

Activity Update August 2026

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 our webpage. These projects are from varied sources of funding, primarily Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board's Grassroots Grants.

Objectives - Support the Mid Murray Landcare committee to implement objectives of their strategic plan which align with the key objectives of Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board. Maintain strategic partnerships of the Landcare community keeping partners informed of activities and opportunities in the region including the Mid Murray Council, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, local community, volunteers and land managers.

1. **Activities – Support the Mid Murray Landcare Committee meetings, annual general meeting, and monthly activity updates, host and support five websites. Encourage the participation of land managers in activities like habitat box surveys, turtle nest monitoring, bat monitoring, workshops, conferences and other events.**
 - 1.1 We held our Annual General Meeting at Meldanda, with guest speaker Rose Laucke talking about the history of the Water Allocation Plan and the flooding of the Marne in 1992/93. It was lovely to have the Marne flowing across the ford at Meldanda on the day of our meeting. We had over thirty people attend the meeting, including students from Cambrai Primary School, we shared the Meldanda YouTube video after Rose's presentation which featured the students.



Photo 1 Meldanda's ford under the flowing Marne River.

- 1.2 Supporting the upcoming Turtle Symposium that will be held during Nature Festival week in Adelaide. Organised some merchandise for the event including caps, sun hats, beanies and t-shirts.
- 1.3 Site visit to Howard's property on Saunders Creek near Angus Valley to drop off a bat box, he is interested to be involved with the upcoming bat monitoring project later in the year.
- 1.4 Supported work experience student, Ruby, for a week from Nuriootpa High School (NHS), Ruby experienced working in the nursery learning various propagation techniques, Meldanda in the seed production area planting and weeding, field work, monitoring trial sites, our AGM and data entry for the python project.
- 1.5 Was notified by Landcare Association of SA that I have received three nominations for a 2026 South Australian Landcare award. I was nominated in the Individual Women, Agriculture, and Individual categories for my dedication to transforming Mid Murray conservation, empowering landholders, regenerative agriculture education, citizen science, and inclusive leadership. The award ceremony will be held in October at the State Landcare Conference in Murray Bridge with special guest Peter Garrett AM, Landcare Australia Chair. Thank you to my nominees, I am very honoured to be nominated.

Habitat Box Surveys

- 1.6 Lou, from Brown's Well has discovered that the nest in one of the Western Pygmy Possum boxes is a bird nest for a Striated Pardalote, this is the second record we have for pardalotes in the possum boxes.



Photo 2 Striated pardalote photo from <https://live.staticflickr.com/3762>



Photo 3 Striated pardalote nest inside WPP box



Photo 4 Wurmbea dioica KNR.

Objectives - Provide opportunities at Mid Murray Landcare SA Nursery for volunteers to participate in hands on activities to grow and provide plants to land managers, schools, community groups and other projects to support healthy natural landscapes by supporting revegetation projects and increasing future native seed availability.

- 2. Activities - Provide opportunities at the Mid Murray Landcare SA nursery for volunteers to participate in activities to support on ground projects throughout the Mid Murray region. Support land managers, groups or schools with on ground project activities including site visits, plant identification, project design and implementation.**

- 2.1 Volunteers Dave, Mick, Greg and Brenton maintained nursery garden, emptied old wicking bed, cuttings of various plants like Spiny and Silver daisy and *Myoporum brevipes*, potting on Acacia and Dodonaea species. We had some visitors from Finnis, who came to visit our nursery as they had heard positive things about us, they bought some plants and sent us a thankyou email to say '*... you and the volunteers made us feel very welcome and your workspace was a very engaging one. Thank you for your assistance.*' We also received a lovely thank you card from landholders Sally and Paul '*Thank you to Aimee and her volunteers, Paul and I are looking forward to getting all your lovely plants in the ground. Thank you again.*' They also gave us some chocolates which were stolen from our outside table by a resident raven.
- 2.2 We also received a nice email from landholder Andrew '*Just a quick note to thank you once again for putting together 100 mixed native trees and plants for our bush block up behind Cambrai. The last of them got planted over the weekend, with earlier plantings doing well ... When I purchased PHK 50 years ago (1976) it was just an over-grazed landscape of bare dirt and rock. Now three generations have contributed to the greening of one small corner of these 30 hectares; it's a special place to all of us. You're doing good and important work there, Aimee. And you've gained a new and grateful customer.*' It is nice to be appreciated and to support landholders that contribute to positive environmental outcomes.
- 2.3 We supported fifteen landholders or groups with native plants, plant identification or other projects including Keyneton Nature Reserve. Local volunteer Phil puts in many hours at the reserve controlling weeds and rabbits. Aimee spent some time there digging weedy bulbs, this is tricky work as there are so many native lily's and Lomandra species that all look similar to the bulbs, even growing amongst the native clumps. A new plant for the Nature Reserve species was also discovered, Common Wood-rush, *Luzula meriodionalis*.



Photo 5 *Luzula meriodionalis*.

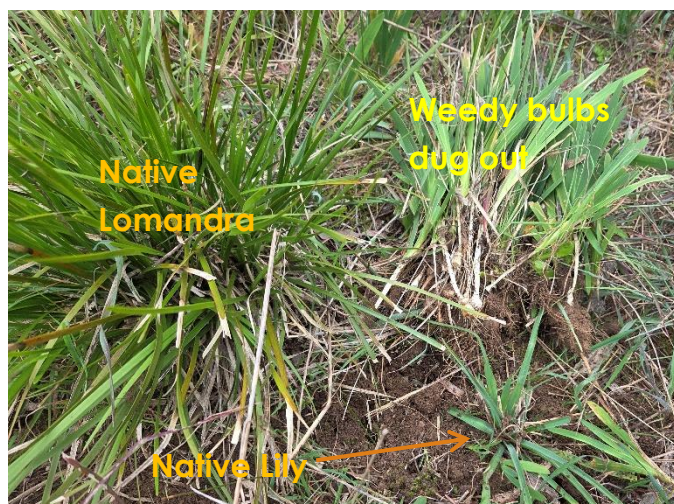


Photo 6 Native and introduced plants, an ID weeding challenge.

- 2.4 Keyneton Primary School watered and weeded the new plantings at Keyneton Nature Reserve, so far there is a 100% success rate, we also saw Early Nancy in flower, *Wurmbea dioica* (photo on page 2). The students then enjoyed exploring nature before walking back to school.
- 2.5 Site visits this month.
- 2.5.1 Deanne and Carl's property at Younghusband to provide some advice on suitable species for a revegetation project.
- 2.5.2 Mark and Di's property on Towitta Creek near Sedan to provide some advice on revegetation and weed control. Also informed them that African Boxthorn, *Lycium ferocissimum*, is a declared weed and how to control it, they have their "eye in" for this species now and will get onto controlling them.
- 2.5.3 Site visit to Genni and Rocco's property near Towitta to provide some advice on weed control and species identification.
- 2.5.4 Site visit to Kate and Anthony's property near Ridley CP to look at potential revegetation options to support Regent parrots and wombats.
- 2.5.5 Site visit to Anne's property near Shell Hill to identify some plants, weed control options and local seed to grow trees for her property. We saw some great plants, still some I am yet to identify. Some weeds up at the moment in the area are *Herniaria hirsuta*, *Erodium cicutarium* conversely the native *Erodium crinitum* is also growing well in lots of areas. Anne's place also had a species of native tobacco *Nicotiana* sp. which if you didn't know better would have thought it was a weed. It is great when people try to confirm whether a plant is native or not before they do any management, there are lots of native's people would think are weeds.



Photo 7 *Erodium cicutarium*, weed.



Photo 10 *Erodium crinitum*, native.



Photo 8 *Millotia muelleri*, native.



Photo 9 *Nicotiana* sp., native.

Objective - Support the management of Meldanda on behalf of the Cambrai Primary School Governing Council and provide opportunities for volunteers and youth to increase their knowledge, participation, and leadership in landscape management by supporting educational conservation initiatives.

3. Activities - Provide support for volunteer participation in activities at Meldanda to further develop and maintain seed production gardens and continue its development as an outdoor educational site, dark sky location and camping facility.

3.1 Volunteers Mick, Brenton, Cameron and Sheralee helped to do some weeding at Meldanda, the rain this season has resulted in lots of weed growth. Picked up the new Meander at Meldanda signs Leila had made up for a wellbeing trail. A portable toilet we had near the seed shed was moved down by Chris from Cambrai PS to be placed near the other toilets as back-up until we can get the new soakage installed.

3.2 Planting in the seed production areas with volunteers Cameron, Ruby, Zoe, Mick and Sheralee, we weeded and planted *Maireana radiata*, *Atriplex vesicaria*, *Lotus australis*, *Convolvulus remotus* and *Goodenia pinnatifida*. A few days later we had some Choughs pluck out some of our new plants, not sure what they did with them or why they wanted them.

3.3 Meldanda campsite for August there has been twenty-six camp nights, thirty-six children, thirty-six adults with two astronomy campers two scout groups. The scout groups also incorporated astronomy activities as part of their camp experience.

3.4 Volunteers Cameron, Sheralee and Aimee planted two species of endangered *Acacias* at Meldanda next to the critically endangered

Spiny Daisy site. The objective is to grow and protect these plants for future seed source or material for propagation, we will increase the species over time.

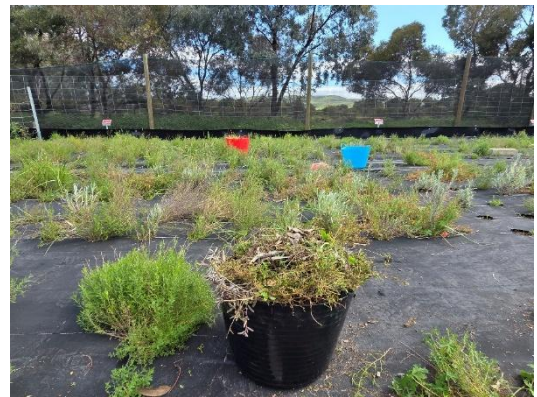


Photo 11 Weeding and planting day at Meldanda.

Activities - Support Cambrai Primary School and other groups with the engagement of youth in outdoor and environmental activities at Meldanda.

3.5 Cambrai Primary School and Preschool has been twice nominated for a 2026 South Australian Landcare award. They have been nominated in the Community Partnership and Junior Landcare categories for empowering young people to lead alongside scientists and communities through authentic environmental stewardship.

- 3.6 Meldanda Environmental Education, a partnership between the school and Landcare committee has been named a finalist in the 2026 SA Public Education Awards – Community Impact Award. This is a wonderful example of what strong partnerships can achieve together. A film crew will come out to Meldanda to record a short presentation for the awards ceremony that will be held in November.
- 3.7 Cambrai PS held their fun colour run and raised some funds for the trip to Canberra next year.



Image 1 Award nomination promotion.

Objective - Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes of the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve. Support the Dark Sky Committee, Mid Murray Council, volunteers and stakeholders to maintain the internationally recognised dark sky accreditation, promote the importance of "Skycare" and the value of protecting the circadian rhythms of nocturnal species and preserving a natural resource that is disappearing globally: darkness.

- 4. Activities - Support the community to preserve and manage the dark sky habitat, by providing resources, information and opportunities for the community and volunteers to participate in this habitat protection, identifying suitable measurement sites for monitoring equipment, engaging with landholders willing to host the equipment, setting up and calibrating the equipment and teaching landholders how to download the results.**

Chris Tugwell

- 4.1 Meeting with Bill Nehmy to discuss formation of Dark Sky Festival committee/working party.
- 4.2 Responded to website queries.
- 4.3 Discussion with Kelly Kuhn re Dark Sky development 'change of use' requirements.
- 4.4 Confirmed with Jarrod Bielby that smart chips have been installed in Cambrai, Sedan, Swan Reach and Walker Flat (software yet to come from SA Power Networks).
- 4.5 Discussion with Paul Haese re. bright lights in Swan Reach.
- 4.6 Mid Murray Landcare has been nominated for a 2026 South Australian Landcare award for the Dark Sky Committee in the Innovation category for innovative work to re-define Landcare to include the night sky as an essential part of a healthy natural environment.

Kate Wills

Social Media

- 4.7 Our channels have been bobbing along nicely with an "August Fast Facts" theme to capture and answer general queries. We reached over 42k views across Facebook and Instagram this month.

Project NightWatch (SQM Project)

- 4.8 Following our site visits, the tech team (Andrew, Ken, David, and I) has officially selected our host property in Sedan for Station 01. All our shortlisted landholders were incredibly excited to be involved.
- 4.9 On the fabrication front, our community partnership with the Swan Reach Men's Shed is thriving. The gents have a fantastic skill set, the solar mounting frame is mostly finished, and they have even volunteered to help us out in the field with the final physical installation!
- 4.10 We have also officially welcomed Skye Davis as our new Volunteer Systems Developer. Skye is a tech whiz we initially met during our April Dark Sky celebrations. She is already working hard on our cloud data pipeline, launching our connectivity framework into a new era. Welcome aboard, Skye!

Tourism & Future Events

- 4.11 I am in the early stages of mapping out our next public event—a Daytime Solar Viewing event at Swan Reach on Saturday, 31 October.
- 4.12 Additionally, I met with Glen (MMC Tourism Manager) from the Mannum Discovery Centre to discuss promotional opportunities and see how the Virtual Reality Dark Sky Experience is going. Glen and the centre volunteers are incredibly keen to learn and do more to promote our unique dark sky reserve.

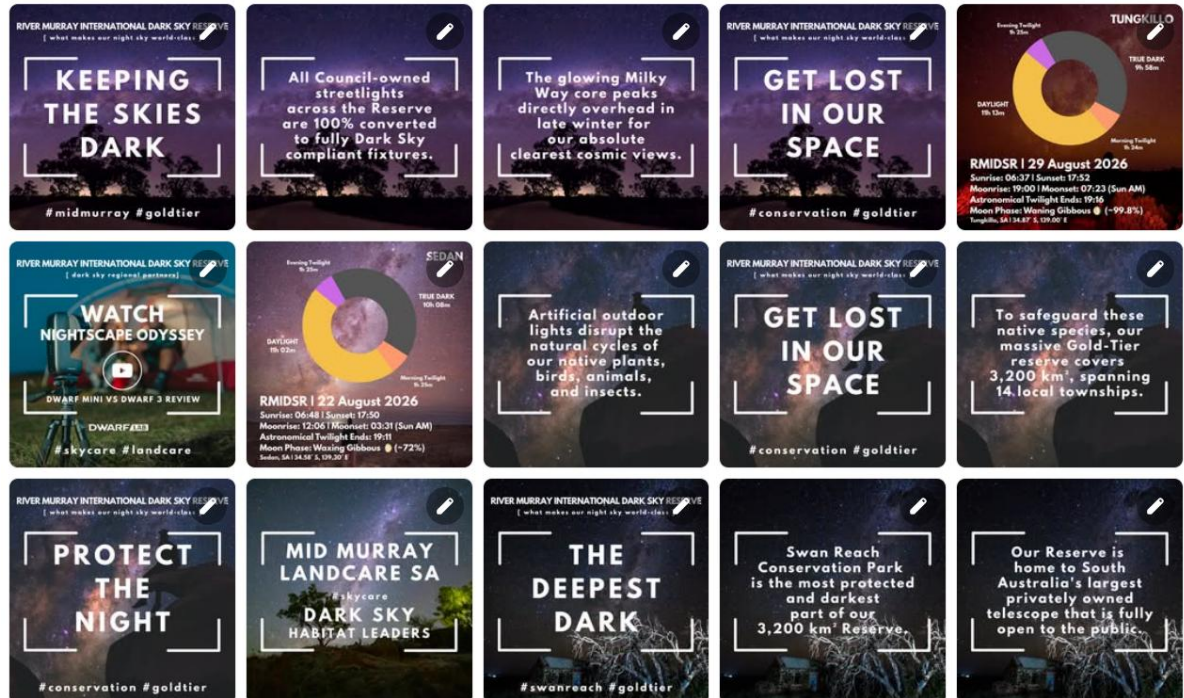


Image 2 Social media presence

Sustainable Agricultural Systems – objectives of this project are to provide evidence of the benefits of managing grazing pressure on agricultural systems, the potential benefits of introducing native species into grazing systems and provision of native seed for on farm production.

5. Activity – Manage and monitor the grazing trial sites which includes managing the camera traps, collecting drone footage, spring vegetation monitoring.

- 5.1 Site visit with to the southern grazing trial site to change SD cards in the cameras, there was lots of plant growth with all the rain we have had, and we captured a photo of a sheep longing to get into the excluded area. We still have had no fence breaches of kangaroos at this site.
- 5.2 Site visit with Ruby a work experience student from NHS, we changed the SD cards, put more rocks under the fence where the kangaroo keeps digging under. Cut and swabbed a boxthorn that is under *Eucalyptus* sp. in the trial site, we left it in there as habitat for the zebra finches. We moved one of the cameras to see if we can get footage of the kangaroo digging under the fence.
- 5.3 Blue Heron's-bill, *Erodium crinitum* was growing very well in the enclosure as well as Pigmy Daisy, *Rhodanthe pygmaea* and Annual Rock-fern, *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*.



Photo 12 Grazing trial site February 2026.



Photo 13 Grazing trial site August 2026.

Activity – Monitor and maintain the seeding trial, including site visits, photo points and weed control activities.

- 5.4 Site visit to seeding trial site, took photos of the ten sites we sowed back in June it looked like there was some germination of *Geranium retrorsum* and *Convolvulus remotus* that we sowed, which is pretty exciting.
- 5.5 Saw a grass species starting to flower that looks like *Aristida contorta*, this was not previously picked up in any monitoring because it never got to flower, will collect a sample when doing the vegetation monitoring.
- 5.6 Inspected five random spider holes in each plot, with Ruby, we saw spiders in most of the holes, possibly a reptile and a caterpillar or some kind of larvae attached to the side wall of

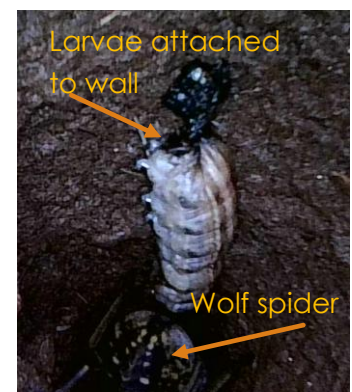


Photo 14 wolf spider and larvae.

the burrow with the wolf spider underneath. We saw these same type of larvae inside another burrow and the spider was pulling away it's prize from us, further into the burrow.

6. Murray Darling Carpet Pythons



Photo 15 Award night photo credit Cath Leo.

6.1 The iSPYthon project has been recognised as a finalist in the 2026 SA Citizen Science Awards celebrating the incredible contribution of everyone who has helped put this elusive species on the map. Since launching in 2023, iSPYthon has grown from an idea into a community-powered project with more than 100 validated python records - compared with fewer than 15 records across the previous decade. An award for the project was presented by the Governor General at the Museum of Discovery in Adelaide.

- 6.2 We will continue to support this project by supporting follow-up calls to any sightings and habitat assessments for sightings away from the river corridor.
- 6.3 We will also support the development of a report on the sightings to date and if there are any correlations with site locations.
- 6.4 Tracking will also continue until early next year of the current python with the tracker in it and we will hopefully capture another python, away from the river corridor, to gather data on home range of another python before this part of the project is completed.
- 6.5 The first sighting of the season has been submitted on the 25th of August for a python seen up a red gum tree near the Murray River, lets hope we get lots of sightings in this season.
- 6.6 There has been an interesting sighting submitted into iSPYthon from a property near Black Hill, it only has a very small remnant vegetation patch and is surrounded by cropping land, this snake frequents the landholders shed, we are hoping we might be able to work with the landholders and track this python this season (pictured below).



Photo 16 Murray Darling Carpet Python seen in shed near Black Hill.