



Annual General Meeting and tour of the Karoonda Nature Park

The 2011 Murray Mallee LAP AGM was held at the Karoonda Hotel with 31 attendees. The meeting was followed by a presentation by Kevin Burdett about his ancestors, Karoonda and the surrounding area, and growing up and living in the 'heart of the Mallee'.

A walking tour of the Karoonda Nature Park was held in the afternoon to inspect the many species of local native flora which were in flower, and to visit the local Pioneer Park.

We now introduce the new MMLAP Committee for 2011/12; Rod Brown (Chairman), Malcolm Johns (Vice Chairman), Rex Spinley (Treasurer / Secretary), Chris Clothier, Adrian Growden, Andrew Hall, Damian Berger, Neville Pfeiffer, Trevor Schiller, Stephanie Evans and Al Walker.

This year we said goodbye to three valuable Committee members; Chris Grant, Lew Westbrook and Leighton Pearce. We wish them all well in the future and thank them all for their valuable contributions to the MMLAP. Alanna Morgan

Digital copies of the MMLAP 2010-2011 Annual Report are available. Contact the MMLAP for your copy, or visit us on our website: www.malleefutures.org.au.

What's Inside

Protection for native *Lawrenca bertea*
Landcare Award Nomination Gary Frahn
Karoonda Nature Park Brochure
Baillayer Operating Instructions
Mallee and Coorong Volunteers
New Record for Malleefowl
Chairperson's Report
Farewell to George

Mallee & Coorong Natural Resources Management Group



Local voices from local communities are guiding how our environment is managed through Natural Resources Management (NRM) Groups. NRM Group Members are all locals from the community who have a passion for caring for the environment.

A key part of the role of the NRM Group is supporting people and communities in the area to deliver good NRM outcomes. It aims to achieve this by building the community's awareness, knowledge, skills and networks relevant to NRM and achieving community connection on local water, animal and plant issues, priorities and actions. The NRM Group also ensures that the local community has access to well planned programs that can deliver improvements to resource condition and contribute to the goals of the Regional and State NRM Plans.

There are currently seven members on the Mallee & Coorong NRM Group with the chair Allan Piggott recently taking on a position on the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board therefore a vacancy will arise. Nominations for group members will be called for later in the year, so if you are interested in Natural Resource Management in your area please consider nominating for this most interesting and rewarding role.

Meetings are held during the day every month usually on the first Wednesday, alternating between the towns within the Mallee and Coorong area. Further information on the Mallee and Coorong NRM Group can be obtained from Helene Norman at the Karoonda Office on 08 8578 1493.

Above photo: Group members, Back from left: Gordon Hancock (Parilla), Steve Murray (Coomandook), Damian Berger (Laxton), Clem Mason (Meningie)
Front: Jenny Roberts (Karoonda), Allan Piggott, Chair (Moorlands), Keith Scobie (Meningie).

Protection for Native Plant *Lawrencia berthae*



Lawrencia berthae is a native plant that has recently been spotted south of Alawoona on the Billiatt Road. Upwards of thirty of the rare plants were found on the roadside by Dan Duval and Michael Thorpe (Adelaide Botanic Gardens).

This plant is easy to misidentify, and any spraying or grading of these plants is to be avoided. The plants occur on the roadside close to the white posts (see photo 4). The approximate location is 8km south of Alawoona through to 12.5km south of Alawoona – please see images and map.

We need to give the plants time to flower and recruit, and it has been proposed that installing road side markers will aid this, and protect them from future roadside maintenance.

Alanna Morgan

Photographs by Dan Duval, Adelaide Botanic Gardens

Location of rare plant roadside population - *Lawrencia berthae*



National Landcare Award Nominee: Gary Frahn



The Murray Mallee LAP would like to congratulate Gary Frahn on his nominations for a National Landcare Award and Sustainable Farming Award, with his nomination for the National Landcare Award coming as a direct result from the years of work he has done with support and funding from the LAP.

Over the years through trial and error, Gary has developed what are essentially almost fool proof revegetation strategies. These have been trialled over 18 years. Gary and Yvette Frahn estimate they have planted approximately 90,000 trees in that period. They are now very close to implementing growing economically sustainable tree varieties, including sandalwood and oil mallee, in an effort to develop greater drought proof potential for the mallee farming district. Gary's vegetation strategies stem from always trying to get the best result, and being clever and innovative in his approach to revegetation, with the planting of up to 19,000 trees per year.

Gary and Yvette are not just planting trees; they are creating brand new habitats for birds and other species. They have created a wildlife corridor on their property, starting from the Noora Evaporation Basin, continuing through to roads linking back to the Murray. These tree corridors now have over 200 species of birds and other wildlife that live there, which they see as a huge bonus. Gary is one of the best revegetation specialists you will come across. The Frahn's love what they do so much they are now venturing into tourism, as a result of the experimentation they have done with different tree varieties. When they bought the farm, the number of trees could almost be counted on one hand. Now they have over 35,000 trees on that farm, and have the most wonderful environment to live and work in. The trees and the natural environment they have created, enhance your wellbeing immeasurably.

The very first year that Gary and Yvette were vegetating, in 2000, they decided to do one side of the main driveway, a two kilometre stretch. They organised for a group of volunteers to come up from the city and some tree planting for a weekend. They had not yet moved into no-till farming, and there were a number of bare paddocks around. The weather for the weekend was so windy, they were trying to dig out fences, and you could barely see out the windows. Yvette loaded up the Ute with the trees, and took the volunteers down to the planting area, and left them to it while she went back to look after their very young children. The volunteers came back two hours later, brown from head to toe, and in dire need of a wash. This was their first group project, and eleven years later, the trees have grown extremely well, and are looking fantastic. They regularly receive and train volunteers and employees from all over Australia, and from around the world.

Gary and Yvette have recently had a carbon assessment done on their farm, and discovered that their carbon worth is now something that they could potentially trade with, as a result of their work. They look at their way of life as an alternative to cropping and stock, and are looking forward to continuing their new tourism venture. Their farm is always open and available for LAP groups and others to come and spend time there and learn about what they have done, and experience the rewards that you can reap with the work of just one farmer and his dedicated support team.

Alanna Morgan with Yvette Frahn

Karoonda Nature Park Brochure

The Friends of Karoonda Nature Park recently produced a brochure for the park through funding from the SAMDBNRM Board Volunteer Grants Program.

The brochures compliment the conservation work done by the Friends Group and will give visitors information about the importance of the park, flora and fauna species that can be found there. It also provides a map that helps visitors to find their way around the nature trail and bush trail.

The finished result has just been printed and distributed, and is a wonderful advertisement for the park. It has come just in time for the Karoonda Centenary Celebrations in October.



Baitlayer Operating Instructions

The MMLAP aims to support groups of landholders working together to ensure effective rabbit control is carried out. Better access to the correct equipment will help to improve rabbit control programs and ultimately lead to a better result.

Landholders are encouraged to work together with neighbours when planning and implementing their pest control activities.

Bait trails will be most effective if these guidelines are followed:

Baiting is most effective when alternative feed is scarce (late summer/autumn) and rabbits are not breeding. During the breeding season, kittens may survive if they are too young to be feeding on the trail but old enough to survive the death of the doe.

Successful baiting programs should kill >95% of the rabbit population.

Trails should be laid around warrens and in the areas where rabbits most often feed.

Laying trails on slopes and hills requires care—it can cause erosion in some soils types. Trails are best laid in a zigzag pattern in steep terrain to minimise erosion.

A trail that has been scratched for the first feed is easy to follow for the rest of the baiting program.

The soil should be turned only enough to scratch the surface—don't plough the ground. A trail that has been scratched too deep will spook the rabbits because they will not have full sight of their predators.

Where vegetation is thick or it is difficult to find the main feeding areas, bait trails should be laid in a grid pattern across the site.

As a general rule, crossing the bait trail should be avoided—it can cause confusion when you try to follow the same trail on subsequent occasions. (If crossing is unavoidable, do it at right angles so that the direction to take is clear when the trail is re-laid or inspected.)

Use good quality, non-contaminated bait material. Make sure you use good, clean oats, as poor quality oats/straw will not attract rabbits.

Use enough feed to bait all the rabbits in the area. (The pre-feed will give an indication of the potential bait take.)

Expect a greater uptake of pre-feed and bait material when vegetation is scarce, dried off or soured.

Do the baiting when the weather is fine, as moisture will affect the feed.

Baitlayer Operating Instructions

Adjusting the Feed Rate

The baitlayer has been fitted so you can adjust the feed rate to deliver the correct rate of oats for either free feeding or poisoning operations. Correct rates can only be assured if oats to be used are clean and free of any chaff or straw.

Applying Free Feed

Three feeds of untreated oats must be laid prior to laying the poison trail.

Trailing should be carried out around and through areas of rabbit activity at a speed of around 10kph and in any case no greater than 15kph.

Allow 3-4 days between free feeds followed by 3 to 4 days prior to trailing the poison.

Cover free feed oats prior to poisoning to ensure only poisoned oats are available to rabbits.

Ensure all trails are in the same furrow.

Applying Poison Trail

This trail should be to one side of the free feed so as to use the action of the disc to cover any untreated oats, leaving only the poisoned oats available to the rabbits.

On completion of trailing, any unused poisoned oats left in the trail must be covered prior to the reintroduction of stock to the paddock. Treated oats left in the hopper after trailing should also be removed and destroyed by burning or burying so the next users program is not compromised.

The MMLAP has several baitlayers available to groups of landholders who work together to implement their rabbit control programs. The Caring for Our Country program provides funding to support these groups to carry out their coordinated rabbit and fox control programs. Please contact us on 85313075 for more information.



A baitlayer ready for the upcoming rabbit season

Mallee and Coorong NRM Volunteer Celebration

The Mallee and Coorong NRM Group of the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board, in partnership with the Lakes Hub Meningie, the Murray Mallee LAP and the Coorong Tatiara LAP, held an event in April to celebrate the contribution that volunteers make to the management of the Mallee and Coorong's precious natural resources.

The celebration was held at the Meningie Sailing Club and brought volunteers together from across the Mallee and Coorong to meet, share experiences, hear about local volunteer projects and go on a bus tour around the Lower Lakes and Coorong. This included a visit to the famous Raukkan church where Clyde Rigney Snr spoke about the area's history and a stop at Camp Coorong where Tom and Ellen Trevorrow spoke to the volunteers and took them through the museum to see the many Ngarrindjeri artifacts.

Allan Piggott, Chair of the Mallee and Coorong NRM Group, who opened the event, said volunteers do so much across the Mallee and Coorong NRM area and the group was pleased to be able to help in celebrating their achievements.

A highlight of the day was hearing from the Chair of the Brown's Well Land Management Group about their work in the Murray Mallee to protect the Nationally Endangered Mallee Fowl. Without the hard work and dedication of these people there would not be much hope for this iconic species of the mallee. Their efforts to control foxes and monitor Mallee Fowl populations are crucial for the species survival.

For more information on NRM volunteering and on other upcoming events and opportunities, contact Miranda Leckie from the SA MDB NRM Board on 08 8532 9100.



NRM volunteers from across the Mallee and Coorong gathered at Meningie for the event celebrating their contribution to NRM in the region.

Murray Mallee breaks new record for Malleefowl



Malleefowl have reached new heights, laying up to 47 eggs over the last breeding season, with activity only recently ceasing in May 2011. What began as a study to detect effects of locust control spraying on Malleefowl, has concluded as an intensive study of breeding activities across 17 mounds in the Murray Mallee region of South Australia. Spraying of insecticides to control locusts occurred in a short burst between late October and early December 2010. Malleefowl eat grasshoppers, to which locusts are related, as well seeds, foliage and other insects (Booth 1985). We wanted to be sure insecticide residue from sprayed locusts or vegetation did not negatively affect Malleefowl.

Four of our studied mounds were within 3 kilometres of sprayed areas. We could not detect any negative changes in the birds nesting outputs after spraying, and this included measurements of egg laying rate, hatching success and mound temperature. Furthermore, we tested Malleefowl scats, feathers and hatched egg membrane for insecticides, but we could not detect any chemical traces. This negative result does not exclusively show insecticides were not present, as they generally have 1 to 2 week half-lives (half of the substance is lost from the environment in 1 to 2 weeks), so may have dissolved before our tests. However, combined with the steady nesting output shown throughout and after the spraying period, results suggest Malleefowl were in this case not affected from aerial spraying. Further investigation is underway for other mounds that may have been close to ground spraying by landholders.

Biosecurity SA did not aerially spray insecticide directly on native scrub blocks containing our studied Malleefowl mounds, and in cases they used a buffer zone of 'Green Guard': a more environmentally-friendly fungus that kills locusts. These precautionary actions may have saved the Malleefowl from any ill effect. In such a productive season, Malleefowl may have had sufficient food resources to keep within the scrub blocks and not feed in the adjacent cropping fields.

Speaking of a productive season, the Murray Mallee Malleefowl have produced record clutch sizes. Birds at four mounds in the Mantung-Maggea area and at one mound near Peabinga laid over 40 eggs, with a top of 47. Two further mounds near Copeville and Murray-Bridge contained over 30 eggs during the season. The record clutch sizes are surely due to the lengthy breeding season – Malleefowl were still laying new eggs in April.

Average hatching success for all mounds was 58% - that's around 15 chicks successfully hatched per mound! However, large variation in hatching success occurred between mounds – from 4% to 88%. For those with low hatching success, we need to investigate possible causes to ensure Malleefowl can successfully reproduce and survive in the long term. The upcoming National Malleefowl Forum in Renmark 29th July – 1st August will be a good place to discuss potential causes and implement management strategies. Look out for our presentation at the Forum, and future reports on this study.

We would like to recognise the enormous assistance of volunteers, Mallee Eco-Services and DENR staff in undertaking the fieldwork. Furthermore, Joe Benshemesh and Taneal Gulliver provided excellent guidance, training and field assistance, for which we are grateful.

Booth, D.T. (1985) Crop and Gizzard Contents of Two Malleefowl, *Emu* 86, pg 51–53.

Ellen Ryan-Colton (DENR)

Chairperson's Report – Rod Brown

Following a Chairs` meeting at Swan Reach on June 21st there has been extensive communication between LAP Chairs as to the best way forward to address concerns about the long term future and role of LAPS.

Immediate concerns of MMLAP have been the reduction of our staff (Implementation Officer) and the Catch 22 of the less funds you have to achieve aims/projects, the fewer outcomes achieved, which in turn must affect the allocation of funding down the track. Having to use LAP funds to achieve this year's projects can only be a "stop gap", short term solution to achieve outcomes. Post 2012, in the current financial climate, will be the greatest challenge.

MMLAP has an outstanding record of success over the last decade and during 2010-2011 in particular.

Our Project Officer's Report outlines the many achievements of the past year in areas such as biodiversity, revegetation and vegetation enhancement (e.g. Subsidised fencing), earthworks to stabilize dunes and blowouts, pasture improvement, species trials (e.g. Oil Seed), and capacity building (community awareness) workshops, field trips, school programs and so on.

MMLAP over the past year has supported and encouraged landholders and community organizations to undertake and achieve a high level of "good things" in terms of awareness, on ground works subsidies to improve sustainability, farm profitability and environmental conservation projects. Add to these a highly informative and widely accepted quarterly "Mallee Update" that reaches a wide audience and you can appreciate that MMLAP is a very effective community based organization that endeavours to meet the needs of the Murray Mallee community.

Needless to say continued community interest and involvement are essential to MMLAP being in a position to continue to offer a wide range of services.

In closing I would like to thank the following:

Our highly efficient staff:

- Rowena as Project Officer who, as always, has worked tirelessly and beyond the call of duty, to ensure that the vision of MMLAP is achieved. A very big Thank You Rowena.
- Alanna Morgan as Administrative Officer. Thank you for your efficiency and for adapting to the job so quickly and well.

Our committed Executive: Secretary Rex Spinley as Treasurer and Chris Grant as Secretary. Your expertise and wisdom have been much appreciated and have contributed to the effectiveness and smooth running of our LAP. Thank you.

Thank you to MMLAP Committee. We are fortunate indeed to have such enthusiastic and committed members. Thank you for sharing your time and talents and for being such effective "eyes and ears".

Thank you to George King for his work as Implementation Officer. Unfortunately we were not able to renew George's contract for 2011-2012 due to the lack of finance to sustain the position.

Thank you for your attendance at our AGM. Your interest and support are an encouragement to our LAP.
Rod Brown

Farewell to George

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to George King. George contributed to the implementation of our on ground works programs from 2009-2011 and he will be missed.

We wish him all the best for the future.



Committee Membership

Rod Brown (Chairperson/ Public Officer)
Lameroo ph: 8577 4033

Damian Berger (Vice Chairperson)
Karoonda ph: 8578 6066

Chris Grant, (Secretary)
Berri ph: 8595 2174

Rex Spinley (Treasurer)
Para Hills ph: 8265 0522

Neville Pfeiffer
Parrakie ph: 8576 2051

Andrew Hall
Wunkar ph: 8589 7029

Trevor Schiller
Waikerie ph: 8541 9096

Malcolm Johns
Karoonda ph: 8589 7053

Adrian Growden
Karoonda ph: 8578 1057

Lew Westbrook
Loxton ph: 8584 7811

Leighton Pearce, SA MDB NRM Board
ph: 8582 4477

Chris Clothier
Kalyan ph: 8578 5020

Al Walker
Lameroo

Supported by:

- South Australian Murray Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board
- State Government of South Australia



Barbara Martin
0437 914 066

SAVE PAPER AND HELP SPREAD OUR DOLLARS FURTHER

Do you really need a hard copy of the Mallee Update?

GET A FULL COLOUR VERSION AT A FRACTION OF THE COST BY EMAIL
all it takes is an email or a phone call to give us your details

Please contact us on ph: (08) 8531 2066 or email: mmlap@internode.on.net

Thank you

Murray Mallee Local Action Planning Association Inc.
Murray Bridge Natural Resources Centre, Mannum Road
PO Box 2056, Murray Bridge SA 5253
ph: (08) 8531 2066 fax: (08) 8532 5300
email: mmlap@internode.on.net
<http://www.malleefutures.org.au>