

## Activity Update August 2023

This activity update is for the month of August 2023. If you would like to be on our mailing list and receive this free update, please email Aimee Linke at the above email address, or view it on webpage. These projects are from varied sources of funding including the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board's Grassroots Grants, Healthy Rivers Grant plus other small grants and contract work.

### Meldanda

1. Continued with managing the volunteers, camp bookings, provision of materials and equipment and all necessary administration managing the booking page, cleaning, and maintenance of facilities, trimming trees. Kept neighbors informed of any camp bookings - we had 28 children and 31 adults camp at Meldanda, there was a Cambrai Lutheran Church Service, Astronomers and the Torrens Valley Scout Group camped overnight and watered the new plants in the Community Bushgardens.
2. Volunteers ran new wire along the boundary fence of the Community Bushgardens, hoping to keep rabbits out. Volunteers spent several days in the garden tidying up the dead plants, weeding, spraying, replacing plant identification signs, raking paths, trimming plants, and planting two new sections. Rainfall at Meldanda in August 18mm.



*Figure 1 one of the new planted sections and path realignment.*

## Community Nursery

3. Supported 8 landholders or groups with plants, plant selection, projects or weed or other species identification, including a site visit to Costa Brothers Hullers and Shellers at Swan Reach to look at a revegetation project. Site visit to Mannum to help identify plants for two neighbouring properties on Purnong road.
4. Volunteers have been sowing *Pittosporum angustifolium*, *Eucalyptus cosmophylla*, and *Rhagodia parabolica*. Peter and Brenton did cuttings of *Correa alba* and *Carpobrotus rossii*.
5. Overhauling the nursery to increase our area of production, including some new shelving in the shed we bought through some funds donated to our group from Murray Mallee LAP which has now sadly closed.
6. Received a nice message update from a landholder at Punyelroo, I advised them to wait and see what plants came up after the flood and they are very pleased with the response, lot of nice native daisies and other plants as you can see in the comparison photos below.



Figure 2 photos of vegetation growth after flooding event.

## Committee & other

7. Managed the office, volunteers and all necessary administrations including monthly payment of bills, reports, invoicing, managing webpages and social media posts, scanned all receipts and reconciled monthly accounts in XERO.
8. Sent out agenda, minutes, correspondence list, and financial report for the month to the Committee. We held our annual general meeting at Meldanda with guest speaker Dr Michael Nash talking about the impact of snails on revegetation and crops. Michael did an ABC radio interview and promoted the event which attracted some Mallee farmers to the event, which was great.
9. Met with Sylvia Clarke to plan project support for this financial year, we will support two Waterbug Bioblitz and a National Science Week event in the coming months. Promoted the National Science Week Event to be held in Murray Bridge.
10. Sent in final report for Grassroots Grant 'Feasibility of maintaining threatened River Blackfish in the *Marne* River under a drying climate'.

11. Supported the National Science Week Citizen Science Showcase “Water and the diversity of life it supports” event in Murray Bridge. Aimee did a presentation on the fish-eating bat, *Myotis macropus*. Our volunteers received an award for outstanding achievement in their support of the Irongrass Natural Temperate Grasslands Project. The award was presented by Di Goulding, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Chairperson.

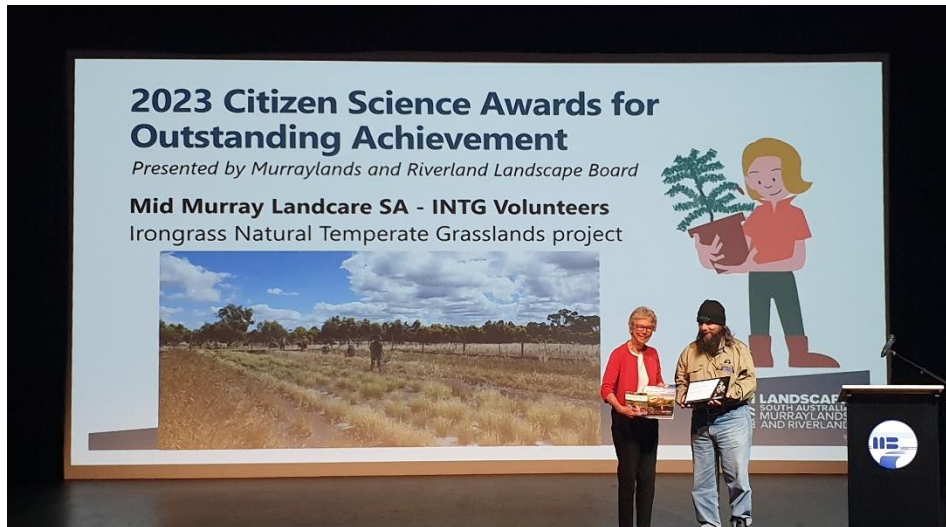


Figure 3 Di Goulding presenting volunteer Brenton Jay with an award.

### River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve - Chris Tugwell

12. Meeting with Buckford Illumination SA rep Peter Buckley and General Manager Andy Spivey (visiting from Melbourne) re Cambrai demonstration site.
13. Meeting with Andy Glen to discuss PS Marion dark sky cruises; Star Lovers (September) and Rockford group (October).
14. Met with Don Bursill to discuss meeting with Tourism Minister and Parliament House presentation.
15. Council Dark Sky committee meeting - discussed access to Council internet for Meldanda darkness data.
16. Martin Lewicki has had discussions with Costa Bros re their new development. They have agreed to work with Buckfords on Dark Sky compliant lighting for the new buildings.
17. Meeting with Peter Graves to discuss Torrens University support for Observatory/Planetarium.
18. I also discussed with Andy Glen a possible Dark Sky Reserve display for the Visitor's Centre, which will be having a complete re-furbish after the flood.
19. Dark Sky article in Good Weekend magazine.

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/turn-it-off-the-fight-to-darken-our-night-skies-20230607-p5der7.html>

## Irongrass Native Grasslands Project – Aimee Linke

20. Volunteers David Bennett, and Cameron Cook continued with burying and smoothing out the netting around the perimeter of the Seed Production Area. Andy and David repaired matting blowout in grass SPA.
21. Project planning meeting in Mt Barker with Kate Graham and Nicola Barnes, funding has been secured to continue this project for another three years.

## Western Pygmy Possums

22. Aimee - went out to a landholder's property on Sleeper track to swap SD card in camera and set up a camera to capture activity on the site like feral goats.
23. Dropped SD cards off to volunteer Don Lester and collected the ones he has reviewed, showed him the video of the possum inside the box.
24. Made further enquiries with FeralScan to start using and promoting the use of this app as part of the possum project.
25. Spoke to landholder who has boxes at the Tothill's about moving their boxes to the woodland area to see if they can attract any activity.
26. Volunteer at Hiltaba (Eyre Peninsula) has decided to move the two boxes as there has been no action in either of them since they were installed. They moved them to flat sandy soil area. Mallee (*E. socialis* over *eremophila scoparia*, *beyeria*, saltbush sp, *olearia*, *senna*, *acacia*, *roepera*) and Undulating hills. Mallee heath (*E. socialis* over *beyeria*, *melaleuca*, *dodonaea*, *eremophila*, *triodia*).
27. Sent a project highlight to Natalia Diaz from Landcare Association of SA about this project we have been supporting for five years to contribute to their annual report.
28. Sent an email to project participants on some of the possums we are seeing in the boxes and about using the Feral Goat Scan app.
29. Tim Pascoe at Gluepot shifted 4 boxes, three because of their annual fire burns and one because it was attacked by white ants.
30. Aimee- went to landholders' property on Sleeper track to swap SD cards and reposition one of the cameras. There are possums in at least two boxes, and three in another. Have been putting together a species list for the landholder and saw a *Waitzia acuminata* (Orange Immortelle) and *Chthonocephalus pseudevax* (Ground-heads).



Figure 4 *Waitzia acuminata*



Figure 5 *Chthonocephalus pseudevax*

## Murray Darling Carpet Pythons

31. Meeting in Murray Bridge with Melissa Burford from Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board to plan the delivery of a community engagement carpet python project in the region over the next three years.

## Healthy Rivers – aquatic weeds project. - MRLB Staff (Scott Hutchens)

32. Flood effected areas have continued to be a focus again this month with a number of inspections carried out on private lands adjoining the river with new emerging weed problems. The Murraylands Board staff have undertaken spraying of weeds on a number of properties that are starting to raise concern and become a problem as flood mitigating continues. Landowners are grateful with the support from the Healthy Rivers project with the aid of advice, control methods and tools to help support them in a tough time.



Figure 6 Weeds on Bolto Levee Bank



Figure 7 Cactus pads spread after flood.

Control works have extended from private lands to levee banks and crownlands to help with the restoration of land with weed problems.

33. Devon Downs private lands infested with White Weeping Broom have also been a priority this month with control spraying on two properties to create a control buffer from properties with main infestation. The property to the north has been completely controlled with landowners planning to revegetate and focus on controlling other pest weeds on their property. The property to the South has had a control buffer area strip sprayed to start control works to help with reinfestation. Works will continue to try to help break the back of infested area and give landowners the confidence that the plant can be controlled and maintained.
34. Works on the Devon Downs/Nildottie Island have kicked into gear with the completion of inspections and extensive mapping of pest weeds. Contractor SK Bush Care has been inducted to the site and works have started with a team of 5 people working on the Island to control the Wheel Cactus infestation by Stem Injection method. This will continue over the next month and will flow onto other private lands with residual funding from the project.



*Figure 8 Drone photo point of Nildottie Island before control*

35. Surveying utilising a drone was carried out this month with a fly over the Island and White Weeping Broom area, with a predetermined flight path to take video and photo points of the focus area with pest plant infested areas before control works carried out. A final flight will be carried out after the control has been finalised to show results of restoration of the area.



*Figure 9 White Weeping Broom main infestation with Southern side control buffer in the distance*



*Figure 10 White Weeping Broom Northern Property controlled.*

36. Budget looks to be on track and project to be finalised before November this year. With the last of the budgeted contractor funding will be dedicated to control African Boxthorns in the southern area of the River project boundary. Letters have been sent to landowners and works will be contracted next month.

## Supporting Biodiversity Across Conservation and Production Lands –

### Rowena Danks

Initiate 1 new partnership with Industry where Regent Parrot management is crucial to crop management.

37. I prepared a species list for the Costa Almond Orchard at Swan Reach to support a site visit that Aimee did early in August. This species list provided local species that could be used in revegetation programs on the farm, and highlighted species that were important for forage for Regent Parrots and also highlighted species important for floral resources for bees.

Support nest survey work on Murbpook.

38. Nature Foundation will be delivering this activity. Initial planning is being done as work will commence in Spring. I drafted a service agreement for this work, and this has been signed by Nature Foundation.

Encourage mallee community to participate in recording sightings of Regent Parrots in the mallee using the 'Poly Tell Us' App. Encourage mallee community to participate in recording sightings of Regent Parrot habitat plants across mallee. (1 communication activities)

39. I have created a video to support people to access the Poly Tell Us App. This is an instructional video that is aimed at increasing confidence of people who want to report a sighting but feel nervous about using the website.

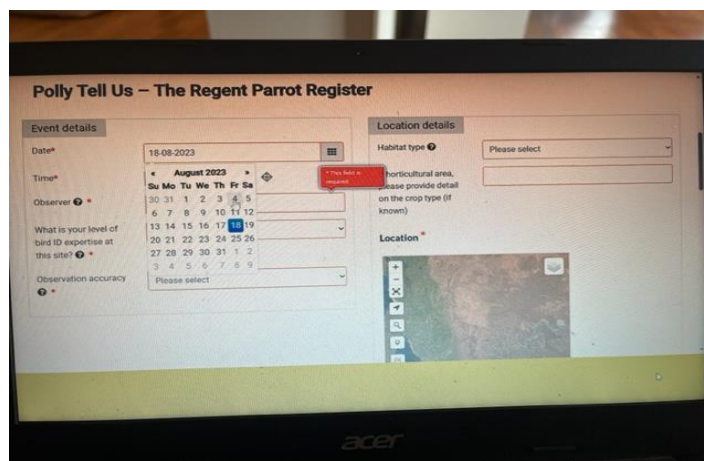


Figure 11 A screenshot from the video.

Assess effectiveness of Forage planting project (5 landholder interviews or visits).

40. I have begun drafting interview questions for these interviews.

**Produce 1 fact sheet (electronic). Include a calendar for growers to provide year-round floral resources for bees as well as integrated pest management attracting forage species for management of pest and diseases in production (i.e., carob moth).**

41. The species list produced for Costa Almonds will provide the basis for this calendar. More work needs to be done to develop the list further. I plan to have this fact sheet and calendar ready for the workshop in 2024.

**Link local producers (honey and cropping/grazing) to National programs that support honey bee health or increased production. 1 communication activity (newsletter article or direct email update)**

42. I have begun drafting a communication about Honey Bee health and increased pollination. I expect this will go out in September.

**Identify potential revegetation project for Regent Parrot forage species.**

43. The Costa site will provide potential revegetation options. And a site further north may also provide an opportunity for revegetation however this has not been confirmed.