

Activity Update March 2020

This activity update is for the month of March, wow how things have changed in a month with COVID-19, meetings cancelled, workshops cancelled, volunteers staying home, schools closed, home schooling, social distancing, areas locked down and all the while still trying to deliver on projects.

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

Meldanda

- Bookings for Meldanda have been cancelled thanks to the COVID-19.
- We have progressed, with social distancing, the planting of grasses in the seed orchard, it is almost full now. Very grateful to Cryss, Kate, Sheralee, Brenton, Nicola and Zoe for helping to achieve this.
- We have also been collecting seed from the grass orchard including Red-leg grass, Cotton panic, Curly windmill grass, Windmill grass and Bottle washers.
- Irene applied for an MMC Community grant to get a new tank for Meldanda to replace the rusty one between the recreation hall and the BBQ shelter shed.
- supported an NRM Volunteer Small Grant for Meldanda to purchase organic weed control products to become more organic with our management of the site.
- Have spoken to an insurance agency about insuring the building and contents of Meldanda which we are working through with the school.
- Volunteers cleared out the Roly Poly that was taking over the front carpark area.



Figure 1 harvesting native grasses



Figure 2 caterpillar on *E. nigricans*



Figure 3 Planting native grasses

Community Nursery

- Have been busy propagating grasses for the seed orchard at Meldanda as well as collecting seed from the seed boxes.
- Have also propagated *Acacia victoriae*, *Enchylaena tomentosa* and *Hakea leucoptera*, *Enneapogon nigricans*
- Did some maintenance on the irrigation in the nursery where some of the sprinklers weren't working

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 kept MYOB up to date.
- Monthly meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19, an email was sent out to all committee members to have the last minutes approved as well as a few other actions. Our next meeting, we may try to Skype.
- Site visit to property near Saunders Gorge where the owner is establishing an organic commercial wattle seed business. We had a great tour around the property to discover more about the native plant business. We were planning on holding a workshop out there but might have to wait till COVID-19 regulations change.
- Met with Russell Pilbeam to sort out the roadside data collector app in preparation for updating the RVMP for the council.

Funding

- Supported an NRM Volunteer Small Grant for Murray Eco Arts Kollektive to purchase resources to assist with plant identification and propagation as well as a remote sensing camera.
- Applied for NRM Volunteer Small Grant for Mid Murray Landcare to purchase a dissecting microscope to assist with identification of plants, scats and insects.
- Supported MACAI with an NRM Volunteer Small Grant for protecting Ngaut Ngaut with the purchase of a remote sensing camera.
- Supported Friends of Pine Reserve with an NRM Volunteer Small Grant to engage a contractor to implement follow-up weed control on bridal creeper in the reserve.

River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve

- Pam Payne from the Barossa Bushgardens rang up to see if someone could do a talk in Ceduna on the Dark Sky Reserve at a conference- since cancelled due to COVID-19.
- There was also a request for a public talk at the Barossa Bushgardens which hasn't progressed due to COVID-19.
- Submitted an application for the 2020 'The Andamooka' Community Project Award which recognises volunteer projects of significant community benefit. We had three great letters of support from Astronomical Society of South Australia Inc, Paul Haese, Kelly Kuhn, Juggle House Experiences and Dave Hartley, Mannum Motel
- Started putting together a task tracker for the committee to help us keep on track with the activities we need to complete in preparation for the annual report.

Microbats

- Have spent some time refining the dichotomous key to assist with bat call identification. Will be doing some contract work soon to support a wetland monitoring project.
- Landholder Sally Arnold borrowed an Anabat to see what species she has on her property.



Irongrass Grasslands Project

- The irrigation has been set up in the SPA and the fencing has begun
- As mentioned above under Meldanda we have been busy planting up the grass seed orchard and collecting grass seed.
- Prepared a comms piece on the SPA for the project. Re-did the piece to make it a longer article and sent it to Nicola Barnes and Kym Arnott.
- Reviewed and made comments on the landholder questions for the project.
- Made a request to Seeding Natives for seed trial design for Meldanda.
- INTG trip to Clare for workshop on a grassland property with the focus on grazing management. We held our team meeting in Clare the next day to firm up proposed trials for project. Provided field trip photos to Nicola Barnes.
- Put together some spreadsheets for the trials on landholders' properties and the focus species we intend to use.
- Held an INTG team meeting at Meldanda, with social distancing, covered more of trial designs, potential properties and landholders to engage with and the landholder questions.
- Potted on some native grasses that were rogue in the SPA that may be used to show farmers when we are talking to them about the C4 grass species.



Figure 4 inspecting a pasture cage



Figure 5 looking at soil where blue grass grows

Western Pygmy Possum

- Wildwood Park Sanctuary owner Sally Arnold came and picked up another WPP box and borrowed a remote sensing camera. Sally has had WPP using some of the boxes she has already set up as part of this project.
- Applied for an NRM Volunteer Small Grant to purchase a remote sensing camera and to develop and print a brochure for the sanctuary.
- Supported an NRM Volunteer Small Grant for the Cambrai Community Nursery to purchase nectar plants for landholders involved with the project and also for a planting day at Wildwood Park Sanctuary.
- Sheralee set up a WPP box at her place in the Mallee.

Spiny daisy

- Cryss and Sheralee weeded the site for caltrop and kept up with watering.