- ◆ Visited another property out near Karoonda to gps some WPP boxes and put up another 2 boxes. The landholder was interested in native grasses and has been trialling different plants on his property to help hold the drifting sands.



Figure 11 Rowena and Brian



Figure 12 Western Pygmy Possum box

Turtle Summit

- ◆ Attended a Turtle Summit at Cleland Wildlife Park with key stakeholders to hear about the latest results from studies on our freshwater turtle species. Many people don't realise that our turtles are in trouble. We have an ageing population with no or very little juvenile recruitment. It is known that 95% of turtle nests are destroyed each year by foxes. A camera trap recorded one fox destroying 15 turtle nests in 5 hours. Turtles are important for our rivers and wetlands as they maintain water quality by being scavengers.



Figure 13 juvenile turtle