

Activity Update December 2022 and January 2023

This activity update is for the month of December 2022 and January 2023. 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 Campers- we have had 7 campers stay at Meldanda.
2. Volunteers Wayne, Andy, Paul and David maintained and cleaned Meldanda facilities and watered areas over the summer. The volunteers chain sawed two different mallee trees that fell over in the wind and blocked access tracks. Volunteers also mowed around the Seed Production Areas. Organised the catering for volunteers to have a BBQ to celebrate the end of year and all their efforts.
3. We were informed by MMC that they are no longer able to support any maintenance work at Meldanda due to lack of resources. We have asked the Cambrai School to see if they can help out mowing the larger areas like the campground and Astronomy paddock and the volunteers can hand mow the other areas required.
4. Cambrai Primary School students helped Mid Murray Landcare SA to take the photo point photos at Meldanda. The first photos were taken in 2009 and there has been so much change in that time. Apart from getting attacked by mosquitoes it was great for the students to take part in this activity and see the value in this simple monitoring tool.



*Figure 1 Cambrai students
photo point monitoring lesson
at Meldanda*

Community Nursery

5. Volunteers Sheralee, Brenton, Cryss, Mick and David general nursery work potting on and weeding. We finished doing cuttings of *Olearia panossa* with 1050 the final tally. Sowed some Kangaroo grass seed from sweepings collected from the SPA at Meldanda, these germinated well, and the volunteers potted on 200 tubestock. Fertilised tubestock before the Christmas break and collected seed including *Vittadinia*, *Templetonia* and *Kennedia*.
6. Supported 1 landholder/groups at the nursery with plant selections for their projects, or other project support, including.

Committee & other

7. 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. Lyn and Aimee sent in the ACNC annual report.
8. Sent out agenda, minutes, correspondence list, and financial report for the month to the Committee. We held our monthly meeting at the Mannum Club and celebrated a successful year with lunch at the club.
9. Mid Murray Landcare SA has a new Councillor representative after the recent MMC Council elections, local landholder Ros Schultz.

Regent Parrots

10. Rowena - A post on Facebook Regent Parrot page, was developed and promoted to highlight the presence of grain falling on roadsides from trucks during harvest time. The post also promoted the Poly Tell Us app and encouraged locals to report their sighting of Regent Parrots in the app. It also promoted a forage species list for those interested in planting for the parrots. The post tagged all the mallee councils so that it could reach the mallee community.
11. Rowena - **Initiate 1 new partnership with Industry where Regent Parrot management is crucial to crop management.** The project supported the almond industry relationship with the Regent Parrot and this project allowed the support for almond orchards to access species identification support at orchards to help in the management of birds and to raise awareness of which species are in the orchards.
12. **Monitor decoy crops and forage plantings.** Aimee and Rowena established cameras on the Loxton crop to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the decoy crops in Dec-Feb. Rowena set up song meters at Loxton and more cameras at Devlin's Pound site at the end of December.



Figure 2 camera set up on sunflowers.



Figure 3 sunflower decoy crop at Pomona

13. Rowena Danks and Aimee Linke attended the Regent Parrot Recovery Team meeting at Banrock Station on 5th December the following is the meeting notes prepared by Chairman Kevin Smith.

Project updates:



10.1 Chowilla Trapping

Grace Hodder reported that only 2 birds were trapped. A flock of Regents hit the nets, but most made a large hole in a net and continued on their way. Trackers were attached to the 2 birds using tape (not the harness method) as this project aims to obtain fine scale points at 15 min space times to determine hot spots in the Chowilla region eg. Foraging sites, roost areas. One tracker only stayed on for a couple of days, but the other one has been on 39 days. The hot spots have been checked and some feeding has been observed and roost sites surveyed. There are still 7 trackers to be attached to birds. Trapping at the nests proved impossible this year. A group of 20 birds were recorded in the area which is more than observed in feeding flock in the last few years.

Questions: Can an analysis of the data provide some idea of the time spent on each food resource? Is it time for some new nets?

15.2 Gluepot bird

This tracker has been on the bird for 2 years and is providing information. Recent foraging areas have been south of the river e.g., in an abandoned vineyard. It also spends time in patches of scrub. The overall message from following this bird and other short-term individuals is that Regent Parrots use the landscape according to the available food resources. There is not a fixed routine or food source that they rely on. They are totally adaptable and able to utilize any available resources as the situation demands.

15.3 Nest Cameras

Five cameras have been placed on nests by the "Eastern Tree climbers" -- 2 at Markaranka, 1 in Katarapko and 2 at Murbpook. Whilst placing the cameras on nests, a

number of nestlings were observed, and a health check made of those able to be accessed. The cameras will remain in place until the end of the breeding season. The data collected will record any predation, nest visit by other birds and numbers fledged from each nest etc. Some hollows were shallow and others very deep. This raises the question as to what constitutes a suitable Regent Parrot nest hollow. It was suggested that we should investigate employing the tree climbing team to conduct a detailed survey of nest hollows including others that are not being used by Regents to see if we can discover what the birds require for a nest hollow to be determined suitable for nesting. Is there a specific requirement at the nest cavity location?

15.4 Revegetation

Cal Lal direct seeding – Trees for life Project. The seed has been sown and Peter Freeman reported that Trees for Life staff are pleased with the germination rate. This is a long-term project managed by Trees for Life staff with landholder agreements for the areas identified to be kept aside for reveg. in future years.

15.5 Fodder Project

Rowena Danks has enthused and engaged property owners to plant regent parrot food plants produced by Tim Field at a number of locations eg. Beldora, Lyrup, Loxton, Gerard and Peter Freeman's in autumn. Gerard people are in need of some assistance- perhaps engage the NPWS volunteer rangers to assist, particularly with the on-going watering. Mel Burford to work on this and engage Kingsley. Rowena displayed photos of her enthusiastic teams collecting and planting large areas of tube stock.

15.6 Decoy crops

Rowena has recruited two properties to trial decoy crops near almond orchards – Pomona Farms at Devlin Pound and The Almond Centre of Excellence at Loxton which is an Almond Board of Aust. project site. Sunflowers and millet are the two crops being trialled. – see the detailed project plan distributed previously.

15.7 General Business

15.7.1 Major Mitchell Cockatoos have been causing problems by destroying irrigation sprinklers at Pomona Farms. Consultation with staff through the relationships that Rowena has established has resulted in a trial watering trough being installed nearby to hopefully attract the birds away from the sprinklers.

The contacts made and relationships established with landowners through the revegetation project and the decoy crop project has seen many groups made aware of and involved in "looking out" for regents. Kevin congratulated Rowena on the great work she has done in regard to the establishment of these valuable relationships and the excellent results achieved.

15.7.2 A partnership project between the Friends of Riverland Parks and NPWS is being conducted to draw up plans for structures to be placed on Regent Parrot nest

sites on National Parks to enable the use of environmental water to maintain the health of these nest sites. Three sites are being targeted – Katarapko, Maize Island and Hogwash Bend. Benita Dillon is managing this project.

15.7.3 The Murraylands Riverland Landscape Board is funding a project where children's book author Heather Freeman is writing the story of the Regent Parrot and the Recovery Team efforts. The first draft has been distributed and the author is seeking feedback.

Comments – Well put together, No mention of feeding on the floodplain, Could the red, black, gold colour combination be an issue? The names used for the birds were not favoured by most of the team (use common names). Could some photos be included? A decision about how the book will be distributed has not yet been made.

River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve - Chris Tugwell



14. completed annual report for IDA.
15. Kelly Kuhn took part in online Wellness seminar in Malaysia.
16. Articles in 'Due South' magazine, Murray Lakes & Coorong magazine, and Qantas inflight magazine (23 places to go in 2023).
17. Dark Sky tram still on Adelaide streets (5 months now).
18. Meeting with Council and SA Power Networks re dark sky compliant lighting.
19. Approached from Monash University Nova Rover Team. They are a multidisciplinary team of Monash University students that build Mars and Lunar rovers which they take to compete in domestic and international competitions (they finished 2nd in the world in 2022). They also perform outreach, hoping to inspire students to pursue STEM and Robotics and are hoping to work with schools inside the Reserve both online and when they visit SA in March.

Healthy Rivers – aquatic weeds project. - MRLB Staff

20. River mapping has continued in December but will be the last of the surveys while the river flow's hit their peak. A state of emergency was declared for the river flood and after talking to local government staff and the announcement of restrictions for boats on the river we will cease inspections until a later date. Mapping of pest weeds was completed from Walkers flat to Younghusband Landings, including Lake Carlet. River flows had increased significantly from last month and becoming difficult to launch the inspection boat due to ramps closing and submerged infrastructure in the water.
21. Surveys uncovered Yellow Water Lily present in various locations. Lily was juvenile at time of inspection, but the decision was made to treat what we could to reduce the risk of any further spread of plants with the strong flows.
22. **Yellow Water Lily** (YWL) infestation at Curnamont shacks site were treated via Kayaks and land base Landcruiser spray unit. River infestations at this location were sprayed via the boat.
23. A new infestation of YWL was discovered during surveys at Bowhill in front of a shack. Landowner contact was made, and it turned out to be planted by the shack owners son,

after consultation it was agreed that the Lily would be treated on the day. This site will be monitored to make sure it doesn't spread any further.

24. The high water allowed us to inspect Lake Carlet and a large infestation of YWL was discovered at the downstream entrance. Some treatment was undertaken with Clipper chemical but due to large amount present it was left to treat at a later date. This site should withhold the high flows as it is somewhat contained due to its location in the western mouth end of the lake.
25. **White Weeping Broom Trial** – District officers visited the sites of the chemical trials to carryout monitoring of effectiveness of chemicals. Good results with plants showing signs of burn off and turning yellow in colour. There was a definite difference in the chemicals used and time will tell what chemical may be the best suited for foliar application. Landowners had noticed the results and are very happy with the trail to date. Monitoring will be the key over the next season to see if any regrowth will occur. Watch this space! (Pictures taken, location mapped and photo points logged).
26. **Opuntia-Wheel Cactus** – Further inspections carried out on properties in the Devon Downs and Sunnydale area. Low lying area is now inundated with water from the flood and will be hard to access for contractors to control. This also will have to be revisited when water starts to subside. Two properties have heavy infestation of wheel cactus on higher land adjoining the river and should still be accessible to undertake control. Will look at creating a purchase order for works to start in the new year.
27. **Boneseed** sites have been treated and completed for this year.
28. The River has become a State Emergency and become very dangerous to undertake project deliverables. With funding remaining a project extension was applied for and granted with the new activity end date the 30th November 2023.
29. Program staff made contact with landowners previously engaged to notify them of the delay with control works in the area due to high flows.
30. Planned opuntia control works on the Nildottie Island have been put on hold due to the high river levels.
31. A meeting was held between the District Manager and NAC representatives to gain a clear understanding of where there are opportunities for collaboration. A plan has been developed to look into packages of work for NAC to contribute to in the New Year.



Figure 4 Program staff utilising a drone to map infestations.

Irongrass Native Grasslands Project – Aimee Linke

32. Rainfall at the Meldanda trial site in December and January was 51.5mm.
33. Kate Graham and Aimee Linke did the monitoring at Meldanda Seeding Trial.
34. Kate Graham and Aimee Linke did the monitoring Wicking Bed trials using a transect method. We found germination only of *Vittadinnia blackii* on the northern side which wasn't captured in our transect lines.
35. Aimee topped up wicking bed 80 litres, over December and January and landholder Georgie Keynes also topped up twice.
36. Eight volunteers pitched in to weed the seed production areas and collect seed in December, we harvested *Minuria leptophylla*, *Convolvulus remotus*, *Eutaxia microphylla* and *Goodenia pinnatifida*.
37. Volunteers harvested seed and weeded again in January, this time we collected *Cryocephalum apiculatum*, *Arthropodium fimbriatum*, *Chloris truncata*, *Themeda triandra* and *Enneapogon nigricans*.



Figure 5 seed collecting at Meldanda.



Figure 6 using blower vac to harvest seed.

38. Nicola Barnes, Toby Galligan, and Aimee Linke made a trip up to the Hall's property north of Hallett to deploy 12 Anabat Swift Bat Detectors, with the aim to see if there is a difference in activity and species across different vegetation communities. We set them up in a diverse *Lomandra* grassland with no nearby woodland, an ex-cropping area with no nearby woodland and a woodland.
39. Nicola Barnes, Toby Galligan, and Aimee Linke went to Tiliqua to count the mortality rate of the *Lomandra* plantings that were done earlier in the year, the survival rate is 96% which is excellent.
40. Have been liaising with Geoff Kew, Northern and Yorke Landscapes Board Senior Soil Officer about an upcoming field trip to conduct soil sample tests across the trial sites for the project. Geoff is working on getting a corer attached to a trailer so we can take deeper soil samples.
41. Have been speaking with Anne Brown in preparation for project workshops coming up in March.



Figures, 4, 5 and 6 bat detectors set up, left photo grassland, middle photo ex-cropping, right photo woodland.

Seed Production Areas – Rowena Danks

Harvest seed at two seed production areas as available.

42. Seeds were bagged on plants at the Whytes Well and Mantung SPAs. These bags allow seeds to be caught for collection at a later date and this helps reduce the number of visits required to ensure the seed drop is not missed. Due to the late rains, seeding appears to be later than usual and bags are still on plants at the end of December.



Figure 7 Fiona Bennett bagging seed with Rowena Danks at SPA.



Figure 8 seed bagging for later collection

- 43. Fiona Bennett helped me do some seed bagging at the Mantung SPA.
- 44. Fiona and I did some weeding, hedge trimming and tidying up at the Mantung SPA
- 45. I spent another day out at Brian's SPA at Whytes Well doing some more hedge trimming and tidying up weeds. Netting to be installed in January on the *Billardiera cymosa*.

Western Pygmy Possums

- 46. Tim Pascoe checked the Pygmy Possum Boxes at Gluepot and found none were occupied looks like quite a few have not had any visitors of any kind, Tim was hoping with the weather they have had something may have turned up. One of the volunteers who was helping with the Calperum pit lines mentioned that they had trapped some of the Possums there (four or five). The type of habitat they were caught in was sand swales with *Triodia*. Tim moved the possum boxes to different locations.

- 47. Tim Pascoe had a report in January when a group of visitors at Gluepot were doing some spot lighting and saw Western pygmy possum sighting, promising that they are about.

- 48. Tim Pascoe at Gluepot checked his boxes again in January after the re locating them and was more than pleased to find something hairy that wasn't a spider, it has been identified as a Dunnart

Sminthopsis murina.



Figure 8 Dunnart in WPP box at Gluepot.

- 49. Jennifer Gardner checked her boxes at her scrub on Sleeper Track and so they have had no sign of occupation in their boxes, other than a little bit of spider web, despite the scrub looking greener than they have in the nearly 40 years they have owned it.
- 50. Rowena did some more data entry in December and 4 Facebook posts sharing news about pygmy possum projects and also a tip to monitor buckets in rainy weather to help stop drowning WPPs.
- 51. Ellen Krahnert checked her boxes near Sedan and had no evidence a WPP only remains of a shedded skin of a huntsman spider.
- 52. Rowena and Fiona monitored three of the Western Pygmy Possum boxes at Malcolm John's place whilst we were out there working on the SPA.



Figure 2 and 8 Fiona Bennett checking WPP boxes with Rowena Danks in the Mallee.

Honey and Native Bees – Rowena Danks

- 53. A Pollinator Update email was sent out at the end of December. This will also be sent out with the next Activity Update.
- 54. The update included the following articles and links to information:
- 55. Information about the latest on bee biosecurity in Australia and a link to a recording of a webinar hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries Biosecurity Program
- 56. Australian Pollinator Week Photography Competition winning entries - link to the gallery.
- 57. Results on research conducted by Uni WA on the use of clovers as a provision of honey nectar and pollen.
- 58. An article from the Wheen Bee Foundation on native bees and their nesting behaviour.

1 Million Turtles Project – Aimee Linke

- 59. Two nest predation surveys will be set up with landholders once floodwaters recede.
- 60. Received some postcards for distributing to the community from the 1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program which has a QR code to easily upload sightings.