



**MOLONGLO
CATCHMENT
GROUP INC**

Things to watch out for:

- **Nest Boxes** have been installed across ACT as part of a PhD research project. Keep an eye out and you are sure to spot some!
- **Mistletoe** flowers are more conspicuous in summer! Keep an eye out for their pretty drooping red flowers.
- **Snakes** have been out and about in full force this year with many reports of more sightings than usual. Keep a close eye on your dog and leave the snakes alone. Remember, most people that are bitten have been trying to kill or corner them!

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Your Molonglo Catchment

Summer 2013

February 2013

Nest Boxes—Do they increase biodiversity in suburbs? *Anna See*

This is the question that ANU PhD student, Darren Le Roux will be trying to answer as part of his research. His thesis is titled *'Maintaining and perpetuating resources associated with mature trees for wildlife in modified landscapes'*.



Darren Le Roux installing a nest box

His research has three broad goals.

1. To measure the current availability of resources important to wildlife (e.g.

tree hollows) across different land-use types (e.g. nature reserves, pastureland, and urban parks) and track the trajectory of these resources over time to determine how sustainable they are for future generations.

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It's Your Tackle.... Look After It!!! *Stephen Skinner*

The Australian Platypus Conservancy reported recently that numbers of sightings of platypus and water rats had dropped in the Queanbeyan River area following the floods. Recent anecdotal evidence has suggested that the downturn may be over. The recent silt trop breach in Googong has sparked interest and we have been told that in January and February platypus have been seen in the

Queanbeyan near the mouth of Googong Creek, in the Wickerslack lane area, in the reach in front of Barracks Flat and in the Oaks Estate area and from there into the Molonglo as well. We have also been told that there are platypus active in the Burbong area of the Molonglo, above the Molonglo Gorge. People have commented that they haven't seen too many water rats lately, sadly.



Devastating. The drowned Platypus at Barracks Flat. *Andy Westcott*

Unfortunately one of the platypus active in the Barracks Flat area has come to grief. It was found tangled in fishing line near White Rock on Sunday 17th of February, drowned! This highlights a problem that just won't go away. When people use our riverbanks for leisure activities they must remember to dispose of the things they bring with them in a safe and sensible manner. The heavy gauge line that drowned the platypus was fitter with a large lure, probably more suited to coastal than river fishing. The lure was snagged and the fishing line abandoned...forming a simple but effective trap. The platypus swam in and drowned of exhaustion while attempting to release itself.

Nest Boxes—Do they increase biodiversity in suburbs? *Contrn...*

(Continued from page 1)

2. Second, to determine what biodiversity value native trees of different size classes have in terms of the wildlife they support (birds, bats and invertebrates) across landscapes with varying levels of modification.

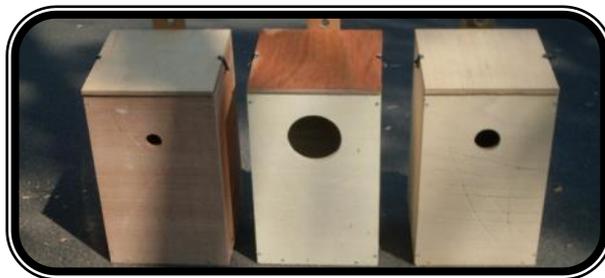
3. To trial the effectiveness of artificial nest boxes as a biodiversity offset tool aimed at perpetuating tree hollows in impacted ecosystems.

It was this third goal that enabled me to spend a day with Darren to help him put up nest

boxes in Tuggeranong. All over the ACT Darren is erecting simple wooden nest boxes. The boxes have different sized holes and he is putting them on different sized trees, at different heights and aspects. The boxes are located in suburban areas so it will be very interesting to see what

occupies them. Hopefully not too many Mynas or bees!!!

The results will help to determine if nest boxes are valuable enough in a suburban setting to be used as an offset for impacting on natural trees with hollows. We look forward to reading Darren's finished thesis!



The nest boxes have different sized entrances



Nest boxes are installed at different aspects

Invasive Animals CRC Update *Jessica Marsh*

The Invasive Animals CRC (IA CRC) has recently embarked on a further five years of work under the Commonwealth Government's Cooperative Research Centres program. We are continuing our investigation into new methods of detection and management of the impacts of Australia's key vertebrate pest species such as rabbits, wild dogs and carp.

The IA CRC also has a national NRM facilitation and engagement project that helps deliver this research and knowledge to on ground practitioners and land managers through all the NRM agencies. The NRM facilitation and engagement team can also offer technical advice regarding regional vertebrate pest strategies and facilitate coordinated group management across various

land tenure.

In the last few months, some new PestSmart resources have been finalised and are now available on the web at www.feral.org.au/pestsmart. Some examples of the new products include the glovebox guide for managing rabbits, the working plan to manage wild dogs, guidelines for preparing a working plan to manage wild dogs, guidelines for planning carp fishing competitions, and

many more.

Additionally, the 2012 'Feral Photos' competition was a great success with many entries being received and they can also be viewed online at www.feral.org.au.

2013 calendars featuring images from the 2012 competition have been produced and are available while they last- if you would like a copy, pass on your

postal details to jessica.marsh@dpi.nsw.gov.au. There will be another competition run this year so make sure you get out there and take some photos of those feral animals in your area.



Subscribe to our newsletters: 'NRM Notes' by emailing jessica.marsh@dpi.nsw.gov.au and 'FeralFlyer' at <http://www.invasiveanimals.com/>

Rabbit Control in Molonglo Catchment *Rachel Marks*

Those of you who have been involved with the Molonglo Catchment Group will be aware of our rabbit control project. In May last year, this incorporated a coordinated release of Calicivirus throughout the catchment. There were varied results of this, some landholders noting a significant decrease in rabbit numbers, some no change, and some reported an increase! It is anticipated that though the Calicivirus is not visible at the moment, as it is a live virus it will re-occur naturally with the return of cooler, damp weather.

"The decision to use Pindone was not made lightly, and is not something to be recommended as a perpetual solution."

Whatever the outcome from this, there is no doubt that there are plenty of rabbits around this season, with rabbits in house yards, back paddocks, roadsides, even reported to be found jumping through bedroom windows! This sort of population explosion is the impetus behind the decision to train landholders in the use of Pindone poison. Of course, the use of these chemicals is only done with appropriate training, and at the landholders free choice.

The decision to use Pindone was not made lightly, and is not something to be recommended as a perpetual solution, merely a population knock-down before

implementing further control measures such as shooting, burrow destruction (ripping), fumigation and harbour removal – especially large blackberry clumps. If you remove blackberries you can ‘kill 2 birds with one stone’ – one less weed species, and rabbit harbour removal! It is recommended that landholders choose at least 2 or more methods, and use these concurrently and with consistency.

The MCG worked with the Livestock Health and Pest Authority to provide 3 courses to provide information and the opportunity to become accredited in the use of Pindone & 1080. 71 people attended these courses, and are in the process of applying for (& receiving) accreditation, should they wish to go ahead with the Pindone baiting on their land. The MCG is providing these courses and the Pindone-laced carrots to be distributed in late March.

For more information regarding rabbit control please contact our Project Officer, Rachel Marks, on 6299 2119 or projects@molonglocatchment.org.au



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

This project is funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country



Rabbit enjoying some free feed carrots *Bill Hall*



Poison workshop—Royalla *Rachel Marks*

Friends of Black Mountain *Linda Beveridge*

Weeding Party 2 February 2013

Our Wonderful Weeders removed Bluebell creeper and other weeds in the comparative cool of the South side of Black Mountain, with support from Molonglo Catchment Group.



The weeding party *Jean Geue*

This species of Sollya (*Billardiera heterophylla*) is native to Western Australia, but has become an environmental weed in many areas of south-eastern Australia, and is identified by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service as one of the priorities for weed management. We also had the opportunity to deal with other weeds nearby.

We were grateful for the rains earlier in the week and the night before which made it easy to pull young plants with minimum disturbance to the soil. We also “cut and dabbed” large bushes of Sollya near the Botanic Garden track, and beside the Black Mountain Drive. All adding up to approximately 16 cubic metres of the Sollya removed.

Other delightful aspects included a basket-weaver Weeder who selected some branches, roots and twigs from the removed bushes to make an item for an exhibition of baskets made from Australian native plants at the Australian Botanical Gardens in a month or two; so we will be looking forward to seeing that.



Towing a large Sollya bush out of the valley

Jean Geue

BURRA SPRAY SAFE AND SAVE COURSE AND WEED ID WORKSHOP!

If you live in Burra and are on a small property then this is a MUST DO! Spray Safe and Save is run by Craig Day and will teach you all you need to know about safe and efficient chemical application and much more. The course runs for 2 days and will be held over 2 weekends. The Weed ID workshops will be run by Alison Elvin and will include information on alternatives to chemical control of weeds. It will be run for 3 hours in the evening. Alison can also be booked on the night to visit your property to provide individual advice.

SPRAY SAFE AND SAVE - 13 AND 20 April (You must attend both!) FREE Catering provided

WEED ID - 16 OR 22 April 6 to 9 pm FREE Catering provided

Both workshops will be held in the Burra Hall

Registration essential! For more information contact Anna 6299 2119 or coordinator@molonglocatchment.org.au



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The operation of the Molonglo Catchment Group and Waterwatch program is assisted by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and the ACT Government. Some administrative assistance is provided by the Australian Government's GVESHO program.

ACT Centenary Bioblitz

25th—27 October 2013

Join us for Canberra's first ever collaborative race to identify as many kinds of plants, animals, algae and fungi at Black Mountain between Friday 25th October morning and late Sunday 27th October afternoon.

A bioblitz comprises scientists, naturalists, citizen scientists and members of the public working together to record a snapshot of the region's biodiversity.

Headquartered at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, all information collected will help assist the Atlas of Living Australia's online portal to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy and benefit from Australia's remarkable biodiversity.

How will the data be recorded?

Data collected will be recorded into the Atlas of Living Australia, a publicly searchable database of all the known plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms in Australia.

The Atlas of Living Australia's mission is to share biodiversity knowledge by providing the tools for the community to capture, store, retrieve, visualise and analyse all data collected. The Atlas has already been involved in two successful bioblitzes and their supporting tools such as mobile apps allow participants to capture images on their smartphones.

The Bioblitz will be launched on the Saturday morning after a free breakfast.

Project Partners



How can I be involved?

Lead a survey! If you have experience in collecting data on specific flora or fauna and would like to take a small group of people on a survey on Black Mountain then we would love to hear from you.

Assist a survey! We need volunteers to help with the surveys. This will involve being paired up with a leader and assisting them with recording, organisation and OH&S.

Come along! Come along during the event to join one of the surveys! Make sure you register your interest so we can include you in our mail outs!

Who do I contact?

Rachel Marks, Project Officer for the Molonglo Catchment Group, is coordinating the organisation of the ACT Centenary Bioblitz, so please contact her with any enquiries or to register your interest.

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