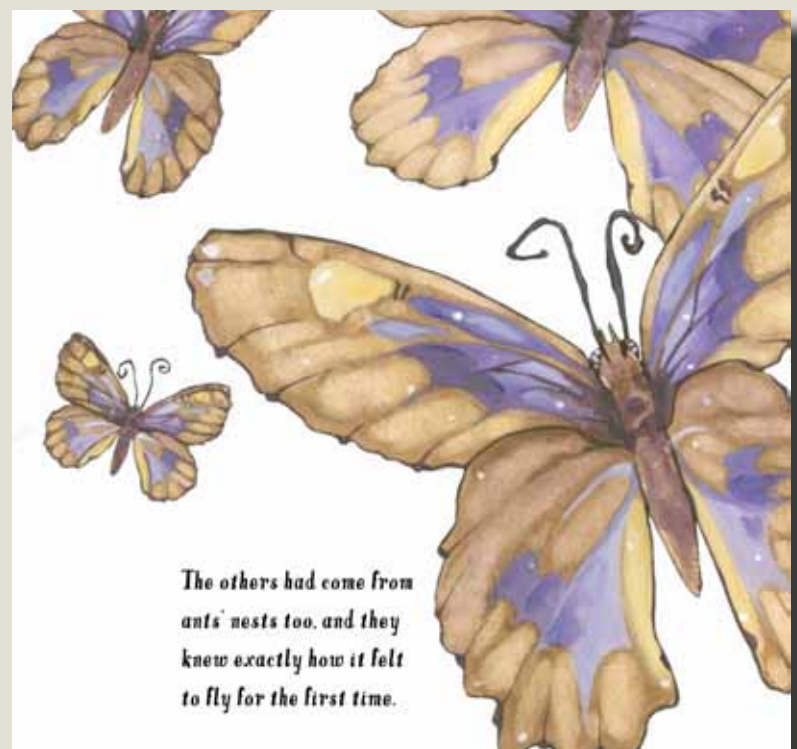
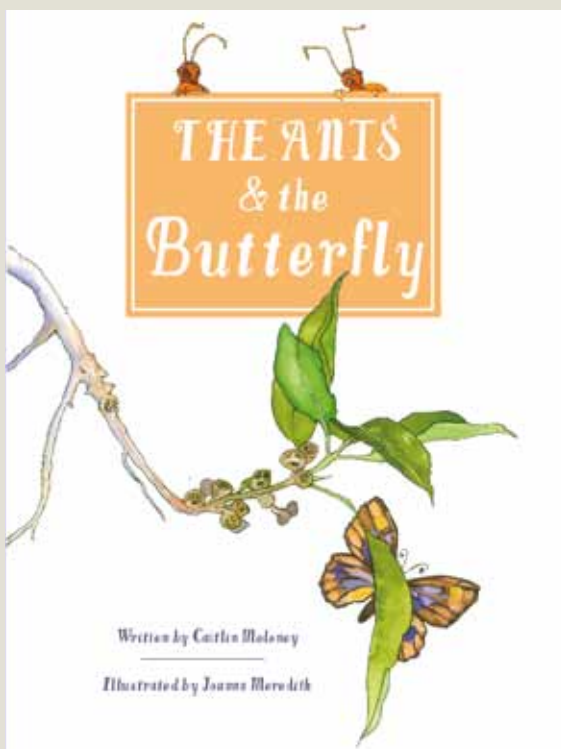




The ants and the Butterfly Community Small Grant Project



By Chris David

The Ants and the Butterfly book page extracts

Once thought to be extinct, the Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly (*Ogyris subterrestris petrina*) was discovered in a patch of bush land just west of the Mukinbudin townsite. During their studies, visiting scientists became aware of the unique role that sugar ants (*Componotus terebrans*) play in the butterfly's amazing life cycle. Through funding from the Wheatbelt NRM Community Small Grant, this remarkable symbiotic relationship was incorporated into a herbarium garden and a beautiful children's book.

The Mukinbudin Conservation Society has designed a garden which consists of specifically propagated local plant species. Signs detailing the life cycle of the Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly and its symbiotic relationship with the sugar ant have been erected and sturdy metal sculptures depicting the story have also been installed.

The Children's book entitled 'The Ants and the Butterfly' written by Caitlan Moloney and illustrated by Joanna Meredith has been published and distributed to schools and community groups. Featuring beautiful watercolour illustrations and an engaging story it gives the account of what happens to a small butterfly caterpillar (larva) which grows inside the dark confines of an ant's nest.

If you would like a copy of this amazing publication for your community group, school or local library please contact Kerry Skinner, Community Small Grants Officer on 9690 2254 or email kskinner@wheatbeltnrm.org.au



Healthy Rivers funding available

"Protecting Wheatbelt Waterways"

The Wheatbelt NRM Healthy Rivers project is calling for expressions of interest from landholders who want to protect their section of waterway.

If you have a project involving fencing or revegetation of a waterway and you are located on the Avon River between Gwambygine and Beverley or in the Talbot Brook or Westdale areas please register your interest at wheatbeltnrm.org.au or contact Greg Warburton on 9690 2250 or email gwarburton@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

For more information please visit wheatbeltnrm.org.au

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Issue 14, Summer 2011

Designed, edited and produced by Wheatbelt NRM



Wheatbelt NRM update

Wheatbelt NRM has had a busy time since our last newsletter with many important announcements being made: Jim Sullivan has been appointed as the new Chairperson of Wheatbelt NRM, after the retirement of Glenice Batchelor at the Annual General Meeting, and, Natarsha Woods has been appointed to act in the position of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the next 12 months.

We would like to thank Glenice Batchelor for her passion and dedication as Chairperson of Wheatbelt NRM over the last three years. Overseeing significant governance changes Glenice has set a solid foundation for Wheatbelt NRM to lead NRM endeavours in our region.

Wheatbelt NRM's new Chairperson Jim Sullivan has been farming on his property in Holt Rock for decades and has a variety of engagement with numerous community services and organisations. Jim is currently the President of the Kulin Shire Council and the Deputy President and Executive Member of the Central Zone of WALGA. With a keen interest in NRM and a passion for looking after the land Jim brings a depth of knowledge and leadership skills to the role.

Natarsha Woods has been the acting CEO since August and has been with Wheatbelt NRM for 4 years as its Operations Manager. A Project Management Professional Natarsha brings a wealth of experience and passion to the role.

We were also delighted to announce that Wheatbelt NRMs project "Riparian improvement of Avon River pools - Gwambygine" was one of the projects to get extended as part of the \$2.3 million used to extend the work of 20 State NRM Program funded projects. Works will be conducted to improve the hydrological capacity and refuge value of Gwambygine Pool. Works are to include bank stabilisation and revegetation. An ecological survey will be conducted to determine the ecological impact of dredging.

We would also like to congratulate the Avon Valley Environmental Society (AVES) for winning the 2011 CSBP Environmental Award. AVES takes up local environmental challenges, research solutions, sources funding and applies effective and efficient remediation. The volunteers have been involved in developing and upgrading walking tracks, a solar power co-operative, a proposal for a cultural centre and commissioning a biological baseline study into water quality in the Northam pool. The Society continues to initiate new projects and is dedicated to reducing environmental impacts.

Salinity is also back on the radar thanks to a new project called "SaltCap". Caring for our Country recently funded the Wheatbelt NRM project which aims to evaluate the use of the decision support tool 'SaltCap', developed by the Future Farm Industries (FFI) CRC. The tool firstly identifies what constraints are affecting salt-affected sites, and secondly provides plant-based solutions aimed at improving productivity on this land.

Project Manager Georgie Troup said "What this project will do is put saltland management back on the radar. For the past few years funding for improving saltland productivity has been few and far between but we are thrilled to be able to offer investment back into saltland." The project will provide valuable feedback on the use of the decision support tool and how appropriate the recommendations are for our region.

We also welcome three new staff members to the team. Dimple Guliani has been appointed as the new Executive Officer, Karen Smith has been appointed as the new Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator and Sue Carter has been appointed as the Evaluation Production Officer. We welcome them aboard and look forward to another productive year assisting Natural Wheatbelt Management endeavours in the region.

Nyungar Seasons

Birak

December - January

Hot and dry with easterly winds during the day. Nyungar people burned sections of scrubland to force animals into the open to make hunting easier.

Bunuru

February- March

Hot easterly and north winds. The hottest part of the year with sparse rainfall throughout.

Sub-tropicals soak up the spring rains!

Peter Sadler on his Wongan Hills property



By Natalie Hogg, Department of Agriculture and Food

Incorporating summer active pastures into annual crops is not widely practiced in the Avon Basin, but the lack of ground cover over summer on sandy paddocks has been the motivation to trial them for Peter Sadler along with his wife Kathy and son Michael who farm in Wongan Hills. Having received funding from Wheatbelt NRM as part of the Soil Conservation Incentives Program (SCIP) to address wind erosion the Sadler's have sown a mixture of sub-tropical perennial grasses into a sandy paddock where the true potential of wind erosion was realised after the 2010 season.

The Sadler's have sown a mixture of Rhodes grass, Gatton panic, Signal grass and Siratro (a legume) to determine which is the most suitable species for their farming system. They plan to continue monitoring germination in early summer as well as monitor the growth of the different species over the summer/

autumn period. In order to avoid wind erosion ground cover should be at a minimum of 50%, anything less than this and paddocks are prone to wind erosion. If growth allows, the Sadler's will graze the paddock over the summer in order to take advantage of the out of season green feed.

Ultimately the Sadler's hope that the incorporation of summer active pastures will allow them to have improved grazing strategies across the whole farm along with improved soil quality and increased production. Pasture cropping, the sowing of a winter crop into summer active perennial pastures, is also part of the project and will be trialled in 2012. Growers in other areas of the wheat belt are having success with Pasture Cropping and the Sadler's hope that it can work for them and make a marginal paddock productive in the future.

Wheatbelt Champions

By Dr David Grasby

Do you know of anyone that you would describe as a “Champion Farmer”? Are they an inspiration to you and your fellow farmers who are seeking to farm sustainably in increasingly challenging times?

The farmers concerned will have not only taken steps to improve soil quality on their own properties but also have inspired other farmers within the Western Australian Wheatbelt to adopt similar practices.

The “Wheatbelt Champions” project will be a way of celebrating the achievements of all farmers who have received funding through Wheatbelt NRM’s Soil Conservation Incentive Program (SCIP), funded by Caring for our Country.

The project will produce:

- a DVD to showcase the achievements of five “Champion Famers”; and
- a “Soil Health How-To-Guide”

The project will culminate in a Sustainable Agriculture Conference to be held in the WA Wheatbelt that draws together people involved in Wheatbelt NRM’s sustainable agriculture program and the broader community and industry to share knowledge and lesson’s learnt for improving soil health in the Wheatbelt. The conference will be held in a central location within the WA Wheatbelt and will include presentations by the “Wheatbelt Champions” and relevant experts, adoption workshops and visits to field sites.

Wheatbelt NRM will be seeking nominations for the 5 ‘Wheatbelt Champions’ in coming months.

For further information contact Project Manager Dr David Grasby on 9690 2292 or dgrasby@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Lynton Beagley with his sons on his farm south of Bencubbin



Project Support Officers announced

By Chris David

Wheatbelt NRM has recently contracted thirteen Project Support Officers (PSO’s) across the region to ensure the successful completion of the Soil Conservation Incentive Program (SCIP) supporting the delivery of over 100 on-ground projects. SCIP is aimed at the widespread adoption of farm practices that maintain and improve soil quality, which forms the basis of the diverse and highly valued productive landscapes of the Wheatbelt region.

Project Support Officers (PSOs) play a central role, liaising directly with farm managers, Wheatbelt NRM staff and technical

advisors. PSO’s will help farmers explore new practices through the Farm Practice Change Model, which supports the practical decision making of farmers in progressing from motivation through exploration to adoption of an alternative agricultural practice or system.

For more information regarding SCIP or the Project Support Officers please contact Dr Guy Boggs on 9690 2294 or email gboggs@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

SCIP is funded by the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country program, under the formal title of ‘Community farm practice change to manage wind erosion in the Avon River

SaltCap

By Georgie Troup

Wheatbelt NRM recently received funding through Caring for our Country competitive projects to support local farmers decision making for saltland management & soil protection. This “SaltCap” project aims to improve the farmers capacity to make informed decisions about what to plant and where in these challenging saltland environments. The project will target farmers located within the areas of Wongan-Ballidu, Bruce Rock, Trayning and surrounding shires as these areas were identified as high risk areas for the spread of salinity. This project has received funding from the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country Program.

SaltCap is a decision support tool developed by the Future Farm Industries (FFI) CRC which aims to provide farmers with a source of information to enable them to make informed decisions on the management of saltland. SaltCap is focused on first understanding the principals that govern saltland capability to then make the best decisions for which plants will work in the saline landscape for greatest production and financial gain. The decision support tool has been publically available through the Saltland Genie website, but there has been limited evaluation of the use of the tool. This project will provide useful evaluation information to the FFI CRC on the use of the tool.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) PROCESS

The project will be promoted in local papers during December, January & February.

- Closing date for EOIs will be 2nd March 2012
- EOI forms will be available on the Wheatbelt NRM website or by contacting the Project Manager Georgie Troup on 9690 2250 or gtroup@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

WORKSHOPS

- Two workshops will be held during April for successful farmers participating in the project
- Following the workshops Wheatbelt NRM will assist farmers to develop Action Plans

IMPLEMENTATION

The project will contribute to the cost of the seedlings required to implement the Action Plans. Farmers are being asked to contribute to the cost of the seedlings due to the high private benefit associated with saltbush plantings.

- Farmer contribution of 12 c/seedling (max 20,000 per site)
- Wheatbelt NRM will coordinate growing & delivery of seedlings for 2012 planting

FIELD DAYS

- 2 Field days/walks held March 2013 to showcase the demonstration sites and findings

For further information contact:

Georgie Troup

Project Manager – Sustainable Agriculture

t (08) 9690 2258 **m** 0417 300 601 | **e** gtroup@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Sheep in the Saltbush



Ballardong Nyungar Budjar Interpretation Project



By Chris David

York Residency Museum has recently completed an innovative project to educate the public and enhance awareness of the cultural heritage of the Ballardong Nyungar people, through the development of a Nyungar Six Seasons Garden Walk.

Funded through Wheatbelt NRM's Community Small Grants, the Garden Walk highlights the contribution by local Nyungar families and their connection to Budjar (Country) through the creation of artworks by local Nyungar artists.

Approximately 400 local native plants have also been planted to enhance the Garden Walk, specifically chosen for their traditional use by the Ballardong Noongar people. Multi language, tactile plant labels have also been installed which feature Nyungar, English and botanical plant names.

Local Nyungar artist Merle Narkle-Goodwin begun the creation of seven interpretive artworks on rocks which were then completed by her artist brother, Dennis Kickett. These rocks feature the names of local Nyungar families represented by symbolic stone circles in the garden walk, with appropriate flora and fauna depictions and artwork.

The Project was coordinated by Museum curator Carol Littlefair.

'The fundamental message that Nyungar cultural heritage is a valued part, a mainstream part, of York's history, is gradually becoming a reality' said Mrs Littlefair.

York residency museum is located on 4 Brook Street, York.



Artwork on rocks (top) and interpretive signs on the Garden Walk

Healthy Bushland

By Mick Davis

The healthy Bushland Project continues to work with land holders and community groups across the region to protect their special patches of bush. Currently we are finalising revegetation projects for next year and ordering seedlings of local species for use in these projects. Over the next two years the range of activity that Healthy Bushland is undertaking is expanding. While working to assist land holders place conservation covenants on their important remnant vegetation continues to be a major priority for the project, in recognition that this level of commitment to conservation is not for everyone we have a new range of activities that can provide support and assistance for community members with a commitment to bushland conservation.

Threatened Species

Phil Lewis from WWF is concentrating on finding patches of vegetation that can provide habitat for some of our most threatened fauna species. At the moment Phil is working with land holders in the north east Wheatbelt to protect populations of the Western Spiny Tailed Skink and is on the lookout for other areas where the skink may be found. Work includes fencing remnant vegetation and revegetation as well as feral animal control as foxes are a major threat to these Wheatbelt dinosaurs.

Phil is also helping several land holders protect Malleefowl. These amazing birds and their gigantic mounds are an iconic species in the Wheatbelt and Phil's work includes fox control and conservation works that will improve the condition of the remnant vegetation the Malleefowl are using.

Phil is always on the lookout for more patches of bush that either already provide habitat for our threatened fauna or with some work may provide for an expansion of habitat for them.

If you have an interest in protecting your bush to provide refuge for our amazing fauna contact Phil on **0437 971344** or email plewis@wwf.org.au.

Landscape Scale Restoration

With so much of the original Wheatbelt woodlands cleared for agriculture, Anne Smith from Greening Australia (WA) is helping the Healthy Bushland project to protect some of the most important patches of remaining remnant vegetation. Anne is working with farmers who want to protect those special patches of bush that all farms have. Work includes fencing to keep stock out and some revegetation to buffer the bush from other land uses.

Anne is working with a number of farmers down in the Newdegate area to undertake some revegetation to protect some pretty special sites. This revegetation is being designed to provide for the very specific feeding requirements for the Carnaby's Cockatoo.

There are a number of other sites in the region where Anne is assisting farmers to undertake conservation works.

If you have a special patch of bush and would like some assistance to protect it please contact Anne Smith on email asmith@gawa.org.au.

BioBlitz 2012

Wheatbelt NRM is planning another BioBlitz in the Wheatbelt this year! So stay tuned for more information and get your camping gear ready!! These overnight community surveys are usually well attended and are a great opportunity to meet and learn, so email Mick Davis if you are interested at mdavis@wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Discovery of Chuditch family near Boyagin

A keen naturalist who spends time observing wildlife in the bush spotted an active animal burrow under a fallen tree a few months ago in Boyagin nature reserve near Brookton. With the help of remote cameras she discovered that it was being used by Chuditch (Western Quoll)! And that wasn't the only surprise - it turns out there was a family of Chuditch there, with a litter of 6 pups!

Chuditch are threatened by feral animals and habitat loss and are currently restricted to several reserves in the western wheatbelt where fox baiting is assisting their survival. With large home ranges (up to 30 square kilometres) it is thought they are moving into the wider landscape from these core populations.

The discovery of this family of Chuditch demonstrates there are native mammals out there which are looking for good quality habitat outside of their core areas. Those 6 Chuditch pups are going to need somewhere to live when they leave their den in a few months!!

If you have a great patch of bush and think there might be some unusual animals in there, contact Wheatbelt NRM and we can work with you to put a remote camera in place to see what is using your bushland.



Baby Chuditch. Photos by Mike Griffiths, WWF.

Meeting on Country Narembeen & beyond



Aboriginal Advisory Group members: (l-r) Deborah Moody, Tania Moody, Murial Collard, Kerry Horan, Winnie McHenry, Kevan Davis, Boyd Kickett, Dennis Hayward, Theo Michael and Yvonne Kickett (front).

By Kerry Horan

On the 5th & 6th of December the Wheatbelt NRM Aboriginal Advisory Group travelled the Wheatbelt as part of a consultation process to identify traditional ecological sites and future projects to compliment work done in the Avon Basin Region.

A particular highlight of the trip was a visit to the “Wadderin Wildlife Sanctuary” in Narembeen. The opportunity to visit Wadderin gave the Advisory group an insight into the dedication and amazing challenges of the type of work required to recreate habitats, record the life of authentic Australia fauna, and maintain feral control. Dr Jeff Short (Director & Principal Researcher for Wildlife Research & Management) and the amazing volunteers Mel Bristow & Brian Price (retired Farmers) have inspired the Aboriginal Elders and raised their awareness of the importance of such Reserves and the work carried out by people on the ground to protect Australia’s native flora & fauna.

The Advisory group also stopped at the Twines Reserve to see some amazing gnama holes and behold some beautiful bush scenery under the careful watch of an eagle spirit. Lastly, but by no means least, the group heard the personal life story of an Aboriginal family in Shackleton and viewed another amazing gnama hole that provided life to the Aboriginal people, fauna and more recently the town site.

A special thankyou to our Elders Theo Michael and Kevan Davis for sharing their stories on this trip and all the members of the Aboriginal Advisory Group for their stories and time in making this trip such a success.



Yvonne Kickett releasing a Woylie at Wadderin Wildlife Sanctuary

Merry Christmas from Wheatbelt NRM

On behalf of the Board of Management and staff of Wheatbelt NRM we wish everyone a merry Christmas and a safe and happy new year.

Our photo of 2011 shows a baby Rock Wallaby watched by its mother. This amazing image was captured by Phil Lewis, WWF on camera trap.





Open call for funding

The current business plan sets out the targets for investment in 2012-13 to ensure we stay on track to achieving the government's five-year Caring for our Country outcomes.

The 2012-13 business plan highlights the types of applications needed to deliver against the outstanding targets of Caring for our Country.

Open call applications

In this business plan, applications are invited through the open call investment process for projects over \$20 000 (GST exclusive). As a guide, projects are not expected to exceed \$500 000 (GST exclusive).

The exception to the \$500 000 guide is land acquisition proposals under the National Reserve System (NRS) where land value is a factor.

The open call investment process is the principal way in which funding for projects can be sought under this business plan. It provides the opportunity for diverse groups and organisations to obtain funding.

For example, applicants can submit open call applications to address targets related to Ramsar wetlands, the NRS, coastal community engagement and sustainable farm practices.

Applicants should plan their projects to meet these Caring for our Country targets.

Partnerships with business and industry

The Government encourages groups and organisations to leverage matching funding from business and industry sectors for projects which directly contribute to Caring for our Country targets and outcomes.

There is an increased focus in business and industry on issues such as climate change adaptation, supply chain and corporate social responsibility. This is an opportunity for them to achieve natural resource management outcomes—partnered and working with regional natural resource management organisations, local and state government agencies, non-government organisations, local community groups, research institutions and Indigenous organisations.

Examples include a mining company working with a local community group to improve local wetlands, and fishing cooperatives supporting Landcare to improve riparian vegetation and minimise the effluent run-off from dairy farms to improve water quality for fish habitat and oyster farming.



These applications will require a specific commitment in writing from the co-investors.

Organisations and groups working together can achieve positive change. The Government encourages partnerships but understands that developing and maintaining them takes time, effort and commitment.

There is no absolute requirement to develop new partnerships for applications under this business plan, unless the partnership is critical to the delivery of the project.

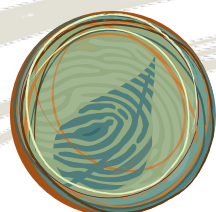
Priorities for investment 2012-13

In preparing your proposal you should carefully consider the information provided in the priorities for investment section of this website.

Applications Close 9 February 2012

For more information visit:

www.nrm.gov.au/funding/business-plan/12-13/index.html



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

PO Box 311
Northam WA 6401
www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Phone 08 9690 2250
Fax 08 9690 2255
info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au