

# Mid Murray Landcare SA

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## Activity Update December 2021 and January 2022

This activity update is for the month of December and January. If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive this free update, please email Aimee Linke on the above email address or view on webpage. These projects are made up of several sources of funding including Grassroots Grants, the Iron Grass Grassland Project, Healthy Rivers Grant plus some other small grants and contract work.

## Meldanda

1. Managed the volunteers, camp bookings, provision of materials and equipment and all necessary administrations including invoicing and banking for Meldanda. Kept neighbors informed of any camp bookings.
2. Volunteers Wayne, Sheralee and Paul have been continuing with ongoing maintenance at Meldanda including irrigation repairs, fixing up the septic, toilets, watering, seed collection, weeding, spraying, and cleaning facilities for campers.
3. Neighbour Peter Graetz sprayed the large campground areas and Astronomy Paddock for caltrop. Volunteers Mick, Sheralee and Cryss helped to dig out caltrop in these areas, we seem to be keeping on top of this weed.
4. Campers- we have a lot of people wanting to stay at Meldanda to see the stars, over December and January we have had 6 different lots of campers, some that have never camped before. One of the campers saw the resident koala which we shared on FB
5. River Murray Youth Council also visited Meldanda for a few hours with an Astronomy event that was supported by Joe Grida.
6. Volunteer and Committee Member David Bennett helped out immensely to repair the septic helping with all the digging with his equipment. MMC staff also assisted with these repairs, it was a great group effort, thanks everyone.



*Figure 1 Volunteers repairing septic*



*Figure 2 David Bennett with his digging equipment*

## Community Nursery

7. Volunteers Brenton, Cryss and Mick have been propagating *Cyperus vaginatus*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Dodonaea microzyga*, *Cullen australasicum* and cuttings of *Kunzea pomifera*. They have also been potting on *Glycine* and *Einadia*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and weeding.
8. Volunteers sowed *Billardiera cymosa*, Sweet Appleberry, for Rowena Danks SPA project (06/12/21). Brenton over sowed some *Leptospermum* for Rowena's project as there wasn't great germination (17/01/22).
9. We had a new volunteer start at the nursery David Bolger who lives out near Yookamurra.
10. Volunteer Cryss has been collecting seed from the nursery including *Billardiera cymosa* and *Convolvulus remotus*
11. Posted on social media about the native grasses and saltbush we have for sale at the nursery which prompted some activity. Provided some saltbush for a farmer at Sedan to use around their holding yards for shade and shelter. Local landholder from Sedan bought some native grass species and ruby saltbush. Local landholder from Palmer bought some native grasses, saltbush, and other mixed native plants.

## Committee & other

12. Managed the office, volunteers and all necessary administrations including monthly payment of bills, reports, managing webpages and social media posts, scanned all receipts and reconciled monthly accounts in XERO.
13. Sent out agenda, minutes, correspondence list, and financial report for November to the Committee, we held our monthly meeting at Mannum Motel followed by Christmas lunch.
14. Compiled and sent off our progress report for Grassroots Grant "Landcare in the Murray"
15. Support letter for Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board application for the Landscape Priority Fund project titled: *Weed warriors of our waterways: eradicating priority pests for a healthy river*.
16. Have been working with a community member on getting the 'Native Vegetation of the Murray Region' reprinted. Both Chris and I have reviewed and provided edits for the document.
17. Collected herbarium sample of *Tribulus eichlerianus*, Bull-head (a native caltrop) from Meldanda to send to the herbarium, there are no records of this species this far south.
18. Identified plant via emailed photo for landholder, it was a Peppercorn tree.
19. Held an end of year volunteer BBQ to thank the volunteers for all their efforts this year
20. Supported 3 landholders and booked them into the Marne Saunders Water Forum that will be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February at the Cambrai Sportsground.
21. Supported landholder Tony Farrell with loaning of a net to translocate tadpoles from a water hole that will be filled in with soil. Also lent a frog monitoring kit, not the best time for monitoring but it might help to identify the species of tadpoles.

22. **Microbats** – have leant bat detectors to Paul Martin and Mick Lowe to see what bat species they have at their places.
23. **Carpet Pythons** – still having sighting information sent through, landholder near Sedan that has 60+ acres of mallee found a Murray Darling Python skin in their cabin, it has been confirmed by snake catchers and they sent through some photos. Sent Melissa Burford the Threatened Fauna Ecologist for Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board the python information so she can lodge the records with BDBSA.
24. **Seed production Areas - Rowena Danks** *Billardiera cymosa* seedlings have been sown by Mid Murray Landcare Nursery. These seedlings will be added to the Whytes Well SPA to increase production of this important habitat species.
25. The seed bags were checked at Mantung by Aimee and Rowena. Some ripening was still needed. *Dodonaea bursarifolia* seed collected and currently being processed by Blackwood Seeds. Phil Druce of Blackwood Seeds has visited the Mantung Site to check and collect seed from the bagged plants.



Figure 3 *Billardiera cymosa* seed



Figure 4 *Dampiera* seed bagged



Figure 5 Checking seed bags

26. Rowena visited the Whytes Well SPA to plan for netting to protect *Billardiera cymosa* at seeding time. A structure is being designed by Brian Teakle - the owner. Netting infrastructure has been started using poly hoops and vine netting. We have two rows to trial the netting on before we plant more seedlings in winter.
27. A seed database has been established with data entered from seed collection and propagation during this reporting period. The database will be maintained with records of provenance and production at each site.



Figure 6 Attaching bird netting to poly hoops



Figure 2 *Billardiera cymosa* seed



Figure 8 Brian Teakle setting up netting on *Billardiera cymosa*

28. **Regent Parrots** – Aimee Linke and Rowena Danks attended Regent Parrot Recovery Team meeting in Berri (16/12/21) The results of the whole of river survey have all been collected together and Chris Hedger will conduct a detailed analysis of the data and present the findings at our next meeting in February).

**Points of interest from the survey:** (courtesy of December RP Meeting Notes by Kevin Smith)

All nests appear to have gone from most of the colonies in drowned river red gum sites.

E.g.

- a) Nil Nil, Lock 6, Gal Gal, Whirlpool Corner. – all upstream of Renmark
- b) Male flocks at Wiela - estimate 22pairs – upstream of Renmark
- c) Lot of birds seen near Rilli Island – no nests recorded
- d) 11 nests located along Katarapko Creek
- e) Lots of birds seen in the Pyap and Beldora area.
- f) Many birds sighted around Loch Luna, but no nests recorded – birds just flying through?
- g) 3 nests recorded on Ball Island
- h) 14 nests located at Banrock Bend, nil on Heron Bend

- i) Many flocks seen between Island Reach and Good Hope Landing
- j) Birds seen around Hogwash Bend and Markaranka
- k) No sightings at Morgan CP
- l) Birds seen at several locations downstream of Morgan



*Figure 9 Regent Parrots photo taken during survey by volunteer Coral Johnston*

- 29. Genetics - Blood samples collected during trapping events will be used to compare relationships between colonies along the river in SA.
- 30. Trackers - The “Gluepot Bird” is still wearing its tracker over 2 years since it was attached. It spent the breeding season around the river and bred in a hollow on the Markaranka side of the river upstream of Hogwash Bend. There are still 2 trackers to be installed on Chowilla birds.
- 31. A decoy crop trial will be set up.
- 32. Donna Belder is updating the Recovery Plan.
- 33. Farewell to Karen Bishop from Riverland West Landcare who has been the backbone of the Regent Parrot Recovery Team
- 34. Rowena Danks - An article is being drafted to submit to the Karoonda Council Newsletter to promote the app and encourage people to use it as they move around the mallee. The app was also promoted at the Biodiversity in Horticulture Workshop and how to use it. The workshop was attended by producers from the Mallee and Riverland regions.
- 35. **Regent Parrots - MD Healthy Rivers Grant** –There were over 40 volunteers that took part in the ‘All of River’ survey that were rotated on the houseboat and at least a dozen behind the scenes doing volunteer transport, food etc. Volunteers did anywhere from a two-night stay to an 11-night stint on the houseboat from the 4th of September to the 14th of October 2021, thanks to Melissa Burford for this information summary.

## River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve

- 36. The RM Dark Reserve Committee meetings were held via Zoom in December and January.
- 37. Final Report for National Science Week grant signed and submitted

38. The River Murray IDSR Website must be getting a lot of traffic and our website host has had to double the bandwidth allowance.
39. The Strategic Plan has been adopted, priorities for this year will be getting the lighting demonstrations site planned for the main street of Cambrai and plan for an arts festival in the region.
40. The committee would like to see a conference/workshop to showcase opportunities for all stakeholders.
41. The Mannum Visitor Information Centre has our Dark Sky merchandise and will look at setting up a display.
42. Martin Lewicki is following up lighting with Costa Brothers and Henry Elebra (lighting expert).
43. Jake was at the opening Silentium Radar Station; ABC radio, ABC New Breakfast, and channel 7 news also attended. ABC News Breakfast did a live cross
44. Ian Hill meeting with Minister Spiers and will be showing the drawings for our Reserve and Observatory/Planetarium.
45. Chris met with Peter Graves who works for Torrens University, and they are looking at getting some design support, or internships for visitor's information.
46. SA Power Networks – Henry Elebra (lighting expert) willing to assist, Cambrai main street demonstration site -Jake is meeting with SA Power Networks.
47. Chris Tugwell spoke on a podcast that is broadcast in Paris, France on the 7th January 2022; Stargazing in the River Murray Dark Sky Reserve'  
<https://podcast.meetstargazers.com/episodes/stargazing-river-murray-dark-sky-reserve>

## Irongrass Grasslands Project

48. We have had 16mm of rain on the trial site at Meldanda in January, nothing recorded for December
49. Identified 2 plant species for landholder Georgie Keynes, *Cyrsocephalum semipapposum* (native) and with Nicola Barnes assistance *Linolium* sp (weed).
50. Drafted up a workshop flyer for upcoming workshops to be presented by Anne Brown with landholders on the trials.
51. SPA –Sheralee and Paul have collected *Minuria leptophylla*, *Ptilotus spathulatus* harvested *Rytidosperma* sp., Wallaby grass and pulled out *Austrostipa* sp., Spear grass. Sheralee Cryss and Mick harvested *Ptilotus*, *Glycine*, *Geranium*, *Goodenia*, *Eutaxia* and *Whalenbergia*. Volunteers have also collected *Enteropogon*, *Digitaria* and *Convolvulus* and kept on top of the weeding.
52. Mick, Cryss and Sheralee have harvested the *Lotus* and are cutting back the bushes ready for next years harvest. The *Arthropodium* has all been spent, Cryss cut all these backs and swept up the seed.
53. We had a blow out in the native grass SPA, it is quite old and perished, we will pin it down as a temporary measure.
54. **Wicking bed trial** – Brenton and Mick topped up the water reservoir, it took a full barrel of water (17/01/22).



Figure 10 Mick and Sheralee sucking up *Ptilotus* seed.



Figure 11 Weed mat blow out in the grass SPA.

55. **Flora Surveys** -during our last survey Kate Graham and Aimee Linke witnessed what looked like a very small very fast snake, by taking frames from the video we were able to save some images that we sent to Peter Matejcic, even though it was difficult to review the images Peter believes the reptile to be a legless Adelaide Snake-lizard now called Gulfs Delma (*Delma mollerii*). Peter could just make out the dark hood and neck band on two images, he also said that the sliding movement through grassy tussocks is reminiscent of legless lizards, unlike young brown snakes. The individual appears long & thin typical of *Delma mollerii*. *Delma mollerii* rear up like brown snakes when confronted (which happened to us). Peter could also just make out a pair of rear flaps (remnant vestigial hindlimbs in the form of scaly flaps) typical of legless Delmas in the Family Pygopodidae.



Figure 12 *Delma mollerii* tail end



Figure 13 *Delma mollerii* head end

## Western Pygmy Possums

56. Di Davidson inspected her Western Pygmy Possum boxes and found some scats, along with cockroach legs and spider remains (15/12/21). Posted this on social media (27/01/22)
57. Picked up the SD cards of photos that have been set up on possum boxes that volunteer Bob White went through for us. There was a total of 30,189 photos, 89 photos with fauna including a White-browed babbler, huntsman, bats, kangaroos, Butcherbird, Hare, owl, and an unidentified critter.
58. Les and Jayne Payne near Morgan inspected their boxes and found no signs of activity.
59. Sophie Bass inspected her boxes near Purnong (28/12/21) and found huntsman's and egg sack or no activity.
60. Rowena and Aimee dropped of an endoscope camera in Berri for Linda Boucher to pick up and inspect her boxes near Cooltong.
61. Sent an endoscope camera up to Morgan for Lyn Raggett to inspect her possum boxes at Pelican Point (18/01/22).
62. Graham Frahn sent in his data sheets for boxes set up at Calperum and Taylorville. He checked the first boxes he put up at Taylorville and there has been no activity. Graham also got the box coordinates and filled in a data sheet for box that has been installed at Roger and Raelene Schmitke's near Taylorville, this was a box from our first workshop back in 2018.



*Figure 14 White-browed Babbler*



*Figure 15 Scats and cockroach legs in WPP box*