

Lowan Behold!

Newsletter of

Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group Inc.
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Newsletter contact giliz@activ8.net.au



February 2012

Coming VMRG 2012 events

- Reporting back meeting, Natimuk
Sat March 17; Excursion Sun March 18
- Training w/e Wyperfeld NP October 13-14
AGM at Wyperfeld weekend
- Monitoring October – January
See www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au
or contact our Secretary Ann Stokie

- Children are now eligible to become members of the VMRG on the nomination of a parent or guardian.
- The VMRG Committee of Management has the authority to co-opt up to two members onto the committee each year until the next AGM.

VMRG Membership - Information about renewals and new memberships by *Ralph Patford, Treasurer*

The VMRG website www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au is full of information on the work of the VMRG. The Constitution, which includes our Aims, can also be accessed.

The VMRG Membership Year runs from November 1 to the following October 31.

The Annual Training Weekend (2nd weekend October at Wyperfeld) provides an opportunity for new members to join and existing members to renew. At other times members wishing to renew or new members should download a membership form from the VMRG website, complete this and forward it with payment to: Treasurer, VMRG, 5 Selma St., Corio. 3214.

If you are unable to download a copy of the membership form from the website, forward your payment and basic details to the above address and I will forward a receipt, together with a membership form for completion and return. New members will also receive a Membership Kit.

The annual fee is currently \$20 for Individuals and \$30 for Household membership.

The preferred method for distribution of 'Lowan Behold', the VMRG Newsletter, is through our website. It is possible that a fee could be charged for those wishing to receive a hardcopy in the mail.

Please note that members who have not renewed by January 1 will receive one reminder notice only.



VMRG executive – from left - Ralph, Bernie, Peter Sandell, Ann, Peter Stokie, Mark, Ross (front) and Bonnie

Photo – Keith Willis

Report from 10th Annual General Meeting

by Peter Stokie

VMRG was constituted as an incorporated body in 2002, and held the first AGM in St Arnaud in that year. It is incredible to believe that ten years have passed since that first meeting.

At the AGM this year the following Executive and Committee were elected:-

President Peter Stokie; *Vice President* Ross Macfarlane; *Secretary* Ann Stokie; *Treasurer* Ralph Patford

Committee members:- Bernie Fox, Bonnie Gelman, Mark Johnston; Neil Macfarlane, Peter Sandell.

The usual reports from the President and Treasurer were presented and adopted by the members. Copies of these reports are available to members and friends of the VMRG through the Secretary.

The outgoing President, Ron Wiseman, was thanked for his contribution to the VMRG as past president and was presented with a gift on behalf of VMRG members. Ron was elected as President in 2005, so held the position for six years.

The AGM accepted three constitutional changes by unanimous vote. As a result of these changes:-

- Organisations are now eligible to become members of the VMRG.



Is this the new motto for VMRG monitoring?
Peter Stokie and friend at Site 36. Photo - Bernie Fox

Some memories from the National Malleefowl Forum, Renmark SA, July 2011

by Gil Hopkins

As the Forum Proceedings has been published, containing all the talks and presentations, the program and resolutions, this is just a snapshot of items.

We started with the usual welcome drinks and lots of nibbles – a chance for people to get together and meet each other, and to check out the displays. You may recognise some of the people!



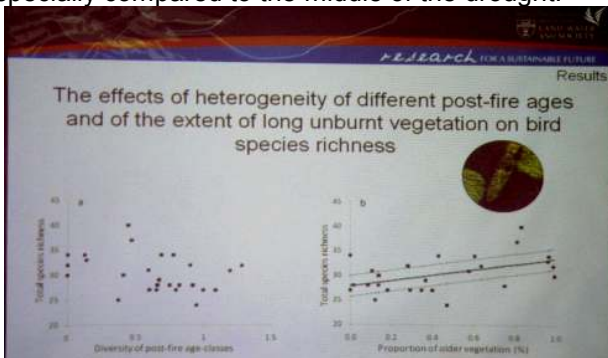
Then we prepared for the official welcome, and followed with more drinks and food!



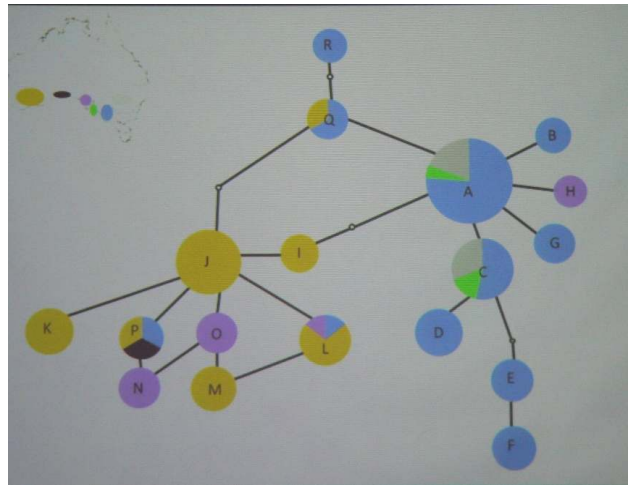
Next day we were straight into a Performance Review, reports and technical talks, all extremely interesting and informative, and setting the scene for the future.

| All Victorian Sites 2007-2011 | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| YEAR | NO OF SITES | NUMBER OF MOUNDS | INCREASE/DECREASE | % ACTIVE MOUNDS VISITED | ACTIVE IN TOTAL SET | ACTIVE OUT OF COMMON SET |
| 2006/07 | 29 | 1043 | | 99.0% | 85 | 5 |
| 2007/08 | 32 | 1170 | +127 | 99.7% | 75 | 5 |
| 2008/09 | 34 | 1169 | -1 | 99.6% | 143 | 8 |
| 2009/10 | 34 | 1164 | -5 | 99.4% | 120 | 11 |
| 2010/11 | 34 | 1213 | +49 | 99.3% | 140 | 10 |

Results from Victorian monitoring show an increase in a number of active nests per site over recent years, especially compared to the middle of the drought.



The left-hand graph shows total number of species present does not directly depend on time since fire, while the right-hand graph shows that bird species gradually increase with time, which was not expected!



Malleefowl genetics so far seems to show that all birds are all closely linked, with some differences between populations.

We need to change how we do things

We need to:

- start managing effectively
- demonstrate that we're spending money wisely
- Learn what works and communicate the answer

But we also need to take actions immediately

Malleefowl might be the place to start

This slide could be about how we live our lives! Or maybe it's about how our political and bureaucratic systems should work! But it's about how Adaptive Management is a process that allows us to manage successfully while causing change, and to see the results. So let's get on with it for Malleefowl, so maybe we can also apply it to global warming before it's all too late for the birds, and for us!



One of the final day excursions was to Chowilla (now all part of managed wetlands) where we looked at the recently flooded wetlands, and where they are building a weir across an anabranch of the Murray to control the flooding and receding flows into the huge wetlands area.



Activities at Wyperfeld training weekend – photo Keith Willis

Fox and wild dog bounty from Bernie Fox!

The government recently announced details of the fox and wild dog bounty in Victoria, starting October 1, 2011. The bounty for foxes is \$10; for wild dogs it's \$50 (only be awarded for wild dog parts collected in designated Wild Dog Control Areas of Victoria). For further details of the fox and wild dog bounty, including requirements, collection locations and times, go to: <http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/pest-animals/fox-wild-dog-bounty/collection-schedules/fox-and-wild-dog-bounty-2011-2015>

Mid Murray Field Naturalists news

from David Thompson dvthommo@hotmail.com

Newsletter of Mid Murray Field Naturalists Inc.

Address, PO Box 1255 Swan Hill Vic 3585

Some Malleefowl Photos

The following photos were taken by Keith Ward at a Malleefowl mound (no 08) in the Wandown Flora and Fauna Reserve shortly after our September Excursion along the Meriden Road. They are excellent photos. If you have ever tried to catch a glimpse of the elusive Malleefowl, *Leipoa ocellata*, in the bush you will know how rare it is to have them perform for the camera like this.



Wedderburn CMN Malleefowl Festival

from Wendy Murphy, Wedderburn CMN Ranger

The iconic Malleefowl was in full flight at Wedderburn on Sunday September 11, 2011, when the Wedderburn community participated in the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (CMN) - inspired Malleefowl Festival, part of the 'Naturally Loddon: A Wonderland In Spring' activities. This was the first Malleefowl Festival.



Children participating in the Malleefowl Boogie, a dance incorporating actions of Malleefowl

The local school children produced a range of high quality artwork including sculptures, paintings, drawings, poetry, masks and a 'Malleefowl Boogie' during school lessons, which were all displayed on the day. Judging of the artwork occurred during the event with fantastic prizes awarded. All students should be proud of their creations.

Activities during the event included arts and craft tables where children and parents attending could show their artistic abilities creating all things Malleefowl. The grand finale to the event was the arrival of Mavis the Malleefowl, a creation of members of the festival committee. The children enjoyed following Mavis along the street as she laid her chocolate eggs.

The event was made possible through a dedicated group of community members and the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and we thank you all.



6ft tall Mavis the Malleefowl loved by the children as she laid her chocolate eggs while walking down the road



Participating in Malleefowl Festival activities



Peter showing searchers an active Malleefowl nest before another line search at Nurcoung – photo Gil

VMRG report on recent grant funding applications by Peter Stokie

The VMRG Committee is constantly on the lookout for funding grants to support our monitoring and searching activities, and more recently our educational role in promoting conservation awareness regarding Malleefowl.

We have been successful in gaining the following grants in recent months, and this report outlines what's involved and our responsibility in implementing the grant action. The VMRG Committee will be responsible for ensuring the grants meet their intended purpose.

Healthy Parks Healthy People Community Grant:

A grant of \$8,421 has been allocated to VMRG for the purpose of Monitoring Malleefowl populations, and related vegetation and predator activity in Victoria.

VMRG Responsibility: This grant supports the continuing annual monitoring program to enable us to conduct the Annual Training Weekend and the collection of data at the 35 monitoring sites we visit every year. This is a Spring/Summer activity for 2012.

Wilderness Society and Dara Foundation WildCountry Small Grants Program for 2011

A grant of \$4,200 has been allocated to VMRG for conservation mapping and monitoring of Malleefowl in Victoria's Western Big Desert. This grant will provide funds to survey all public and closed tracks in the Western Big Desert and Wyperfeld National Park. Detailed data and maps will be produced to determine future monitoring sites where none currently exist, for future conservation management actions.

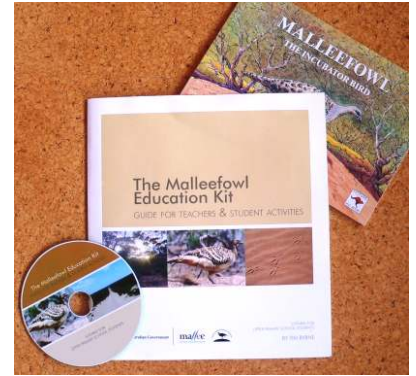
VMRG Responsibility: This project will follow the system of the Little Desert Track search and involve teams of people using 4wd vehicles to drive and walk all tracks in the Western Big Desert and Wyperfeld NP to record all evidence of prints on tracks and record a



comprehensive photographic record of vegetation along every track. This is a 2012 activity.

Malleefowl Education Kit –A Guide for teachers and student activities

A total of \$3,500 has been provided from both Mallee CMA (\$2,000) and the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network (\$1,500) to enable VMRG to reprint 100 copies of this 2008 publication.



VMRG Responsibility: Individual members could approach their local Primary School or the Primary School of your grandchildren (especially the grades 5 & 6 teachers) to enquire whether they would be interested in using the kit in their teaching. If there is a positive response, please pass on the school details to Ralph Patford or Peter Stokie through our Secretary.

Community Volunteer Grant from the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

"The Department is pleased to advise VMRG that" \$4,850 funding has been approved to purchase a Service Trailer under the Community Investment Program.

VMRG Responsibility: The VMRG committee will need to decide the best use of the service trailer, and conditions of use by VMRG members, storage, and insurance and also decide on maintenance arrangements at the next committee meeting.

Malleefowl Management Fund (Iluka offset) Grant

A grant of \$2,000 has been approved to assist the VMRG to upgrade the Webpage.

VMRG Responsibility: The webpage upgrade is currently under construction under the direction of Ralph Patford, and this grant will provide for further improvements.

Back in print! by Bernie Fox

This great field guide to the mallee plant species of South Australia and Victoria is now back in print. The book is advertised on the Mallee Murray Local Action Plan website. The book is for sale for \$22 plus \$3 postage and handling. It's available by contacting Alanna on 08 8531 3075 or email

alanna.morgan@internode.on.net



VMRG Executive members for 2012:

President: Peter Stokie pstokie@iprimus.com.au

Vice President: Ross Macfarlane
rm@rmtheriskmanager.com.au

Treasurer: Ralph Patford r_patford@hotmail.com

Secretary: Ann Stokie annos@iprimus.com.au

Committee members for 2012

Bernie Fox: hayburn@bigpond.com

Bonnie Gelman: lucasassets@iinet.net.au

Mark Johnston: maaikejohnston@bigpond.com

Neil Macfarlane: neilmacfarlane2@bigpond.com.au

Peter Sandell: psandell@bigpond.net.au



Us kids!

Malleefowl Kids - a day of fun and adventure at the 2011 Training Weekend by Maaïke Johnston

Last year at the annual training in Wyperfeld we introduced a children's program to the weekend. With the help of two great Malleefowl education kits that are available, one from the VMRG and one from the Malleefowl Preservation Group in WA, Maaïke was inspired to organise some fun Malleefowl kids activities.

The picture story book, 'Malleefowl the Incubator Bird' was a great inspiration to do some drawings about the Malleefowl and the threats it faces. After some discussion about the life of the Malleefowl, some of the children started to create a board game to play.



The highlight of the activities was practicing the compass and GPS skills. The children first had a chance to follow a small course with the compass in which they got a number as a clue at each point. These numbers were 8, 10, 11. The clue was that those numbers had something to do with the day....(ah yes it was the date!).

To practice with the GPS they had to find a waypoint and learn to enter a waypoint and change its name.

After some practice our Malleefowl Kids had to start the big treasure hunt and as a group had to navigate the GPS to seven different points with clues on them. The clues were letters that formed the word Wyperfeld. The next activity was the compass treasure hunt in which the letters found formed the word 'incubator'.



After some football and playing with the boomerangs, the children listened to the Malleefowl song and learned to do the gestures to the song in preparation for a public performance the next day, but that will be the highlight of this year's training weekend.

It was great to see such motivated and enthused

kids during the activities. The children formed friendships and played together for the rest of the weekend.

We hope to have a Malleefowl Kids activity every year now.



Felix, Rob, Peter and Gary discussing the day's planned sequence of mound visits

Malleefowl monitoring initiations by Rob Lucas

Over three days we looked at 48 mounds in Grid 20 at Wyperfeld National Park in the Mallee. The weather was excellent, we were well prepared and we worked very well as a team. Gary, our mentor on this trip, was very knowledgeable of the area, about the business of Malleefowl mound monitoring and the area's

indigenous plants. We were very proud of the way Peter and our Felix took their measuring and recording jobs at the mounds very seriously.



Peter and Felix checking an inactive mound

VMRG Committee October 2011 Report

by Peter Stokie

The following matters were discussed/decided at the recent Committee Meeting:-

- VMRG has renewed its membership of the Environmental Defenders Office.
- VMRG has received a grant from the Wimmera CMA to conduct an Indigenous Youth Training Program based on Malleefowl Monitoring in 2012.
- VMRG has deregistered as an organisation required to prepare quarterly BAS reports due to new statutory regulations and revised limits required for GST registration.
- VMRG has developed a Roles and Responsibilities Document for the VMRG Executive and Committee to guide the committee through its deliberations.
- The VMRG committee approved an application to the Malleefowl Management Committee Fund (Iluka) entitled 'Community Awareness, Involvement and Education'.
- The VMRG Fire Sub-Committee forwarded detailed submissions to the Mallee, Wimmera and Northern Goldfields 2012-2014 Fire Operations Plans outlining our concerns and requesting further discussions with the various FOP personnel. The Wimmera DSE fire planners have agreed to meet with VMRG to discuss matters raised in our submission. The sub-committee is investigating whether to refer the 'Fire Issue' to the Commonwealth Government through the EPBC Act regulations under the clause of 'fire as a threatening process'.

VMRG members are reminded that Committee Meetings are open meetings and anyone interested in attending a meeting should contact the Secretary prior to a meeting to indicate their attendance.

Monitoring Broken Bucket in January 2012

by Bernie Fox



The active mound in BB Brett Wheaton and his two sons, Angus and Harry, monitored Broken Bucket with me on Sunday afternoon. This was the second consecutive year this particular crew has monitored this site and the first time the Wheatons had seen an active mound. The sighting was greeted with a long "Wow" by all! It was the first 'active' mound at Bucket since 2008 season, after two 'null' seasons.



Angus, Bernie, Brett and Harry with a long 'Wow!'

"Paul Burton, eat your heart out!" by Bernie Fox

Paul monitored Washing Machine grid in remote Sunset Wilderness for many, many years until the demand of having a young family and having moved to manage NSW National Parks placed too heavy a load on him. Bernie and Sue took on the challenge and love it! 2010 saw them record a fantastic five active mounds, a new record possibly reflecting, in part, the fantastic long-term efforts of Rob 'Occa' McNamara, the local Ranger, in baiting across the lower range of Sunset NP. This 2011 season, sees six active mounds!!



Sue Hayman-Fox monitoring an active mound

Discovery at Mali Dunes by Bernie Fox

I was out doing Bunny control at our place on Saturday January 21 on Big Dune and the next dune to its north. I had the pleasure of a Malleefowl (the bigger of the two we have seen over the last few years) approaching "to see what was going on". I observed it from a distance of 5-20m for some 15 minutes or so. It did not approach closer, but kept around the same distance moving quietly through the broombush.

On Sunday I was still heavily into bunny control (a never-ending responsibility) and was working on the other side of Saturday's dune and came across **this!**



Wow!!! Bloody wonderful! Are we rapt? [Rhetorical question!]. We got out our formal Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group monitoring gear and took the appropriate observations and sent them through for incorporation into the National Database.

Thought you would enjoy sharing our discovery!



Sue at 'their own' personal Mf mound!

Do you have any pictures of unusual Malleefowl mounds? Or stories about Malleefowl? Or stories about 'Malleefowl people'? Send them to Gil at giliz@activ8.net.au

Latest news from the VMRG Committee

by Peter Stokie

The VMRG Committee holds four meetings a year, and after each meeting I will provide a summary of decisions and actions to members.

January 2012 Committee meeting decisions and actions

- Roles and responsibilities of VMRG Committee document has been accepted and will be placed on the website for members information
- The Malleefowl Education Kit for Upper Primary Schools has been reprinted with financial support from the Mallee CMA and Wedderburn Conservation Management Network
- Monitoring of all sites was completed by January 12 this year
- One new partial site has been monitored in Toon State Park this year (2 active mounds)
- All monitoring data has been placed on the National Malleefowl Monitoring Database, and is able to be monitored by all VMRG members who have a password
- University of Melbourne has received funding for a long term project 'Adaptive Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Ecosystems'. VMRG is a non-financial partner in this project
- VMRG has funding from the Wilderness Society for a Big Desert Track Search. This will occur in May/June
- VMRG has applied for funding from the DSE Communities for Nature Grants to complete on-ground searches in partially completed sites in the Little Desert (Broughtons), Nurcough FFR, Broken Bucket BR, and Toon State Park. Funds to revisit 12 tracks from the 2009/2011 Little Desert Track Search are included in the application
- The website is being redeveloped

- Wimmera CMA has provided funds for VMRG to conduct monitoring and site search training for Wimmera indigenous participants in 2012
- Funds for a service trailer have been provided by the Commonwealth Government. The Committee is developing policies for the purchase, VMRG use, storage, maintenance, and potential community use for the trailer
- VMRG is working with Greening Australia (Wimmera), Landcare Groups, and Trust for Nature to assess potential corridor enhancements funded through a Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Grant

Some different photos of monitoring at Broughton's by Bernie Fox



Peter Stokie and Clive Crouch in action



Clive's very 'at home' in the bush!

Update on Nurcough FFR by Gil Hopkins

It's been a long-running saga of line-searches at Nurcough, starting years ago one wet Queen's Birthday weekend with VMRG members. Since then we have had varied experiences, but this year was good. Unfortunately there is thick broombush with lots of dead sticks from the drought years, and prickly Hedge Wattle. But more than half has been done now, with new mounds discovered and monitored. And the new monitoring equipment makes searching more accurate.

Nurcough is a very important 'isolated' remnant with lots of activity. This season Liz and I monitored over two days and used a sensor camera at an active mound to get a few hundred photos of the bird in action.