

Lowan Behold!

Newsletter of

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May 2008

Coming VMRG 2008 events

August 23 -Committee meeting
Early October -Newsletter
October 11, 12 -Training weekend, AGM
October onward -Nest monitoring
November -Newsletter

See www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au

Old name - new name!

The original newsletter of the people who met to form the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group was called "Lowan Behold" – we shouldn't have to explain why!

At its meeting in February the VMRG Committee agreed (with permission of the original newsletter publisher) to use this name for our newsletter.

Newsletter dates *by Gil Hopkins*

At its February meeting the Committee agreed that the newsletter be published 3 times in 2008; in April after the Reporting Back meeting, July to maintain contact, and after the AGM and Training Weekend in October.

But sometimes other events take over! I sincerely apologise for this delayed Newsletter and will work to make sure we have all three newsletters this year, even though they might be a bit late. This is why this newsletter is still called May 2008, though it is now August!

Hopefully there will be another newsletter before the AGM, and then another afterward and including some of the monitoring.

Remember that any information, ideas, articles or photos can be sent to me at giliz@netconnect.com.au



This young Malleefowl attended the National Forum at Katanning and even brought along the shirts and information you can see behind it!



Ann Stokie presenting the Monitoring System at Forum

National Malleefowl Forum 2007

The second National Forum was held at Katanning Leisure Centre, Western Australia, from September 7 to 10, with a trip to Yongergnow Malleefowl Centre and local Malleefowl nest sites on September 11, 2007.

The proceedings have been published as Environmental Biology Bulletin 28 by Curtin University of Technology.

The Forum included updates from each State, description and distribution of the National Monitoring System, discussion of progress in Adaptive Management processes, genetics, captive breeding and survival of young, status of other megapodes including Scrubfowl and Brush Turkey, research through community involvement, and searching and re-searching monitoring sites.

Some information from the proceedings will be presented in the next few newsletters.



Participants in the Forum at Katanning

National Forum resolutions endorsed

- maintaining a National Recovery Team
- the Adaptive Management approach to conservation, together with support from Federal and State agencies
- National monitoring standards and data management, with government support for continued monitoring
- supporting the goals of the National Recovery Plan through employment of a National coordinator
- the development of a National Malleefowl website

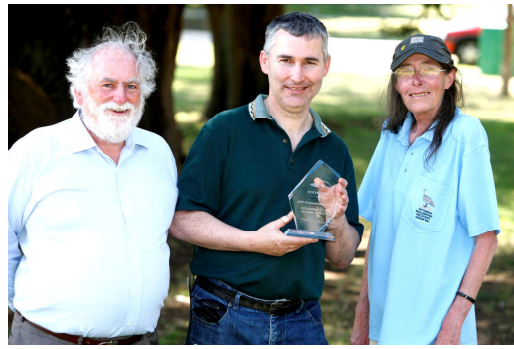
Envirofund Malleefowl 'Neighbourhood Watch'

We have been successful in gaining Federal Government funding for this project and have about a year to finish a trial and set up a long-term program. This project will improve the long-term sustainability of Malleefowl by encouraging all landowners with property close to monitoring sites to participate actively in malleefowl recovery through information leaflets, personal contact, observation days, monitoring programs, property signs and other future activities.

This will mean VMRG members travelling to Malleefowl areas and spending time with neighbouring landholders, and organising workshops and observation days. Predator control, reduction in food competition by grazing animals, and fire are key factors affecting Malleefowl numbers. These factors are often under the direct control or influence of neighbouring landholders, so educating these landholders and involving them in Malleefowl recovery programs through an environmental 'Neighbourhood Watch' is essential to the long-term future of Malleefowl.

This program uses the positive aspects of Landcare and Neighbourhood Watch programs to involve landholders in caring for their local natural wildlife, rather than depending solely on management by agency staff travelling into their area. The program will improve the knowledge and skills of landholders, and increase involvement in natural resource management activities, and so is essential to the long-term sustainability of Malleefowl populations. The program has positive benefits to the landholder, the Malleefowl and their habitat, agency staff, and to future natural resource management programs.

If you are interested in being involved in setting up this program, please contact Gil on 5383 8207 or giliz@netconnect.com.au



Accepting the Award

Kookaburra Environmental Award

Parks Victoria makes annual awards to recognise volunteers and those who have made an outstanding contribution to Victoria's Parks. Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group received this Kookaburra Award for quality environmental work making a sustainable improvement in parks.

Ann and Peter Stokie and Ross Mcfarlane accepted on behalf of VMRG members. At the April VMRG meeting at Rainbow it was decided to house the award at the information centre at Wyperfeld National Park.

Parks Victoria publication 'Parks Discovery' highlighted the Award, and had two pages of information on Malleefowl and the work of VMRG.

BOCA Award

VMRG member Alex Hawtin was recognised with a Distinguished Service Award by the Bird Observer's Club of Australia for his contribution as a founding member of the Sunraysia Club, being president, leading many outings, contribution to surveys, opposing the Nowingi waste facility, and his long involvement with VMRG.

News from your Committee

- VMRG shirts are available from Ralph at \$35
- We are working on a way of recognising outstanding service
- Ron Wiseman will digitise and archive historical material which should be taken to him at the Training weekend
- We need a coordinator of 'winter' activities
- VMRG has submitted to the Panel hearing for Iluka sand-mining proposals near Bronzewing
- Envirofund application was granted
- PV 2007/8 monitoring grant was successful
- Education kit has been distributed to a few schools for trial and feedback
- A submission was made to the Land and Biodiversity Green Paper
- VMRG has received a Gold Pass for entry to Victoria's Parks
- A submission has been made to Birds Australia about maintaining corridors between natural areas and the Murray River, for bird movement

Malleefowl Monitoring 2007/8

adapted from report by Joe Benshemesh

1170 mounds were visited, including 130 new. Monitoring was extremely effective!

80 active mounds were recorded which is one of lowest counts on record (on par with 1994 drought). Declines occurred in most areas

Data generally very high quality, with few changes needed. There were some simple errors

Perhaps we need a competition such as 'who gets the smallest average distance between where you record mounds to be and where we have measured it previously' with the prize being a fine bottle vino! 2007/8 winners were Greg and Tricia Currie!

To improve your score and WIN you need to make sure you have the correct mound and site number, finalise your records while standing at the mound (same spot each season), and check that the GPS has a good signal

Fox scats were collected from 352 mounds weighed a total of 5.1 kg, similar to the total last year

Lerp were recorded at 5% of mounds, with most at Bronzewing (31% mounds) and a big increase in March.

Lerp outbreaks are potentially significant to Malleefowl recruitment so it's very valuable to obtain more data on lerp abundance around march-April

Concluding Comments

Monitoring is going very well indeed, declines are pronounced and reflect low rainfall, and we need to focus on value-adding (e.g. Lerp)

New projects this year are:

- National database
- National Adaptive Management Framework
- Little Desert Malleefowl track survey



A brief rest – photo Alex Hawtin

Coming up – some thoughts from Gil Hopkins

There are a number of important issues and programs coming up, and some of these have been briefly mentioned. We will be discussing some of them at the August committee meeting and making recommendations for the General Meeting at the Training Weekend. More information will be available before the Training Weekend AGM and meeting.

Issues include

- relationship with mineral-sand mining companies, including agreements/responses on clearing and revegetation/enhancement, which will effect our involvement for many years of possible mining
- fire prevention and ecological burning programs and long-term effects on Malleefowl
- recommendations regarding captive breeding and release, especially with respect to burnt nest and habitat areas
- clearing versus vegetation enhancement in agricultural/horticultural areas
- involvement with Government agency strategies and programs, for recovery of Malleefowl populations, including implementation of Adaptive Management principles
- effects of climate change, changing agriculture and changing economics
- planning for our own operation so that work is spread more widely – especially a 'Coordinator of searches and re-searches (winter activities)'

You may have noticed that VMRG is getting bigger and the work and demands are increasing. Government funding appreciates voluntary help, but it means we have to do the work. And if we want to satisfy our aims to **recover Malleefowl population and habitat** there's no choice really!



April Reporting-back meeting in Rainbow

Present VMRG Committee Roles

President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Equipment Officer, Safety Officer, Newsletter Editor, Grants & Fund Raising, Publicity, Education, Membership, Publications, Documents & Archives, Threats (official responses), Liaison with Government Organisations, Liaison with Non-Government Organisations, Future Planning, Excursions & Events, National Recovery Team Representative, Web Page Co-ordinator, Technical Advisors, Public Officer

If you want to see Malleefowl incubation facilities and discuss their release, visit Little Desert Lodge August 16 & 17, and also help with the Hindmarsh Landcare Network Plantout. Book at 5391 1811 now.