

# Western Pygmy Possum Project 2017 till now



Mid Murray  
**Landcare**  
SA



- This project all started back in June 2017, when a landholder brought a small mouse like creature into my Cambrai office, that had drowned in a bucket of water. The bucket was under a mallee tree on a property north of Sedan. The landholder thought it looked a bit different with how its tail was curling around and on closer inspection you could also see that its paws looked like they could grip onto things.



This got me thinking about these creatures in the area, firstly the property this possum was found on there was only a small patch of Mallee and surrounded by cropping or cleared land and secondly the risks people have on their property to these creatures, like rubbish left under trees that can collect water and provide potential drowning vessels.



It was interesting to hear of other possums losing their life in the same way, so a new project was born to help inform people about keeping their properties safer and find out where else these possums might be.

Through funding from the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board we embarked on our new project in 2018.

We started with a community engagement workshop at Meldanda, with guest speaker Dr Elisa Sparrow who had been working on a successful WPP nest box project on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Followed by our first of many, habitat box building workshops for the possums.

The box design was based on what Dr Elisa Sparrow used on the Fleurieu Peninsula Project, but ours were smaller and did not open at the front.

# Cambrai Community Nursery

20th February Workshop

## Western Pygmy Possums

Time 9:30am– 2:00pm *Morning tea and BBQ lunch provided*

Location Meldanda 106 Bundilla Rd, Cambrai

- Ecology , Fleurieu project
- Distribution in the Mid Murray Region
- Habitat needs, make a habitat box

Photo Elisa Sparrow



RSVP by 19/02/18 to Aimee Linke 0427 590 344 or  
mmlandcaresa@internode.on.net

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Natural Resources Management Board through funding from the Australian  
Government's National Landcare Programme and the NRM Levies.*



130x100mm internal  
200mm height

20mm Hole -small  
ledge outside and inside  
with slits for climbing  
in and out  
Removable snug fitting lid,  
not hinged. Weatherproof  
tin covering



The nest box workshop was a great success, one of our Landcare volunteers, Don Lester made up what we call “box kits” that are all the pieces required to assemble a box. Brilliant design that makes it easier at a workshop to engage people of all ages and capabilities to assemble a box.

Participants really enjoyed this type of hands-on workshop where they get to make something they can take home, install and provide habitat. It was really empowering for some people, especially a lot of female participants, they seemed to love getting their hands on the electrical tools and making things.

We made up an information brochure that could be handed out about the possums and what people could do on their properties to help, which includes controlling grazing animals in the scrub, especially browsers like kangaroos and goats. Keep cats inside all the time but especially at night.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Control grazing animals in the scrub (especially browsers like kangaroos and goats) to encourage or maintain flowering shrub diversity

Avoid "cleaning up" too much as they are known to use fallen timber and hollows to sleep in. This also benefits other fauna  
Keep cats inside all the time but especially at night.

Install habitat boxes on your property.

Include a mix of flowering plants on your property, not only do they drink nectar from flowers but also lick the protein-rich pollen from the anthers.

They also eat insects, so shrubby plants are great for attracting insects like Acacia, Senna, Dodonaea and Maireana

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## MID MURRAY LANDCARE SA

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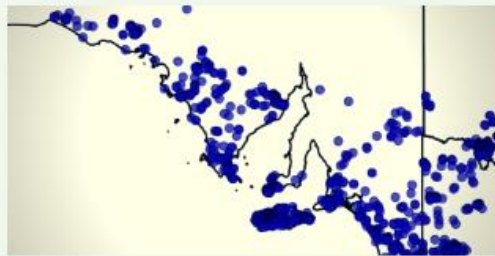
## WESTERN PYGMY POSSUMS

### BIOLOGY

They are nocturnal creatures that live in trees. They can breed at any time of year with up to 3 consecutive litters; with an average 2- 4 young. Adults are small with combined head and body length of 60 mm to 100 mm, about as long as your finger. They use short term torpor to conserve energy. Their population fluctuates with rainfall and food availability and will travel to find flowering plants. Believed to play a role in pollination of trees and shrubs.

### DISTRIBUTION

They are found in the lower part of Australia, including the Mid Murray Region of South Australia.



### THREATS

Introduced predators • Competition • Over grazing • Disease • Roadkill • Weeds • Altered fire regimes • Clearance • Mistaken ID. These possums can be confused with the common house mouse. They don't have a mousy smell, have gripping feet for climbing and a tail that curls.

If you find one alive or dead, record the date, location, photo if possible and observers name. Alive phone fauna rescue (08) 8289 0896. Dead take it to the SA Museum, all records are valuable.



Since our first workshop at Meldanda, interest in our project expanded and we were approached by the SA Museum who were interested in the genetics of the possum's survival in relation to climate change. We partnered with SA Museum and ran several workshops with the Waterhouse Club and Murray Mallee LAP, all our work on this project has been supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Community Grant Funding.

We held a further seven workshops with over 150 people attending making 300 habitat boxes.

Mantung in the Mallee, with Murray Mallee LAP and volunteers

Bowhill on the Murray River, with Murray Mallee LAP and volunteers

Meldanda with box installation at Moorunde Wildlife Reserve, with Waterhouse Club.

Burra with box installation on two private properties in the Tothill Ranges, with Waterhouse Club

Calperum Station with box installation on an Island near Chowilla Station, with Waterhouse Club.

Read Creek Hill, World's End Conservation Group with installation of boxes at Hallelujah Hills and Read Creek, this workshop was supported by WIRES Landcare Wildlife Relief and Recovery Grant.

All of these successful workshop could not have been achieved without the generous volunteer contribution of Don Lester, coordinating all the habitat box making and the volunteers he organised, at his shed, to get all these kits ready for the workshops.

The guest presenter at all these workshops was Professor Steve Donnellan from SA Museum, who was a passionate supporter of this project, and we could not have achieved this without his support.

# Mantung Conservation Park – Workshop August 2019



WESTERN PYGMY POSSUM  
WORKSHOP

## Saturday 24th August

MANTUNG CONSERVATION PARK

TIME: 10AM-2PM  
BBQ LUNCH PROVIDED

RSVP VIA [WWW.MALLEEFUTURES.ORG.AU](http://WWW.MALLEEFUTURES.ORG.AU)

Learn about the elusive and adorable Western Pygmy Possum, create habitat boxes and help increase their population and knowledge of genetics in the mallee region



**Mantung Workshop Group Shot**



## Bowhill Workshop October 2019

We had over twenty people attend and made 50 boxes.

Attendees take the boxes home and then provide us with details on where they have been installed.

Each box has a unique identifier tag on it.



Waterhouse Club September 2020, held the box making workshop at Meldanda, then we headed out to Morundee Wildlife Reserve to install the boxes.





## Installing boxes at Morundee



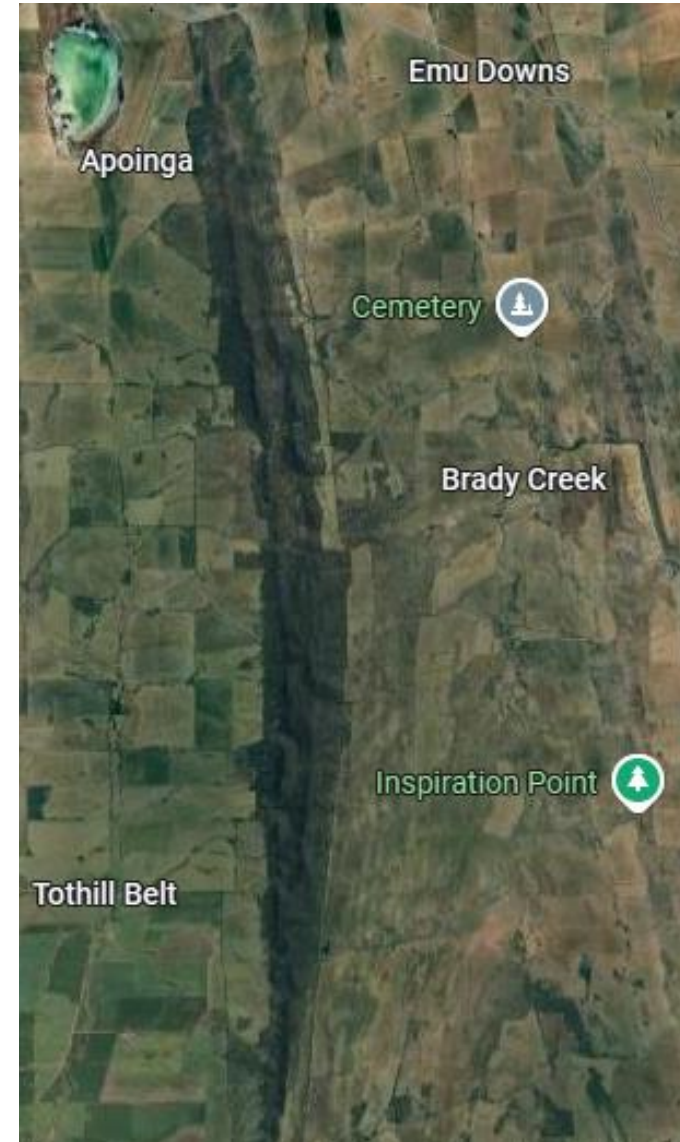




THE WAREHOUSE CLUB



The boxes were installed in two different locations north of Eudunda and south of Burra in the Tothill Ranges, there is vegetation that we thought would be appealing to the possums, like hakeas and banksia, nectar plants.







AH231S



**THE WATERHOUSE CLUB**  
AN ASSOCIATION OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM







