



Mid Murray Landcare SA  
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## Activity Update October 2022

This activity update is for the month of October 2022. 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 from varied sources of funding including Grassroots Grants, the Irongrass Grasslands Project, Healthy Rivers Grant plus other small grants and contract work.

### Meldanda

1. Continued with managing 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, Andy, Paul and new volunteer David (aka Bear) maintained and cleaned Meldanda facilities. Made repairs to the roof of the old shed down the back, fixing leaks along the ridge cap, cleaning roof, replacing guttering and down pipes.
3. Dropped off the whipper snipper to be serviced, bought some new mower blades, volunteers fixed and secured the pipe that goes from top tank across the astronomy paddock where the wombats keep adding to their warren.
4. Campers- we have had about eight campers camp for two nights up at the back shed who also came to see the stars and celebrate a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. ASSA had their monthly stay. A group of thirteen students and teachers from Pulteney Grammar School camped at Meldanda, they did some more plantings at their ongoing revegetation project at Wongulla.

### Community Nursery

5. Volunteers Sheralee, Brenton, Cryss, Mick and David have been potting on Aloe vera plants and we trialled using the gel for our cuttings, we did some more cuttings of *Olearia pannosa* and sowed more seed, cuttings of *Halgania andromedifolia* common name Lavender Halgania. Potted on Acacias, weeded tubestock and tried controlling garden snails which are decimating some species.
6. Supported nine landholders/groups at the nursery with plant selections for their projects, or other project support, including local farmers and plants for a windbreak near Devon Downs.
7. Put together plant order for a floodplain project at Wongulla, Pulteney Grammar School picked up their plants and paid a visit to the nursery where Alex Emmins and I spoke

about propagation and other environmental things. They left us a nice thankyou note when they returned the used plant tubes.

## **Committee & other**

8. Managed the office, volunteers and all necessary administrations including monthly payment of bills, reports, invoicing, managing webpages and social media posts, scanned all receipts and reconciled monthly accounts in XERO. Had one weeks leave over the school holidays
9. Sent out agenda, minutes, correspondence list, and financial report for the month to the Committee. We held our monthly meeting at MRLB Office in Cambrai.
10. Received another carpet python sighting from the River Murray north of Blanchetown, forwarded the details onto Melissa Burford at MRLB.

## **Regent Parrots**

11. Rowena and Aimee did some work on the Healthy Rivers final report, ready for submission in November.



### **Regent Parrot Decoy Crop Project – Rowena Danks and Aimee Linke**

12. This project is stage two of a project commenced by RPRT and Riverland West Landcare. This project is a continuation of the initial project, which aimed to improve understanding of Regent Parrot movements and behavioural habits in the Murraylands and Riverland region in respect to reducing current and future threats. In particular, how their activities relate to usage of floodplain communities and adjacent mixed horticultural zones. Existing data collected by the RPRT indicates that whilst the mallee and floodplains are the birds preferred landscape, they are also known to feed on certain agricultural crops such as almonds, legumes and cereals, vineyards, and orchards.
13. This project funding was used to purchase some GPS bird trackers, Regent Parrot hat pins to engage and appreciate volunteers, and to set up a decoy crop demonstration site. The decoy crop was sown using sunflower and millet seed adjacent to almond orchards. Data collected over the coming months will be used to foster opportunities within horticultural practices that benefit both growers and Regent Parrots.
14. Some key highlights from this project have been a new partnership with the Almond Industry, in particular the Almond Board of Australia with the key decoy crop site established at the Almond Board of Excellence. Flow on work with almond growers including raising awareness of management tools such as water troughs. This has already led to the implementation of water troughs to help manage Major Mitchell Cockatoos where they have been damaging irrigation lines.



## River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve - Chris Tugwell

15. Meeting with Council and Commshake to finalise Parliament House presentation
16. Spoke at Kelly Kuhn dark sky tour with Tourism Minister
17. Space Forum presentation at Lot 14 (will provide numbers later) with Prof Fred Watson (Australian Astronomer at Large), Kylie Eggers (Principal, Australian Science & Mathematics School), Ben Scales (Mid Murray CEO), Don Bursill (former Chief Scientist of SA), Silentium CEO & Paul Haese (Swan Reach Imaging)
18. Meeting with Leila Kasprzak (school principal) re Meldanda sundial project
19. Discussion with architects to update concept drawings
20. Second meeting of Council Dark Sky Committee
21. Meeting with Council to discuss dark sky compliant lighting project in Cambrai
22. Online information session with Torrens University Design students
23. Don Bursill held multiple meetings to prepare for Space Forum and upcoming presentation at Parliament House
24. RMIDSR Committee meeting at Cambrai and via Zoom

## Healthy Rivers – aquatic weeds project. - MRLB Staff

25. Weather conditions at the beginning of the month provided the opportunity to launch the inspection boat and undertake some control of previously mapped weeds. The focus has been on African Boxthorns and Boneseed on low lying areas on the Riverbanks to control these weeds prior to rising water levels submerging them. Terrestrial weeds will become the focus in coming months as river conditions become unfavourable for rivercraft activities.
26. After a successful workshop last month landowners have taken the opportunity to borrow stem-injection packs to undertake their own control of wheel cactus on their properties. A total of 9 landowners currently has equipment on loan to undertake control works.
27. The workshop has facilitated neighbourly conversations regarding the project which has resulted in additional landholders reaching out to project staff, requesting property inspections.
28. Project staff are currently developing a list of properties that we intend to engage a contractor to undertake Opuntia control works over. This work will aim to break the back of the Opuntia infestations adjoining the River in the Devon Downs & Sunnydale area. This will also be complimented by control works implemented via the spray boat in the coming months.
29. Property inspections revealed a large infestation of white weeping broom spreading across multiple properties and becoming a concern for landowners. After research and talking to an agronomist it was determined that no herbicide is registered for the control of White Weeping Broom. It was therefore decided to undertake control trials to see what foliar spray will have the greatest impact on the plant. With the plants in full flower, it was prime time to foliar spray and chemical trials were undertaken on two separate

properties. Project staff will monitor these trials over the project life in the hope of using the results to inform future treatment recommendation for control in the area.

30. River surveying completed from Swan Reach upstream, this will see 164km of riverbank surveyed between Blanchetown and Purnong. Further inspections are planned but may be impeded by high flows over the following weeks.
31. Boneseed infestation in the River corridor have been the focus this month. Inspection and control have been completed in the following locations Scrubby flat, Walker flat, Manunka, Big Bend, Greenways Landing and Nildottie.
32. Project staff continue to seek opportunities to engage with First Nations contractors. Contractors (RAW) that were engaged for Nildottie Island works have proved difficult to contact of late, resulting in additional contractor options being investigated to undertake Opuntia control works on the island.
33. High River flows continue to impede project delivery with the forecast projecting this to continue into the coming months.
34. Access to the River flats is becoming difficult due to rain events and the rising river with most now inaccessible.

### Irongrass Native Grasslands Project

35. Rainfall at the Meldanda trial site in October was 111mm
36. Kate Graham and Aimee Linke went to Poonthie Ruwe to monitor the seeding trial and control sites, we also saw a brown snake 14/10/22.
37. Renata Rix, Kate Graham, Marcella Rosero and Aimee Linke did some grassland monitoring at Preston's near Eudunda 18/10/22. The site had wild oats over the bonnet of the ute, it was like driving through the Savannahs of Africa!
38. Monitoring Trial sites at Dietrich's near Truro with Renata Rix, we did sites 1 and 3 21/10/22, saw some *Drosera glanduligera* and a native butterfly. Kate and Marcella monitored Schneider's long term monitoring site near Frankton.



Figure 1 *Drosera glanduligera*



Figure 2 Long-tailed Pea-blue, *Lampides boeticus*



Figure 3 *Actinobole uliginosum* with a larva

39. Alex Emmins, Aimee Linke, Tina Gillespie and Nicola Barnes monitored grassland trial sites at Terowie, and long term sites at Kurcolo and Mokota over three days with 26-28/10/22. We saw lots of native plants including some of our favourites like *Actinobole uliginosum* as pictured above. With all the rainfall the weed load was evident with lots of annual

grass and Trifolium species. The landholders up at Terowie had also found a Yellow-bellied Sheath-tail Bat, *Saccolaimus flaviventris* on a fence post, this species migrate north when the weather cools, they are not commonly seen.

40. Planting with volunteers at the Seed Production Area Meldanda, Paul, David B, Andy and Cryss planted *Lotus australis*, *Goodenia pinnatifida*, *Whalenbergia sp.*, *Cryocephalum apiculatum*, *Ptilotus spathulatus* and *Geranium retrorsum*.

41. Volunteers weeded the seed production areas at Meldanda, the grass orchard was particularly weedy and will probably be ongoing with all the rain we keep having.



Figure 4 grass seed production area photo courtesy Cryss Filsell



Figure 5 native grassland plants seed production area, photo courtesy Cryss Filsell