



around THE MOUNDS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL MALLEEFOWL RECOVERY TEAM AUTUMN 2013 EDITION THREE

THE NATIONAL MALLEEFOWL RECOVERY TEAM

BY SHARON GILLAM, CHAIRPERSON



The 2012 breeding season for Malleefowl is now over, with great effort and enthusiasm shown by volunteers and staff across the states. Whilst Victoria has seen extraordinary breeding success, South Australia has also seen an increase, albeit not as prolific. We saw a rise from 9% in 2011 to 11% in 2012, of all mounds monitored as active. Results of the monitoring are detailed within this third edition of the national Malleefowl newsletter. Thank you to all who participated in the monitoring this season.

Earlier this year we experienced the loss of one of the great campaigners of Malleefowl conservation, with the passing of Ann Stokie on 17th February. Ann was Secretary of the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group for 10 years and was made the first Life Member just recently, for her "exceptional sustained service". Ann's contribution to Malleefowl conservation, together with her husband Peter, has been outstanding, and her enthusiasm and passion will

be missed, but not forgotten. When I began working on Malleefowl recovery 8 years ago, Ann and Peter were mentors to me, and were always more than happy to give their advice and support. Ann not only showed total determination and dedication to the cause of Malleefowl, but was also a great advocate for volunteers. Her legacy will continue to influence Malleefowl recovery at all levels, and for that we can all be grateful. Our thoughts go to Peter and family

I am delighted to report that the Recovery Team has appointed a National Malleefowl Program Coordinator, with this new position taken on by Tim Burnard. Tim comes to the Team with experience in threatened species' recovery, namely Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, along with a host of other project management skills. Tim will be working on implementing National Malleefowl Recovery Plan objectives; assisting with the Adaptive Management Project; and assisting with the National Monitoring Program. The position is part time, initially for a period of three years. This is a very exciting development for Malleefowl conservation, and we look forwards to bringing you updates on things as they progress. A very big welcome to Tim.

Once again there have been a few changes in Recovery Team membership over the last 6 months. Peter Sandell, Chairperson of the Team for 7 years and member before that, has retired from Parks Victoria, and hence from the Recovery Team. Peter has shown outstanding

commitment to Malleefowl recovery and in leading the Recovery Team throughout his service. His knowledge and expertise are greatly appreciated, and will also be greatly missed. We look forward to maintaining links with Peter through the VMRG, and wish him all the best in 'retirement'. Both of Peter's roles have been filled by Kathryn Schneider, and we welcome Kathryn to the Recovery Team.

Marcia Reiderer, Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) in Mildura is taking on a new position as Mallee & Murray Goulburn Strategic Partnerships Facilitator. Many thanks to Marcia for her time and input into the Team. Marcia's role will be filled by Victor Hurley, who has a range of threatened species experience. Welcome to Victor.

Another Victorian member, Karen Nalder, has left the Recovery Team. Thanks and best wishes to Karen. She is replaced by Elizabeth Gosling, Land and Biodiversity Project Officer, Mallee CMA. Welcome to Elizabeth.

Chris Hedger, Threatened Mallee Birds and Fire Ecologist for the Murraylands DEWNR, SA is leaving the Team for 10 months and Luke Ireland, based in Berri in the Riverland, will be stepping in to fill Chris's role for this period.

In this edition you'll find an update on the Adaptive Management Project; fascinating profiles on Recovery Team members; a new segment on historic articles; updates on recovery activities around the states; information on the Yongergnow Malleefowl Centre in WA, plus more.

I hope you enjoy the read.

'ICONIC SPECIES' PROGRAM UPDATE, NSW

BY MARC IRVIN

Aerial Survey

Since our article in AtM Spring 2012 edition the Malleefowl Icon Species program has progressed well. An aerial survey in the Nymagee region of central NSW in August 2012 identified more than 20 new mounds and several others have been reported by landholders in the area. These mounds are currently being ground-truthed by OEH in partnership with the Western CMA. There is potential for these properties to receive assistance from the OEH and the CMA to control goats, foxes and pigs as part of Malleefowl conservation in the region.

Mound Dig

In Goonoo State Conservation Area a project to regularly excavate mounds to gain knowledge of laying and hatching success, egg viability, and predator relationships on the mound began in October 2012. Despite searching at all known 26 mound locations in the Park only two mounds were being prepared for the 2012/13 season. In the end only one mound was continually worked by the birds and had eggs laid in it. Six eggs were laid in this mound over the season with four hatching and two not hatching. Despite large goannas digging deep into the mound no eggs were lost to predation.

Camera Traps

In late December 2012 three remote cameras were installed on mounds in the south west of NSW; two in Mallee Cliffs NP and one at Tarawi Nature Reserve. The cameras at Mallee Cliffs NP are looking at mound visitation by feral animals and the Tarawi camera is mounted directly over the mound looking at the egg chamber (this mound is also not active at present). Photo data from Mallee Cliffs NP has been downloaded but has not yet been analysed.

In November 2012 two cameras were set up on mounds in Yathong NR as a pilot study which may be expanded to more mounds for the 2013/14 season. The photos have not been fully analysed but there were no foxes seen; hopefully indicating success of the baiting program there. Cats, goannas, goats, and kangaroos were also captured at the mound on the photos. On one of the cameras at Yathong NR we were lucky enough to capture a chick coming out of the mound. The camera images show the mound had not been worked by the parent birds



MALLEEFOWL CHICK FUMBLING ITS WAY OUT AND OFF A MOUND AT YATHONG NR IN CENTRAL NSW.

for nine days previously. During this nine day period goats and goanna had also been captured on the camera. The adult Malleefowl did not return to the mound after the December 9, 2012. This is only one of three camera triggering events where we have seen chicks captured at the mound; even though we have had cameras on seven different mounds over the last few years. The camera traps are providing some very interesting and useful information but we don't yet consider this a reliable measure of hatching success.

M44 Ejectors

The M44 Ejector was first developed in the United States in the late 1930s to control coyotes. It is a spring loaded device that propels a dose of 1080 poison into the mouth of a wild dog or fox as it tries to pull on a bait head pinned to the ground.

More than 200 M44 ejectors and associated tools and baiting accessories were provided for use at Mallee Cliffs NP and Tarawi NR. Training for staff will occur next month and ejectors will be in place soon after. A monitoring program for the M44 ejector deployment at Tarawi NR will also be undertaken to help determine bait preferences, visitation by non-target species, and to assess interest vs action by target species. This monitoring is intended to identify efficiencies and help refine the M44 program.

For further information please contact Marc Irvin (02 6883 5348) or Peter Ewin (03 5021 8915).

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Submissions for Edition Four of
Around the Mounds close on
Friday 13/9/13.

For editing, articles are best sent by email as attached documents with photos also as attachments.

This Newsletter is available in colour at <http://database.malleefowlvictoria.org.au/Start.aspx> or from the website.

If you want to update your monitoring skills, MPG workshop is August 31-September 1, and VMRG 2013 Training Weekend is October 11-12 at Wyperfeld National Park.
For MPG contact sdennings@bigpond.com
For VMRG, Secretary Ross Macfarlane
0417 370 371 or secretary@malleefowlvictoria.org.au

Important websites for news, information and photos include
www.malleefowlvictoria.org.au
www.malleefowl.com.au
www.malleefowl.net.au

THE MOUNDS OF (MT) HOPE!

BY MICHELLE HINES AND MILTON LEWIS, LACHLAN CMA, NSW

Patches of Mallee located in the west of the Lachlan River Catchment NSW have proven that 'the more you look the more you find!' The Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has been working with land managers in the Mt Hope region to protect Malleefowl and their habitat since 2009 through the Australian Governments Caring for our Country program. More recently the Invasive Animals CRC has also partnered in the project through the Australian Governments Biodiversity fund. Ascertaining a baseline for the Malleefowl in this region seems to have shifted from the initial 'maybe there are still some birds out there' to currently 'more nests than anyone thought would be found'.

Using the 'there are many ways to skin a cat' principle, discovering and monitoring these beautiful birds has encompassed a range of field activities. Starting at the top (literally!), aerial survey transects from a helicopter have been conducted annually during the start of the breeding season both to discover mounds and to check known mounds for activity. Utilising this method, an area of over 100,000ha has been surveyed revealing a total of 114 mounds which have now been GPS located and photographed. Immediately swapping the flight suit for the walking shoes, the project team then visited each of the mounds identified from the air as active or possibly active to ground-truth activity. In the last breeding season in 2012, 55 mounds were found to be active. As these known mounds are mapped, the project is finding that birds tend to occur in certain types of Mallee, thus improving the ability to prioritise future survey work.



MALLEEFOWL MOUND SEEN FROM AERIAL SURVEY
PHOTO: M. HINES

More recently camera trapping has revealed insights not only about the birds themselves, but also about mound visitation by what is becoming evident from the data, to be a vast range of creatures. While tracks and scats at mounds reveal what has been visiting

mounds, camera traps enrich the data with information on visit times and number of individuals. The camera traps have already validated the 'hunch' that feral goats do visit mounds, potentially threatening the actual nest mound site. Cameras have also been useful in reassuring the 'that looks like a deer track' observations. Cameras have been placed at 22 active mounds on three privately owned properties.



HCO ScoutGuard 08.06.2012 14:57:44

The project is already working with private land managers to improve the quality of the Mallee by actively removing feral goats from the landscape. Fencing and one-way gates to direct goat movement away from Malleefowl areas have been installed by land managers as well as 56 trap yards, summing to a potential area of control influence in excess of 290,432 ha. Additional work will shortly commence with land managers on feral pig and some fox control through the Invasive Animals CRC. This feral control work will also use camera traps as well as the standard bait-take methods to monitor the impact of the control activities.

The more monitoring data the project collects to track progress and answer more questions, quite naturally more and more observations and questions arise and on-ground activities adapt, refine and change. However one thing is certain, that if the project work continues on these properties there are mounds of (Mt) Hope for these!

MALLEEFOWL DISPLAY CAUGHT ON CAMERA



MORE NSW NEWS

BY PETER EWIN AND
MELANIE BANNERMAN

Malleefowl surveys were conducted at Mallee Cliffs NP in October 2012. There were only 4 active mounds (out of 25) compared with 10 active in 2010 and 2011.

The first set of mound data for the Goonoo reserves (National Park and State Conservation Area) near Dubbo was entered into the National Database. This is the first set of data for NSW, and although it is from 2009, hopefully it's not the last. Thanks to Joe Benshemesh for making it possible.

Fox baiting continues on a monthly basis throughout the Goonoo reserves, with over 350 baits laid every month.

The NSW Government has introduced a Supplementary Pest Control program where hunters licensed through the Game Council will be allowed to hunt for feral species within NSW National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Conservation Areas. Initially 77 reserves have been selected including a number with Malleefowl habitat such as Mallee Cliffs NP, Yathong NR and the Goonoo reserves and adjacent Coolbaggie Nature Reserve (which contains historic Malleefowl records) for the program to begin sometime this year. It is likely that most of the area within these reserves will be zoned for unsupervised hunting, with the possibility of closing areas around active Malleefowl mounds for 6 months from October to March. NPWS is undertaking assessments to ensure that impacts on staff, park users and biodiversity (including Malleefowl) are as low as possible. Additional points under the program include: Children aged 12 years and older are permitted to hunt; and Black powder guns and bows & arrows are also permitted to be used.

Further details are available at the following website

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestweeds/spc.htm>

MALLEEFOWL ON THE OUYEN-PATCHEWOLLOCK ROAD, VIC AND A PERSPECTIVE ON THREATS

BY JOE BENSHEMES



PHOTO: ROSS MACFARLANE (FACEBOOK)

Malleefowl and the dozens of Malleefowl lining up on roads - what does it mean? Have they been driven out of the scrub by predators, fire or starvation? Are they so desperate that they have lost their fear of people and are gathering en masse?

The extraordinary gathering of Malleefowl along a stretch of road between Patchewollock and Ouyen has created enormous interest amongst locals, tourists and nature lovers across Australia, especially following the circulation of a photo showing no less than 22 Malleefowl scattered along the road verge in one photo (this must be a world record!).

In response, Alan Horne of Ouyen organised locals to map the locations of Malleefowl each night for a week along the stretch of road (typically 50-80 over 12km), and handmade signs were immediately placed on the road to warn motorists to slow down.



PHOTO: JOE BENSHEMES

At Patchewollock, counts were recorded by Wally at the pub (88 was the highest) and, urged by VMRG, the Mildura Rural City Council swung into action producing and erecting large warning signs. Meanwhile photos bounced around the internet, appeared in newspapers, were discussed on radio and deliberated by the recovery team in urgent emails.

By all accounts locals and tourists displayed great respect for the birds and traffic was generally slow in the evenings and morning when Malleefowl were on the road. But it was inevitable that there were some casualties and it is thought that somewhere between 5-10 Malleefowl were killed by traffic. Like kangaroos and other wildlife, Malleefowl don't have much road sense and sometimes flee into a vehicles path rather than away.

We now know that the birds were attracted to the stretch of road by canola that was spilt when carted to Ouyen. Substantial quantities of canola have been noted on the side of the road by VMRG observers in January, February and March, suggesting that canola continues to be spilt and is probably still being carted. It has been a great year for canola in the area and the seed is so fine it is difficult to contain in trucks; even though trucks are covered, canola will flow like water through small holes, door jambs and hinges. Malleefowl have been observed feeding on the canola, and the only road-killed bird autopsied so far by DSE had its crop full of canola and little else.

Thanks to the monitoring, we also know that Malleefowl are currently unusually abundant following several years of good rainfall. However, the past few months have been very dry, and this means that the canola along the road would a vital and irresistible find for local birds. Although the numbers of Malleefowl along the road is remarkable, it is not inconsistent with what we know about Malleefowl numbers in similar areas nearby, and may simply represent all the breeding birds within one kilometre of the road coming out each evening for a snack before bed. The 12km stretch of road in question passes through Mallee burnt 28 years ago that is only now coming into its prime for Malleefowl.

Road deaths are a major concern, being tragically wasteful and unnecessary, and undeniably we need to mitigate this threat. Even so, we need to put this risk into perspective. Even if all the birds sighted along this stretch road were killed, this would arguably be equivalent to removing all the birds in one thousand hectares of similar habitat. Yet DSE/PV have been told by the Victorian government that they must burn many tens of thousands of hectares each year to

meet an arbitrary 5% state-wide target despite the fact this is damaging to ecology, expensive, and completely unnecessary in remote areas in terms of public safety or asset management.

Imagine a few Malleefowl standing in the middle of the road oblivious to the fact that cars and trucks are racing toward them; it's only a matter of time before some will be killed. It's easy to understand the danger they are in and to lament the tragic, wasteful situation when they are found killed.

Now consider thousands of Malleefowl on public land, oblivious to the fact that a planned fire is about to burn them out. It's only a matter of time before they will be killed or displaced with nowhere to go because the current policy in effect demands that *all* of their habitat will be burnt over the next decade or two. This is actually happening in Victoria and is creating a tragic, wasteful and unnecessary situation for Malleefowl. If fully implemented the annual 5% burning policy represents the greatest threat to Malleefowl conservation since the clearing of the Mallee.

Even worse, Malleefowl are not alone in requiring mature Mallee and being disadvantaged by too frequent burning, as researchers at La Trobe and Deakin Universities have clearly shown over the past few years.

So there you have it. As shocking as it is to think of Malleefowl being killed on roads because of spilt grain, a more disturbing spectre of unnecessary wanton habitat damage is actually being played out currently on public land in Victoria.

Extraordinary as it seems, Malleefowl taking potentially lethal chances on the Patchewollock to Ouyen Rd are threatened even more in the long term by the current government policy than by the traffic.



EVENING FEED OF CANOLA!
PHOTO FROM ROSS MACFARLANE (FACEBOOK)

GATHERING KNOWLEDGE FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

BY CINDY HAUSER, RESEARCH FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

In the Spring 2012 edition of *Around The Mounds*, my colleague Michael Bode introduced the concepts of adaptive management. This approach melds the best of research and management. First, it reveals sensible management strategies that we can go ahead with in spite of current uncertainties. Second, it carries a plan for further data collection, research and learning so that management can be adapted as new findings arise. In accordance with the objectives of the National Malleefowl Recovery Plan, our research team aims to develop an Adaptive Management Plan for Malleefowl over the coming years.

We have begun by collating current knowledge of Malleefowl and their management. We convened a workshop at the University of Melbourne, where we gathered Malleefowl and arid zone experts from universities, government agencies and monitoring groups. Participants contributed to a structured elicitation process (like brainstorming, but more focused and directed) to help frame the adaptive management problem. The main components are:

1. Objectives: The fundamental objective is to ensure the long-term persistence of a self-sustaining population. Our progress towards this aim must be tracked via more tangible objectives, and we focused on adult Malleefowl abundance, juvenile Malleefowl abundance, Malleefowl dispersal, and Malleefowl occupancy (i.e. are Malleefowl present at a given location and why/why not?).

2. Threats and drivers: Major threats and drivers were thought to be grazing, fire, rainfall and predation, although many other issues were also discussed and recorded. These processes typically impacted Malleefowl via habitat structure, food, adult fitness and survival of adults, juveniles, chicks, eggs and mounds.

3. Cause-and-effect models: Threats and drivers were linked to Malleefowl outcomes in cause-and-effect models. These flow charts rapidly became highly complex with many ecological processes and linking arrows involved, reflecting the inevitable complexity of ecosystems.

4. Actions: Potential avenues for mitigating threats to Malleefowl were identified and connected to ecological processes. Approaches included reducing grazing pressure, controlling other species (such as rabbits, goats, dingos, pigs, foxes and cats), fire



WORKSHOP EXPERTS, STILL STOICALLY SMILING AFTER TWO DAYS!

management, influencing land use change and protection, translocation, revegetation, supplementary feeding and road signs.

5. Existing knowledge and data: We compiled an extensive list of resources for understanding Malleefowl population dynamics and their interactions with their environment. These included university research, government reports and suggested contacts for past studies.

By splitting participants into groups, we were able to obtain three independent conceptions of the ecosystem and debate their merits. This debate highlights what is agreed upon and what we still don't know about population dynamics. We intend to carry that uncertainty through our research, so that we can recommend management strategies that are robust to what we don't know.

Such expert workshops are intense and draining for everyone involved. Luckily for us, our group of experts had as much enthusiasm and stamina for the project as they did knowledge and data. The University research team is enormously grateful for their time. We recorded workshop findings in a report available on request (email chauser@unimelb.edu.au).

Since the workshop was held, we've had the opportunity to briefly report our findings to the Iluka Malleefowl Management Committee, the National Malleefowl Recovery Team and at the VMRG Reporting Back Weekend. We've received more valuable feedback at these forums, much of it reinforcing the concepts presented. All comments are being recorded as part of the project and we welcome input from everyone interested in Malleefowl conservation and management.

RESEARCHER BRENDAN WINTLE GETTING INFORMATION FROM THE PARTICIPANTS
INSET IS PART OF THE WHITEBOARD SHOWING THE RESULTS - A CAUSE-AND-EFFECT MODEL
PHOTOS: CINDY HAUSER



THE NATIONAL MALLEEFOWL MONITORING DATABASE (NMMD)

BY JOE BENSHEMESH

The National Malleefowl Monitoring Database (NMMD) has greatly improved almost every aspect of the national Malleefowl monitoring program, each year handling data from over 100 sites and over 3000 mounds across southern Australia. The data are collected by hundreds of volunteers who are organised by state and regional coordinators who prepare and send out equipment, and upload the data onto the NMMD once the equipment is returned. The data is then scrutinised and if necessary corrected by the 'ecologists' in each state before being reported on at the end of the season.

The coordinators and ecologists have an essential and pivotal role in organising and processing the monitoring data. For the most part, these data handlers are volunteers too, and most monitor as well. To maintain national standards and consistency in the monitoring across the continent, and to discuss improvements of the NMMD we try to hold a meeting of datahandlers from all states each year. For the past couple of years these meetings have been funded by the Iluka Malleefowl Management Fund. Meetings involve technical discussions and problem solving, but there are a couple of

issues that should be of general interest:

Cooperative data handling. the data handlers from each state/group would still mostly manage their own state's data, but we can help each other process data once it is on the NMMD. If datahandlers are busy when data is uploaded in their home state, the data could be processed by another datahandler elsewhere. This would make better use of volunteer's time and speed data handling processes.

Cybertracker on Android. Graeme Tonkin and I have been playing with Cybertracker on relatively cheap smartphones. Android smartphones are a small fraction of the cost of the devices we currently use (Mobilemappers and Nomads) and have many other benefits (small, powerful, larger screens, great photos, text and phone calls) as well as GPS and other location services. Although still under development, we have been generally impressed but there are still a few software issues that would need to be resolved and also concerns about battery life and screen performance in sunlight.

Our focus is essentially technical, and mostly involves behind-the-scenes improvements that will make the handling and reporting of data easier for volunteers to accomplish. We then

approach Margaret and Richard Alcorn, the skillful builders of NMMD, with our wish list.

We are always keen to learn what people involved in the monitoring think of the NMMD and what improvements they would like to see. If you have not already had a look at the NMMD, you should! There is an enormous amount of information that you can access, including trends in Malleefowl and other animals at monitoring sites, maps and mound photos. Most importantly, you can also inspect the data that you have collected and add comments for the data handlers to act on, to correct typos or other mistakes or to add new information. As datahandlers, our challenge is to get the data you collect up onto the database where you can inspect it as quickly as possible so that the information is still fresh in your mind when you do look over it.

The database can be found at <http://database.victoria.org.au> where you will see a table showing progress in processing the current season's data, a short video of Malleefowl, and links to Around the Mounds issues. You will need to obtain a password from your local coordinator to go further and see the goodies inside.

VMRG REMOTE CAMERA MONITORING PROJECT

BY JOE BENSHEMESH

Monitoring Malleefowl is a huge step in the right direction for learning how to manage the species, but it's not enough to understand their conservation needs. To make sense of our monitoring data and understand trends in Malleefowl populations, we also need to know what other species are doing, and to determine when it is that young Malleefowl are most likely to survive and flourish. These are difficult questions to address, especially for multiple species, but they might be answered by using remote motion-sensitive cameras to obtain information on the abundance of a range of species simultaneously. The cameras might provide information to help us interpret trends and understand how best to manage Malleefowl populations.

Last November, VMRG successfully obtained funding from the Iluka Malleefowl Conservation Committee to purchase 25 remote cameras for a feasibility study on their effectiveness

in obtaining information on: recruitment of young Malleefowl from hatching to when they breed (when they are monitored by checking mounds), and the abundance of other animals (foxes, cats, goats, kangaroos, pigs, etc.) that might influence Malleefowl abundance. If our project is successful, a camera trap program may become part of monitoring at sites throughout Australia.

Our cameras will be scattered through the monitoring sites so they will give us an unbiased estimate of each species abundance (and Malleefowl age-class) in the habitats.

To minimise the number of visits needed to each camera, we will use a system that can be visited once a year when we do the routine monitoring, using a camera and large external battery charged by a solar panel. Thousands of photos can be stored on a memory card, and it only takes a few seconds to replace a full card with an empty one.

The big question is how much effort will be required to inspect the photos and obtain the data, especially for several thousand images per camera and multiple cameras per site! On the positive side the photos will all be of the same scene and scanning through them may be very quick and easy. In any case, we may just sample the photos rather than check them all. Too much data is not nearly as problematic as not enough!

The camera trap project has great relevance to the Adaptive Management (AM) project currently underway, providing information on both predator/competitor abundance and Malleefowl age classes, which are critical issues for modelling the effectiveness of management actions. As the AM project is only funded for three years, assessing the camera traps for filling data gaps is of immediate concern. We expect to have some answers by the end of this year!

ANN STOKIE, *MALLEEFOWL SUPPORTER*

9 FEBRUARY 1947 - 17 FEBRUARY 2013

Edited from information compiled by the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group from contributions by Peter Stokie, Ross Macfarlane, Peter Schmidt and Bernie Fox.



ANN IN ACTION! PHOTO: BERNIE FOX

Ann Stokie, the much loved and esteemed past Secretary and Life Member of the Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group, died on 17 February 2013. She had been unwell for some time and receiving medical treatment since December. Whilst her physical strength waned, her mind and her spirit never did.

Ann was born in Colac, Victoria and spent her childhood there. With the nurturing of her mother and grandmother, Ann developed into a devouring reader and through that, adopted a love of the language and its effective use. Her grandfather fostered a love of the earth which also helped shape her later life.

Ann had an outstanding school career, excelled at swimming and played good hockey into her thirties.

Ann was a superb teacher in both the formal school system and in the

wider community and took on huge teaching loads and production of school musicals. It is this commitment students see, value and never forget.

She worked across both the secondary and primary systems achieving wonderful results in both, and excelled in that most difficult role of Deputy Principal.

Ann showed great clarity of intellect, and a deep and thorough knowledge of her subject. She always showed genuine respect for others. Even in the darkest times, she was able to seize upon the positives and drive all to a better place. She was a skilful negotiator seeking out the win-win situation.

Ann's green inclinations and environmental concern then developed into a passion for Malleefowl and her lifetime development and refinement of skill

was now channelled to this wonderful cause. She always had a consistent base to address all land based environmental issues regarding threatened species: 'Habitat and Corridor'. It was simple and consistent but very, very powerful. This clear statement of position together with an ability to strip away the rhetoric, speak succinctly and without notes had all taking notice and remembering what she said. After seeing the submission to the Victorian White Paper on the Environment, Sir Gus Nossal asked Ann to present to the Scientific Reference Group he chaired because the case and argument she presented was vital for them to fully explore.

Her work to shape and put in place a national approach for the wellbeing of Malleefowl was vital and a key contribution to the current strength of the cohesive work now being achieved. Those involved, directly or otherwise, know it was not an accident and value her many discussions and efforts. Ann's powerful presentation on behalf of Malleefowl to the EES Panel for Victoria's Nowingi Toxic Dump proposal was her usual stand-out contribution and generated a most unusual 'question and answer' session with the panel leading to several extensions of time and a little angst among more formally qualified representatives for the proponent. Her presentation on behalf to a recent Sand-mining EES process resulted in a previously unexperienced, relatively long-term, contribution to the Australia-wide welfare of Malleefowl, which has reset the standard to be considered in such cases.

The 'mentoring' Ann showed during her teaching career was also extended through her care for, and mentoring of, our young scientists who become involved in Malleefowl matters.

Whilst Ann's passing is a huge loss to the continued welfare of the Malleefowl, we acknowledge and celebrate her wonderful and enduring contribution to that cause.

Ann is survived by her husband Peter, her son David and daughter-in-law Eliza.

VICTORIAN REPORT BY PETER STOKIE, VMRG PRESIDENT

2012/13 Season Monitoring

VMRG monitored 41 sites this season totalling 1300 mounds with 132 people involved. The time taken was 1,108 hours and travelling time 342 hours.

Joe Benshemesh's analysis will be on VMRG website and some findings are:

1. Overall, breeding numbers are the highest since the mid 1990's; in some locations numbers exceeded previous highest totals by 20%
2. Malleefowl breeding numbers were strongest in Sunset NP, Hattah Kulkynne NP, and the northern section of Wyperfeld NP. The Flora and Fauna Reserves of Bronzewing, Wandown and Wathe continue to have the highest breeding density per hectare and have increased their breeding numbers this season. Breeding numbers have not increased universally, as numbers in SE Wyperfeld NP, Little Desert and localities in the Wychitella NCR were stable or slightly decreased.
3. Rainfall was extremely high in early summer 2012, and again in mid-winter. But from August on rainfall was well below average.
4. There may be several reasons for 2012 being an exceptional season:-
 - the long drought to 2009 suppressed Malleefowl breeding
 - then above average rainfalls to 2012 led to a surge in recruitment of chicks
 - recovery of several sites burnt in the

1980's and 1990's with vegetation that matured and now supports increased numbers of Malleefowl.

New sites Three new sites were established this year for vastly different purposes. One site (Mali Dunes) is on private covenanted property undergoing massive revegetation, and this site will be monitored for effects of plantings on recolonisation by Malleefowl. A second site (Iluka) with Malleefowl is a small isolated native vegetation remnant on private property with two sand mine trenches, and will be monitored to assess the impact of the mine on the birds in this remnant. The third site (Nurcough Farmers) is a collection of patches of vegetation with Malleefowl mounds south of the Little Desert amongst farming properties, and several similar nearby patches will be searched for Malleefowl presence. Monitoring will support a program to create an effective landscape-scale corridor linking the Little Desert to significant remnants south of the Little Desert forming "Nurcough Corridor".

Weather Conditions Summer 2013

The summer conditions have been dry and hot this year and anecdotal evidence suggests that some Malleefowl abandoned their 2012 breeding efforts. This probably returns the birds to a more 'normal' pattern.

There have been only a few wildfires this year, and none of the monitoring sites were affected. The Government Planned Burning target was close to 40,000 ha with larger targets for 2013 and 2014

Interpretive Signs VMRG used a grant from the Iluka Malleefowl offset fund to design and manufacture ten large interpretive signs outlining information about Malleefowl and the work of VMRG. Six signs will be strategically placed in the small towns tourists visit travelling to Mallee Parks at Rainbow, Hopetoun, Patchewollock, Murrayville, Ouyen and Robinvale. Other signs will be placed on major tracks into the National Parks at Rocket Lake, Mt Crozier and the Shearers Quarters in Murray Sunset NP, and at the Information Centre in Hattah Kulkynne NP.

VMRG Reporting Meeting this year was held in Ouyen with a significant number of local people from Ouyen, Patchewollock and Walpeup in attendance. Because of the interest generated by the increased sightings of Malleefowl in the area, VMRG held a public meeting prior to the regular meeting for interested local community members. More than 60 locals attended this meeting. Joe Benshemesh addressed the meeting and answered questions from the audience.

MOUND MONITORING, NCMPG, WA

GORDON MCNEILL, PRESIDENT

Milton Mcneill Reserve

(East Nugadong)

Total Mounds: 42. Active Mounds: 07/08-Nil; 08/09-3; 09/10-2; 10/11-1; 11/12-2.

2012/13 season saw one active mound only with a further 3 having extensive recent working. There were 6 other mounds with some recent scratching and one other with tracks on it.

Old Well (East Latham)

Total Mounds: 34. Active Mounds: 08/09-3; 09/10-3; 10/11-0; 11/12-3.

2012/13 season saw one active mound only with a further 4 mounds having extensive recent working. On one of those mounds the bird was sighted in the mound. Three other mounds had some recent scratching evident.

Carters (Jibberding)

Total Mounds: 31. Active Mounds: 07/08-1; 08/09-2; 09/10-1; 10/11-0; 11/12-1.

2012/13 season saw no active mounds

however there were 3 mounds which had been recently completely coned out and 2 others had some recent scratching evident.

Reudaveys (Jibberding)

Total Mounds: 36. Active Mounds: 08/09-3; 09/10-3; 10/11-2; 11/12-5.

2012/13 saw four active mounds with one other having been recently coned out. Five other mounds had some recent scratching.

Total Mounds 160

Mounds monitored 2012/13-143 (not including Charles Darwin Reserve)

Total Active Mounds: 2008/09-13, 2009/10-11, 2010/11-3, 2011/12-11, 2012/13-6,

Seasonal Conditions

2012 winter period was relatively dry with July and August significantly down in rainfall compared to 2011 (46mm to 117mm). October had only 2mm compared to 60mm in 2011. The yearly rainfall which fell near Site 1 was

296mm but 80 mm fell in November and December which may have been after the Malleefowl had ceased attempting to nest due to dryness.



WHAT WE ALL HOPE FOR!
PHOTO: CHRIS HEDGER

MPG NEWS, WA

BY LEONIE MCMAHON, MPG EDITOR

In 2013 the MPG has good reason to look forward, and to look back.

Just before Christmas we secured funding and have now employed a full-time CEO, Mr John DeJose – a first in the history of the group and a very important step towards furthering the group's objectives. See page 16 for further information.

On September 28/29 this year MPG will also celebrate its 'coming of age' – 21 years of operation. MPG's patron, Australian folk/singer and songwriter John Williamson, will be attending. Planning for the event is now under way and if early indications are anything to go by, it should be quite a bash.

The annual mound monitoring program began in September last year and of the 16 WA sites selected to be monitored, most were completed that spring. Following on from the previous three very successful monitoring workshops, the fourth annual



2012 BADJA SURVEY GROUP

monitoring workshop is expected to be held again at Babakin, 205 km east of Perth, over the weekend August 31 - September 1, 2013.

The main survey planned for this year is at Badja Station in the Yalgoo Shire, Sunday July 7 - Friday 12, 2013. This will be the MPG's second survey at Badja, owned by Karara Mining/Gindalbie Metals as an offset property investment. The closing date for registrations is Friday June 7. So far 18 people have booked the week's bush walking. Should anyone wish to participate please contact Susanne Dennings via email on sdennings@bigpond.com

The Malleefowl *Magic* Roadshow is again under way. Project Coordinator, Susanne Dennings, presented the education program to five schools in the WA Wheatbelt from March 18 to 22. The education program, in partnership with the Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management group (WNRM), included the Mukinbudin, Southern Cross and Lake Grace District High Schools and the Nungarin and Kondinin Primary schools.

Late last year the MPG launched its updated website. Same address: www.malleefowl.com.au, but faster and more user-friendly thanks to our webmaster, Alan Thompson. You can now join in the conversation on the group's facebook page: www.facebook.com/MalleefowlPreservationGroup or log in from the website.

YONGERGNOW AUSTRALIAN MALLEEFOWL CENTRE - COMMUNITY, CULTURE, CONSERVATION IN ONGERUP, WA

BY VICKY BILNEY, MANAGER/BIOLOGIST

Vision Statement:

"For Yongergnow as a community owned and operated interpretive centre to be recognised as a centre of excellence for environmental awareness and education, with special focus on conservation of the Mallee and its endangered flagship species, the magnificent Malleefowl."

Opened in February 2007, Yongergnow Australian Malleefowl Centre focuses on the conservation of Malleefowl and its habitat in the small farming community on the edge of Western Australia's wheatbelt. Situated approximately 410 km south east of Perth and 150 km north north east of Albany, Ongerup is centrally located between National Heritage listed Stirling Range National Park, Fitzgerald River National Park, and a large expanse of nature reserves and privately owned conservation properties.

Yongergnow's contribution to Malleefowl conservation is chiefly through education and awareness raising for visitors to the centre, including bus groups, community groups, and very importantly, school groups. Yongergnow offers visitors the opportunity to familiarise themselves with



YONGERGNOW BUILDING PHOTO: FRED DUNCAN

these magnificent, yet elusive birds in a captive situation. The centre currently houses two pairs of subadult Malleefowl in its large custom-built natural habitat aviaries.

Yongergnow's Malleefowl were captive-raised on site in 2010. The skills acquired for this

project enabled Yongergnow to extend its conservation scope to captive-raising Malleefowl for rescue and re-introduction projects. So far, eleven Malleefowl have successfully been raised for release at three sites up to 1000km from Ongerup in this ongoing project.

Yongergnow is open 9am to 4pm Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, 10am to 4pm Sunday and closed on Tuesdays and Fridays, Christmas (December 24 - 26) and New Year's Day. For enquiries, please contact Yongergnow Australian Malleefowl Centre, phone 08 9828 232, email visitor@yongergnow.com.au or visit our website on www.yongergnow.com.au



'HAPPY' - YONGERGNOW'S FIRST MALLEEFOWL CHICK, 2010 PHOTO VICKY BILNEY

REPORT FROM FRIENDS OF GLUEPOT RESERVE, SA

BY CHRIS LILL, SECRETARY

On November 24th to 27th a group of Friends, Sue and John Nettlefold, Tommy Tucker, John Drummond and Rod Bradtke, checked all of the known mounds on the Gluepot grid system (seven grids), for evidence of Malleefowl activity. We found three active mounds, despite 2012 being a very dry winter. It is good to see the birds continuing to nest. To our surprise, one of the active nests was in the area that was burnt in 2006.

We also noticed a recently active mound where the Malleefowl had used Spinifex instead of leaf litter. This nest was also in the burnt area.



RECENTLY ACTIVE MOUND IN AREA BURNT IN 2006 CONTAINING SPINIFEX, PHOTO CHRIS LILL.

MARCH 2013. STEALTH CAM PHOTO. FERAL CAT ON THE MOUND WITH MALLEEFOWL IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE.



During 2012, we lost one of our breeding pairs to predation, which is of concern. This year we have applied for a grant to purchase 4 Stealth Cameras to monitor active nests. Hopefully this will mean that we will be able to determine what is happening to our birds.

In February of this year (2013) our group checked the active mounds we had observed in November. One of the mounds in the recently burnt area showed evidence of very recent activity. Although we did not see any birds, there were pieces of fresh shell (still pink), and chick feathers, so we were hopeful that the birds working

that mound had successfully bred.

We placed a stealth camera on one of the mounds where Malleefowl had been seen working, with some surprising results. In February our stealth camera captured a newly emerging chick which was great news, but several weeks later we also captured photos of a feral cat on the mound (see photos). The stealth camera is proving invaluable in increasing our knowledge of Malleefowl behaviour and the threats to their continued survival. We hope to place cameras on other active mounds if our grant application is successful.

COUNTING THE EGGS – AN IN DEPTH LOOK OF MALLEEFOWL PRODUCTIVITY IN THE BOOKMARK, SA

BY CHRIS HEDGER

In the summer of 2010-2011, a nest excavation project was conducted south of the Murray River in the Murray Darling Basin Region in an attempt to determine if locust control activities were having any impact on Malleefowl productivity. The results failed to show anything untoward, but rather pointed to a record-breaking season for Malleefowl. At the time there was insufficient activity north of the river to extend the sample range. However it appeared that three years after the break of the drought, Malleefowl finally started to respond with increased levels of activity, indicating a significant lag effect.

This was an opportunity to extend the nest productivity work to those populations in the Bookmark region. This work gathers information such as laying season, laying rate, clutch size, fertility, hatching success and predation rates, all important and useable information which inform management of the species. Eight nests were chosen across Calperum and Taylorville and were checked every three weeks across the season.

Although exact figures are not in yet what we have observed so far are record clutch sizes for north of the river. Of the

few studies conducted previously in this region, average clutch size was 9; however in 2012-2013 this was boosted significantly to 19, with the largest clutch size totalling 25. Another record was also broken with the largest egg for the region, totalling 240g, 40g above the previous biggest.

Whilst hatching success and fertility appear to be on par with south of the river, the more concerning characteristic that differed from 2010/2011 south of the river, was the prevalence of fox and cat predation around the mound. It appears that at least one adult and a significant number of chicks were struck down in

close vicinity to the nest, with countless others likely to have fallen victim outside the immediate search area. In a region that has already demonstrated a delayed response in nesting activity, potentially missing the most productive periods during the prior wetter years, this additional stress of increased predation levels is concerning. Future programs will now aim to focus on understanding this link and determining how to best go forward from here.

Many thanks to all those volunteers who assisted with the project; it wouldn't have been possible without you all!



ONE OF THE NEW CHICKS! PHOTO: CHRIS HEDGER

MONITORING, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BY SHARON GILLAM

In SA 30 sites were visited this season, with a total of 1027 mounds monitored. Overall, there were more active mounds this season than has ever been recorded, since 2005. At a state-wide level, there has been a steady increase in breeding activity over the seasons, rising from 6% in 2005 to 11% in 2012. This, however, can be a little misleading, as Malleefowl occur across at least 5 distinct regions in SA, all with slightly different environmental factors such as rainfall, which leads to different breeding activity across the regions. The graph on the left shows the percentages in breeding activity across the regions in SA, from 2005 to 2012. The Murraylands region is shown as 'South of the Murray' and 'North of the Murray', as the results from these regions are markedly different.

Eyre Peninsula 2012 season update

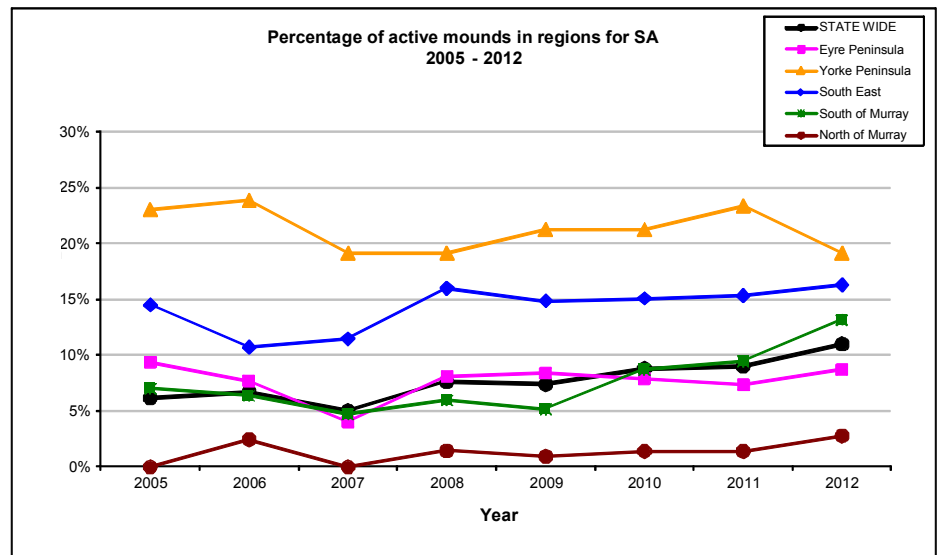
Annual monitoring of four of the five Eyre Peninsula sites took place over 2 weekends: Cowell and Munyaroo were done in Dec 2012; Lock and Hincks completed in Feb 2013. Graeme Tonkin and I took part this year to provide refresher training in the monitoring system, and general support in monitoring the mounds. In particular, the use of the new Trimbal Nomad devices was explained, with the opportunity to answer any queries as they occurred in the field. Thanks to the EP DEWNR Office for providing the funds to assist with supporting our volunteers.

Results of the 2012 season:

Active nests - Cowell 6, Munyaroo 5, Hincks 3, Lock 3, Innes 9.

Cowell and Munyaroo sites are located on the eastern side of EP, and recorded stable to increased breeding activity, with average annual rainfall. The Hincks site in central-north EP had below-average rainfall although stable breeding activity, while the Lock site had well below average rainfall and the lowest breeding activity since 2007.

Regular and new volunteers were involved this season, with assistance from Andrew Freeman. Andrew is based in the Port Lincoln office of DEWNR, and has coordinated and supported Malleefowl monitoring activities for many years on EP. Andrew has recently taken on a new role in the Wild Eyre Program, and will no longer be coordinating the Malleefowl monitoring program on EP, however, is still keen to be involved in



monitoring the Lock and Hincks sites. Hopefully coordination of the EP sites will continue from within the EP DEWNR office. Thanks to everyone for their help and support this season!

Yorke Peninsula 2012 season update

The Innes NP grid was monitored on 3rd November 2012, by Deb Furbank and me with regular volunteers Graeme Tonkin, Michael Gillam, Tony Chambers and Déé Parkhurst. Johanna, an overseas visitor from Poland, and Jody O'Connor, also took part as new volunteers. This year all of the 47 mounds on the grid were visited, including '5 year' mounds, this being the 5th year. Nine mounds were found to be active, seven of which were active last season. We also found one of the '5 year' mounds, with no recorded activity ever, to be active this season! Of course this mound will now be taken off the 5 year list and visited each year.

Malleefowl were only seen at three of the active mounds this season, much less than usually seen in this site. The breeding activity on the Innes grid remains consistently high, with no recorded signs of foxes or rabbits, and only a few signs of kangaroos. While rainfall was well below average for 2012 in this region, the three preceding years were well above average, which seems to be the pattern across much of the Malleefowl's range in eastern Australia.

We'll have to wait and see what conditions the 2013 year brings!

MEET THE EP MONITORS

FROM LEFT:
DARYL DOLPHIN, JIM WALFORD, PHIL WOORE WITH GRANDSON JONTY, ANDREW FREEMAN, MARK REYNOLDS, LORRAINE WALFORD, GRAEME TONKIN
PHOTO: S GILLAM



MONITORING SOUTH EAST SA

BY VICKI NATT

Mount Boothby (grid 72)

Monitoring on October 15, 16 had help from Chris Thompson, Darrell Long, Kathryn Copping, Patrick Grub and Rick Makevits. The weather was conducive and the vegetation again was in reasonable condition. 49 mounds were monitored (mound 49 was new) and 15 mounds were active. This was even better than last year and it was the most active grid for the South East this year.

There were fox scats or prints on 10 mounds and evidence of egg predation at 2, though interestingly not at the mounds where the fox prints or scats were recorded. Echidna prints were on 12 mounds and deer prints on 3.

Gum Lagoon – Coola Coola (grid 14)

Monitoring was on October 18, 19 with assistance from Kathryn Copping, Glen Jackway, Peter Cook and Don Mount. The weather was ideal and the vegetation in fresh condition. Of 51 mounds monitored 10 were active, 2 more than last year.

There were fox scats or prints on 20 mounds with evidence of egg predation at 5 mounds. Echidnas had been digging around on 11 mounds. Goat prints and/or scats were recorded at 14 mounds and a goat was observed standing on a mound. Deer activity was only recorded on one mound this year, a big improvement on past seasons.

Mount Scott (grid 13)

Monitoring was completed on October 20 with assistance from Kathryn Copping, James Ferguson, Russell Fisk, Chris Brien and Margaret Emery. Weather was reasonable. After a search of most of the grid in winter, 4 previously unlisted mounds were monitored though these are not yet

on the database. Of the 36 official mounds, 4 were active, 2 less than last season. Encouragingly there were only 2 mounds with deer prints though damaged vegetation occurred.

The vegetation reflected drier conditions, which may have had a bearing on mound activity.

Coorong (Grid 65) and Naen Naen (Grid 66)

Monitoring of these two grids took place on November 23, 24 by Sharon and Michael Gillam, Graeme Tonkin, Dee Parkhurst and new volunteer Fran Davy. The weather was warm to hot. All mounds for both grids were visited including the '5 year mounds'.

For the **Coorong** grid 36 mounds were visited with 3 active. Two of these are outside the grid and have been active most years. The other active mound has never been recorded as active prior to this year.

Wombat scats and diggings were seen on at least one mound and observed throughout the grid area. The vegetation appeared to be in good condition with plenty of Kangaroos and Emus about. Though there was an increase in activity on this grid, breeding activity remains low.

For **Naen Naen** the vegetation was in good condition with new growth and plenty of seedlings. 14 mounds were visited with 2 mounds considered active, the same number as last year. A new mound was found on the NW side of the grid.

Deer and goat prints were noted on at least one mound, with cloven prints seen throughout the grid. 7 deer were sited on the day.

Time

Around 334 hours, over 7 days was spent on mound monitoring.

Training

Again a minimum of time was spent on training, leading to inconsistencies and inaccuracies of data collection and recording. It has highlighted the need to spend more time on monitoring techniques and data entry before separating into groups so that everyone is collecting and recording data with consistency.

Equipment

The Palm Pilots, though still being used for data collection, have issues associated with old out-of-date equipment. A Mobile Mapper was trialled along with the Palms for some of the grids this season and appeared to work well. Trimbals borrowed from DEWNR Eyre Peninsula office were also used with no major problems.

Cam

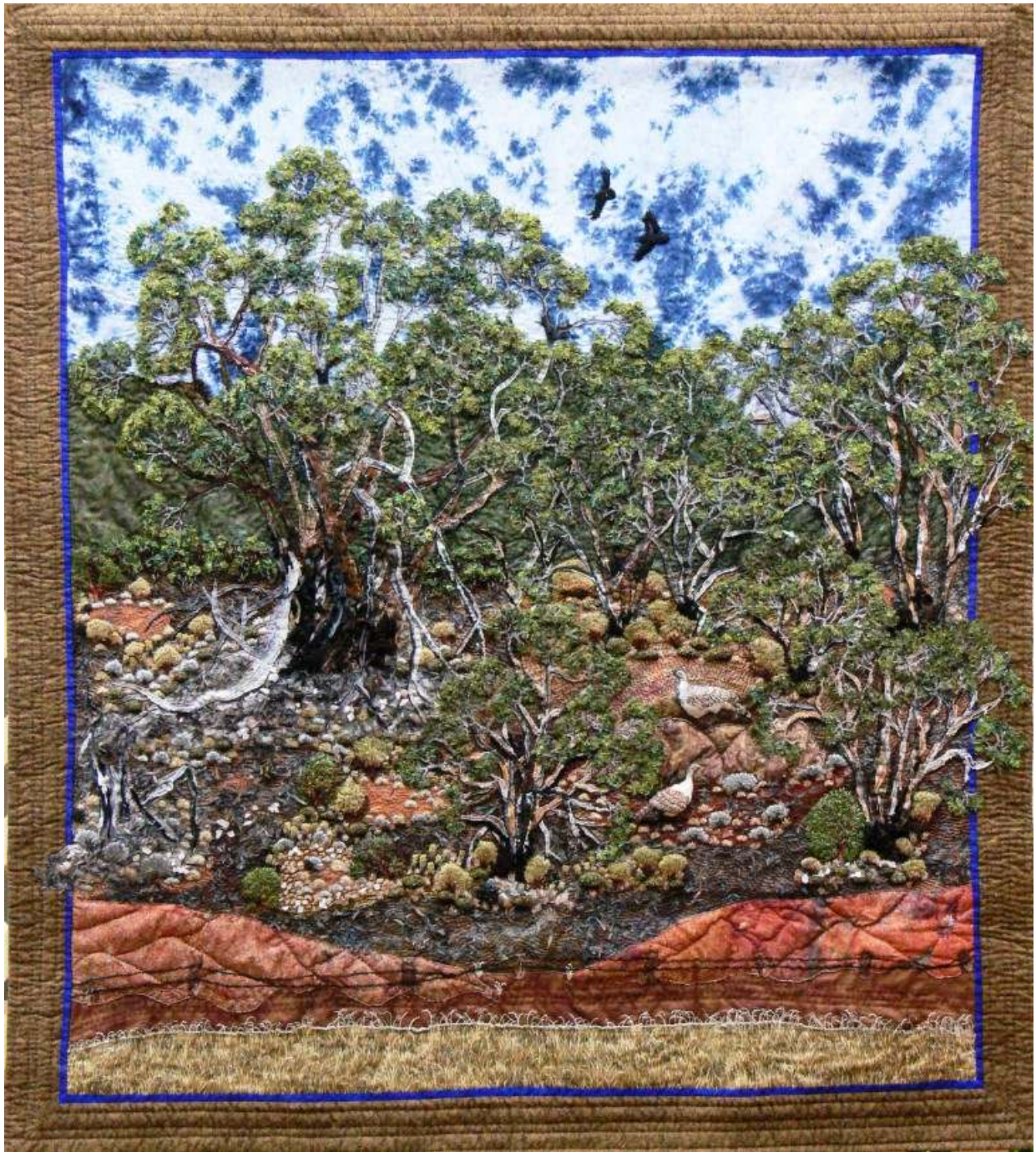
Some very good photos and other useful, easy to access information about Malleefowl can be viewed at Graeme Tonkin's website, www.malleefowl.net.au

Reflections on the season

Overall the results of the mound monitoring reflect a reasonably productive season for Malleefowl breeding activity in the South East.

Thanks to the volunteers and staff who participated in monitoring this season it was much appreciated. In particular to Kathryn Copping, from Newcastle, who gave a week of her holiday time to help. I am also indebted to Graeme Tonkin and Sharon Gillam for preparing equipment and checking and transferring data to the national database and to Sharon for organising the monitoring of the Coorong and Naen Naen grids.

Season	Mounds per Site/Grid									
	Mount Scott		Coola Coola		Coorong		Naen Naen		Mount Boothby	
	Total	Active	Total	Active	Total	Active	Total	Active	Total	Active
2005	36	8			23	0				
2006	39	6			31	0	14	3		
2007	39	1	54	9	32	1	14	5		
2008	40	9	54	10	32	0	10	5	46	5
2009	42	6	52	14	32	0	10	4	46	6
2010	43	6	52	9	32	0	10	4	47	10
2011	44	6	52	8	32	0	10	2	49	13
2012	46	4	51	10	32	1	14	2	49	15



'PLIGHT OF THE MALLEEFOWL' AWARD-WINNING QUILT BY KATHY BROWN
EXHIBITED IN 'FLIGHT!' AN EXHIBITION OF BIRD ART AT
YONGERGNOW - ONGERUP COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE, WA
MARCH - APRIL 2013.
ALSO SEE YONGERGNOW ARTICLE PAGE 9



A MALLEEFOWL HAVING "ONE OF THOSE DAYS"
IT DOESN'T RAIN VERY OFTEN, BUT **WHEN IT DOES!**

HCO ScoutGuard

12.22.2012 18:08:13



THE MALLEE POST

AtM HISTORICAL ARTICLES

This is the first of what we hope will be a regular section in the newsletter including articles and/or images on Malleefowl sourced from historic media

BY GRAEME TONKIN

The following article was published in *The Mercury* (Hobart Tasmania) on Friday 16th November 1866, p 3.

All spelling and grammar have been reproduced as per the original.

Source: National Library of Australia. Retrieved March 6, 2013 from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article8842751>

THE MALLEE HEN.

At the last meeting of the New South Wales Acclimatisation Society, Dr. Bennett observed the first description of the **Mallee Hen** was brought before the Zoological Society by Mr. Gould, on the 13th October, 1840, and is mentioned in their published proceedings of that date as follows:- "Mr. Gould, after reverting to the account given by him at the meeting on the 8th of September of that singular bird, the brush turkey of New South Wales, proceeded to state that he had since received from Swan River another bird, having similar habits and a similar mode of nidification, but from which it differs in inhabiting the open sandy plains instead of dense and gloomy glens, and in forming the mound for the reception of the eggs of sand, dead grasses, and boughs depending as much upon the sun's rays as upon the heat produced by decomposition to develop the young." Mr. Gould added that a most interesting note detailing these facts accompanied the specimens and that an equally important sketch of its range, &c, had been furnished him by Captain Grey, who had just returned from the north-west coast of Australia. The acquisition of this new species, and the notes here alluded to, are more than ordinarily acceptable, since they materially tend to clear up the long disputed point as to what group this Brush Turkey should be referred. Mr.

Gould further stated that the views of these naturalists who have considered it to be closely allied to the Megapodii were perfectly correct, and that the Brush Turkey and the new species now exhibited would, in fact, form part of a large and singular family of birds inhabiting Australia and the Indian Islands, all of which assimilate in their habits and mode of nidification. The new species differing considerably in several of its characters from the Brush Turkey (Talegalla), Mr. Gould proceeded to characterise it as a new genus, under the name of *Leipoa*, signifying "a deserter of its eggs". The specific term of *ocellata* was suggested by the ocellated character of many of the spots with which its body is adorned. Then follows the description. The total length of the bird is 24 inches; bill, 1 ½; wing, 12; tail, 8 ½; tarsi, 9 ½. It is the native pheasant of the colonists of Western Australia, and, according to Mr. Gould, the female closely resembles the male in the colouring and general makings of her plumage. But Mr. Masters (who has seen the bird in its native haunts) says that the male bird is distinguished from the female by the brilliant metallic lustre of the upper wing coverts. I believe the only part of New South Wales where this elegant bird has been found is on the borders of the Murray River; if any one has found these birds in any other locality in the colony, I shall feel obliged by the information.

BY ROSS MACFARLANE

Scanned from the reproduction published 100 years after, in the same paper.

The Ouyen Mail, Friday, December 20, 1912

Correspondence

The Mallee Hen

Sir,

Australia is world famous for its birds. One of the most remarkable of these being the Mallee hen (Lowan).

It is to be regretted that there are people in this district who for sport, food or vandalism, do not hesitate to rob the Lowan's nests and to shoot the birds. Some of these, doubtless, still hold to the old quaint or vicious idea, that birds and animals were made for men.

There was a time when this theory was extended so as to include slaves, both white and coloured. It seems still to hold the field as regards the better half of man-kind.

But thinkers recognise that every living creature has a destiny, little or great, to fulfil, a use in the world in its life not death and a need of experience for itself. Hence the growing sense of responsibility to birds and animals our 'little brothers' as St. Francis of Assisi called them. But in any case, our robbery of nests and our killing of birds are made possible only by our greater strength. Though he were very hungry a man would be very cautious as to stealing eggs or birds that belonged to another man but the birds are defenceless and so we rob and kill.

There are some who gather the eggs (or perhaps only one) as a curiosity. This kind of curiosity cannot be called vandalism yet its extension to many people would soon exterminate the birds as effectively as the sport spirit and the stomach slavery are doing now.

So the law forbids the possession of either the birds or the eggs.

It is most unpleasant to have to involve people we know in court cases but the extent to which the Lowan suffers in this district compels me to determine to report, from now on, every case with which I shall become acquainted - cases of keeping or using the eggs and cases of capturing or killing the birds.

Yours etc., - Edgar Williams

Inspector of Game and Fisheries.

INTRODUCING MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL MALLEEFOWL RECOVERY TEAM



MANDA PAGE, WA

I am currently the Principal Zoologist for the WA Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), a role that allows me to work on threatened fauna recovery in WA. I originated from South Australia where I grew up and completed my

undergraduate degree in Conservation and Park Management. I did my Honours project on Innamincka Regional Reserve in the north-east of the State, where I fell in love with the arid zone. I moved to Queensland to do my PhD on restoring the Mulgalands of Western Queensland. I stayed on at the University of Queensland as a lecturer for the next 10 years and taught subjects like Ecology, Fire Management, and Field Methods and developed a course that was run in South Africa. In 2008 I moved to Western Australia to take up a position as the Regional Ecologist for a private conservation organisation called Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). This presented me with an opportunity to get my hands dirty and do more onground conservation and research work. This is when I started working with, and gained an interest in the humble Malleefowl which occurs

on the AWC property called Mt Gibson (located about 400km NE of Perth).

The recent move from AWC to DEC is proving challenging. In this role I deal with threatened fauna recovery at a broader scale, providing advice on fauna management and research to DEC staff and beyond. I Chair the DEC Animal Ethics Committee and sit on a number of Recovery Teams. I see the role as a link between research and management, finding ways to apply what science tells us in order to improve conservation outcomes. I am learning all the time and enjoy the collaboration with the broader community as it is clear to me that we cannot save species on the conservation estate alone. I look forward to learning more about Malleefowl and approaches to better protect and conserve the species in my role on the Recovery Team.



PETER COPLEY, SA

I was raised on a mixed cereal and grazing farm near Bute on northern Yorke Peninsula, SA, where I gained an interest in the wildlife of the local region and took a particular interest in birds during my father's many field trips collecting plant specimens as an amateur botanist for the State Herbarium. Malleefowl had long gone from the region before I was born. My natural history interests led me to the University of Adelaide where I did a BSc with Hons in plant taxonomy.

My first contract position was in 1977 with the State environment department, doing vegetation surveys of Mallee on the far-west Coast and western Eyre Peninsula. Then I had 20 very different contract and volunteer roles, including yellow-footed rock-

wallaby surveys, researching TV documentaries about feral animals, various environmental impact assessments, and writing a management plan for Bool and Hacks Lagoons in the South-East of SA.

In 1984, I joined the Biological Survey and Research Unit of the SA National Parks and Wildlife Service where I had the good fortune to work with a great bunch of passionate conservation scientists on regional biological surveys and threatened species conservation projects.

My involvement with Malleefowl research and conservation began in the mid- 1980s, at about the time when Joe Benshemesh was doing his PhD in NW Victoria, David Priddel and Rob Wheeler were commencing their research on Malleefowl in western NSW, and I was the SA Department of Environment and Planning representative on Council of Nature Conservation Ministers Mallee Working Group. That group organized annual workshops in NSW (1985), SA (1986) and Vic (1987) to address conservation issues on Mallee lands of southern Australia. Malleefowl were a regular topic of discussion and a small recovery team was established.

The Mallee Working Group organised a National Mallee Conference in Adelaide in 1989 in which the first truly national Malleefowl recovery team meeting was convened. I am fairly sure this means that the national

Malleefowl recovery team is the second-longest running recovery team in Australia, after the orange-bellied parrot which dates from 1983.

As a result of this meeting Joe Benshemesh was contracted to write a 'research phase' recovery plan for Malleefowl - printed in 1992. A significant outcome was that Joe's technique of establishing nest-mound mapping and monitoring grids was gradually adopted and refined in an increasing number of sites across the Malleefowl's large range. This, in turn, exposed many more people to the wonderful world and life history of Malleefowl. The increasing interest in Malleefowl made it relatively easy for a few of us to raise funds for the first national Malleefowl forum in Adelaide in 1995, and also to raise funds from the major zoo organisations in WA, SA, Vic. and NSW, to sponsor the development and writing of the first national recovery plan for Malleefowl, in 2000. More of the same sorts of activities, only better, have continued to the present.

My roles in Malleefowl conservation through that time have mostly been as a facilitator; trying to keep Malleefowl on government planning and investment agendas, and wherever possible supporting those who are doing the great work in the field. I was also the chair of the national Malleefowl recovery team in the late 1990s and early 2000s.



MELANIE BANNERMAN, NSW

Hi everyone, I am currently a Ranger with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, based in Dubbo. I was born in Sydney and spent most of my life on the NSW Central Coast, 1 hour north of Sydney. I have a deep love and respect for animals of all shapes and sizes and my love for the environment grew strong when, at the age of 9, I was fortunate to travel around Australia for 12 months with my family. My passion for animals and the environment has been my driving force since then.

I studied for my Environmental Science degree at Newcastle University during which time I began a

keen interest in threatened species. I discovered a new population of the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog on the Central Coast and whilst at uni studied the population under the supervision of Dr Graham Pyke from the Australian Museum. From there I began a stint as an Assistant Researcher with the Museum, travelling the state to monitor various coastal and inland populations of both the GGBF and the Southern Bell Frog. At the same time I conducted an Honours research project looking at the behaviour of wild versus the captive tigers at Taronga and Western Plains Zoos and the implications for reintroduction success. During my studies I also volunteered as a zookeeper at Taronga Zoo in the carnivore division and at the Australian Reptile Park looking after birds and mammals.

I then became a National Park Ranger at Gosford and, in 2002, moved to Dubbo as a Threatened Species Officer, where I prepared the Recovery Plans for the Southern Bell Frog and a number of threatened plants. It was at this time that I became involved with Malleefowl, venturing out into the Goonoo forest just north of Dubbo, to catch a glimpse of the elusive birds. I also

began to oversee and license the reintroduction of captive-bred Malleefowl from Western Plains Zoo into Nombinnie Nature Reserve, travelling out west with the birds on board an air-conditioned (yet still very 'aromatic') minibus to release them into this vast stretch of Mallee.

When the opportunity arose in 2007 to become the Ranger for the newly formed Goonoo National Park and State Conservation Area and actively manage the Malleefowl population I took it on. Since then I have focused on the two iconic species of the reserve - the Malleefowl and the Glossy Black-Cockatoo. There have been some challenges in this job, particularly changing community opinion regarding the natural values of the Goonoo forest and conservation of threatened species in the area.

On a more personal note, I have been brought up with numerous pets and currently live with my three (indoor) cats. I'm a rescuer and carer with WIRES and have hand-raised an echidna from a tiny 110gms to a whopping 3kg. I'm a very keen bird-watcher, photographer and traveller and am currently planning two overseas trips to Africa and Antarctica.

JUST PASSING THROUGH!
PHOTO:
BERNIE FOX



**NEWS FLASH!
MPG CEO APPOINTED, WA**



The Malleefowl Preservation Group (MPG) is proud to announce their appointment of a full time CEO, Mr John DeJose. John brings a wealth of experience and networks to the MPG. Best known in Western Australia for transforming Perth Zoo, John has made wildlife conservation his life's work across Australia and internationally for over 40 years, and is returning to his ornithological roots to drive Malleefowl conservation for the MPG.

John says "MPG programs aim squarely at sustainability and resilience in rural WA because we are of and for the local community. Those who work and extract a living from the land have a special affection for nature and are best-placed to advance community conservation." Contact John on 0433 586 965 or at ceo.mpg@inet.net.au and also check the MPG website www.malleefowl.com.au

