

Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group Inc.

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Newsletter January 2007

Coming VMRG events

October 06 to January 07 - Nest monitoring
January 22 - National Project workshop
February - Committee meeting
March - Newsletter
March - Reporting back meeting

Present Committee

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Unique and Beautiful *by Ross Macfarlane*

November 2000, Lowan grid, Wyperfeld National Park. It's nearing 8 am on a cool clear morning as we track into the bush on an easterly bearing. We tread quietly. An active malleefowl mound lies just over the sandy rise.

Ahead, a big mallee tree is backlit by the morning sun. And as we hoped, so too is the malleefowl. A brief vision of his silhouetted presence is the reason, and the reward, for our cautious approach. He stands erect on the mound, and eyes us for just a few seconds, before silently disappearing into the scrub.

I love my malleefowl work, for many reasons. First is its value as a conservation tool. Put simply, protecting the malleefowl means protecting the mallee too, because it means conserving large areas of contiguous

bushland and with them the other less visible flora and fauna.

The malleefowl is one of those vital iconic species which has become a flagship for the cause of conservation in its environment. Not for being big and scary like an elephant or a tiger, but uniquely, for its stoic ability to survive and thrive in a harsh environment. The malleefowl can be a catalyst for reaching balance between economic and ecological imperatives, because people in the bush identify with this stoicism and feel an obligation to conserve it.

Equally important to me, though, is the pure joy of the malleefowl work. The bush itself. The mini-adrenalin rush when you find an active nest. The social interactions at our training weekend. The sense of common purpose – almost tribal. And I love the idea that my data might be looked at by a scientist in a year, a decade, or a century from now, and it will be “good data”.

Most of all, I love the possibility of a chance encounter, like the one I describe above, with that wonderful, mysterious *Leipoa ocellata*. It is moments like this which clarify for us why we must involve ourselves in conservation causes. Not only to protect unique and beautiful creatures like the malleefowl, and unique and beautiful ecosystems like the mallee, but also for the benefit of our own unique and beautiful humanity. See <http://www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au/image18.html> or take your own photo like this one from Ron Thompson!





Graeme Tonkin, volunteer monitor and equipment organiser, and Sharon Gillam Threatened Fauna Project Officer DEH

VMRG HELPS SA MONITORING

Adapted from an article by Sharon Gillam,

One objective of NHT Malleefowl Project was to

initiate training for volunteers in monitoring malleefowl nests. Workshops were held in late September 2006 at Berri (Riverland) and Lock (Eyre Peninsula), timed to coincide with the beginning of the 2006/07 malleefowl breeding season.

The workshop in Berri, in the heart of the Murraylands where there are 32 monitoring sites scattered throughout the surrounding mallee country, attracted 45 participants. Jodie Gates and Dave Setchell from the Riverlands DEH staff organised and led the workshop. A vast area was represented with people coming from the surrounding district, Gluepot Reserve, Calperum/Taylorville Stations, Innes NP, South East Region, Mantung-Maggea Landcare Group and Gawler Ranges. Local Action Planning groups, interested volunteers and landholders from as far away as Adelaide, Marion Bay, Kingston SE and Padthaway attended.

At the morning 'theory session' Ann Stokie from VMRG spoke about the Multi Regional Project and the National Recovery Plan, and gave an overview on VMRG and how it operates and how they monitor malleefowl sites. Ann ran through the electronic monitoring sequence using Palm Pilots, including photographic examples of each mound profile. Peter Stokie explained the VMRG monitoring kits. Ralph Patford outlined the communications techniques used by VMRG both internally and externally, and introduced the VMRG website and promotional material used by the group.

In the afternoon visit to Cooltong CP to monitor actual mounds the participants were divided into three groups led by VMRG members Ralph Patford, Ron Wiseman and Peter Stokie. They visited three mounds each, learning and practicing Palm monitoring as well as all the intricacies of reading malleefowl mounds.

The workshop in Lock was attended by 30 participants, and was organised and led by Andrew Freeman, NRM Officer based in Port Lincoln, with the assistance of VMRG through Ann & Peter Stokie and Ralph & Wendy Patford. Participants came from DEH and NRM staff from the area as well as regular and new volunteers from Poochera, Cowell, Streaky Bay and the surrounding Lock district. The format followed the Berri workshop, with the inclusion of a South Australian overview from Sharon Gillam and a summary of the malleefowl reintroduction project in Lincoln NP in 2001 by Andrew Freeman, and an excellent BBQ in the evening. A further feature of this workshop was the attendance of a number of local children, who had become excellent monitors by the end of the session in the field.



Gawler Ranges landholder and local Lock child get serious about monitoring

Outcomes include

- a large group of volunteers now familiar with electronic monitoring equipment
- at Berri, new volunteers will monitor Ferries McDonald CP and Innes NP sites
- possibility of establishing new sites once existing sites are organised
- LAP groups interested in monitoring sites
- owners of a Heritage Agreement property near Billiart will monitor their mounds
- all five Lock sites now have designated volunteer monitors
- a new site proposed by Streaky Bay school Science teacher and students
- workshops will become an annual event, and the cooperation between SA and Vic will continue to promote malleefowl conservation across the State borders



Future and present Benshemesh in action

What would you like in the Newsletter?
What have you done?
Send pictures and items to Gil
giliz@netconnect.com.au

Malleefowl Forum and First Western Australian Megapode Symposium

Katanning Leisure Centre and Yongergnow
Australian Malleefowl Research Centre

September 7-10, 2007

Presentations and discussions include - State roundups, analysis of monitoring data, malleefowl biology, mf management and conservation in large areas and in small remnants, captive breeding, research on other megapodes, visit to mf areas, resolutions for future mf recovery.

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on behalf of the Australian Malleefowl Recovery Team.

If you wish to present a poster on the conservation activities or research you or your group have done on Malleefowl or other megapodes please let Stephen know soon so that he can arrange space for it. There is also the opportunity for a limited number of short spoken presentations. If you wish to speak please provide title and abstract by March 31, 2007.

The emphasis of the Forum will be on improving the conservation status of Malleefowl in large and small remnants. The Forum will be an opportunity to bring together people whose interests in Malleefowl are very varied with the intention that discussion involving all the participants will lead to a significant improvement in management.

Katanning is a regional centre in the south-west of Western Australia about 3 hours drive from Perth. A range of accommodation is available and details for Katanning and Perth is available on request.



Mutual support - the foundation of VMRG

Would you like more input into VMRG Committee decisions?
Send ideas to our Secretary or other committee members



There it was, gone!