



# Working Together

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**Inside this issue:**

Opening Ceremony—Coolamon	1
Murray Bridge ALOC Cactus Control	1 & 4
A day and night in the Life of Lenger Reserve	2
TurtleSAT Community Turtle Monitoring App	3
Simply Saltbush	4
Upcoming AGM	4

## Opening Ceremony—Coolamon

At the start of Reconciliation Week the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (MACAI - NGANGURAKU/PERAMANGK) performed a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony before officially revealing the Coolamon that has been created in our Bushtucker Garden at Meldanda.



MACAI Opening Ceremony

In 2013 the Mid Murray LAP was successful with a Country ArtsSA Grant to work with the local Aboriginal community and artist to create a sculpture for the Bushtucker Garden. What developed was the incorporation of Aboriginal drawings carved onto a metal Coolamon. A Coolamon is a strip of

bark that acts as a vessel, used by Aboriginal people to carry food, water or babies. The Coolamon made as part of this project incorporates the hand-made bush foods by local Aboriginal people inside it.

The Bushtucker Garden is an interpretive space that displays numerous bush foods and other plants used by Aboriginal people. One of the aims of the project was connecting and engaging with students through the Indigenous Community Educator to engage with local Indigenous peoples to ensure cultural relativity is present in connection with the public sculptural works in the Meldanda Bush Tucker Garden. This project has been a collaborative event involving local artist Alexandra Devitt-Lansom with school students and educationalists from Cambrai Area School, Mannum Community College in three creative workshops to design images for the Coolamon, make the ceramic bush food and the small native

plaster and clay animals scattered throughout Meldanda. Further collaboration has been established with the Mannum Community College Aboriginal Educational Officer, MACAI peoples and the broader community. This project has, and continues to promote engagement in the arts, community cultural activities and positive promotion in the recognition of Australia's Indigenous culture. There were over 100 people that attended the ceremony and we were privileged to be a part of it.



Mannum Community College students & artist



Alfie Gollan, Murray Bridge ALOC Team, treating wheel cactus at the Swiatnik property near Swan Reach

## Murray Bridge ALOC Cactus Control by Phil McNamara

In April and May this year, the Murray Bridge Aboriginal Learning on Country (ALOC) team joined the local effort to control and stop the spread of wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) in the region.

The ALOC program is a natural resources management training and employment program for Aboriginal community members which began at

Calperum Station in the Riverland in 2008. Since then, ALOC projects have been run at Berri, Gerard, Glossop, Monarto Zoo, Raukkan and now Murray Bridge.

The Murray Bridge team started in November 2013 and employs three Aboriginal community members. The team has already done some great work including, fencing at

Murray Park in Murray Bridge, willow control at Swanport and Riverglades wetlands, box-thorn and rabbit warren mapping at Narrinyeri Hills, and rabbit control at Mowantjie Willauwar Conservation Park. The wheel cactus control project took place on Adrian Swiatnik's property between Ridley and Swan Reach Conservation Parks. Wheel cactus

**‘...rehabilitate the formerly grazed natural vegetation while controlling the advance of invasive weed and rabbit populations.’**

## **A Day and Night in the Life at Lenger Reserve** *by Janet Pedler*

In fantastic weather on April 5<sup>th</sup>, the National Trust of SA and the Mid Murray Local Action Planning held a workshop centring on the biodiversity found near Mannum on the NTSA Lenger Reserve. Interested local visitors mixed with others from as far away as Gawler, in a range of activities around the natural habitat, plants and animals the reserve supports.

Long-time NTSA volunteers on Lenger Reserve, Len Phillips and Melville Liddle painted a picture of the European



Participants enjoying the walk and talk at Lenger

history of the reserve before it was gifted to the National Trust in 1978. Many volunteer hours of hard work have been put in since to preserve the

hut, and rehabilitate the formerly grazed natural vegetation while controlling the advance of invasive weed and rabbit populations.

The fantastic rehabilitation progress so far was made obvious by expert members of the Field Naturalist Society of SA sharing their knowledge of habitat and animal activity on the reserve, past and present. In guided walks Peter Matejic and Janet Pedler focussed attention on native vegetation, reptiles, birds and mammals now found on the reserve while Graham Medlin pro-

**‘...Barn and Boobok Owl pellets (regurgitated compressed bones, skulls, fur and feathers from their prey ...’**

## **A Day and Night in the Life at Lenger Reserve** *continued*

vided information on the sea creature fossils found in earthen banks and the cracks and crevices that provide shelter to nocturnal animals such as bats, possums and owls.

In the shade of the Lenger Hut, Graham Medlin took the group on a natural history journey back in time to the habitat once provided by the River corridor. With a stunning display of sub-fossil bones found in Barn Owl pellets

nearby, Graham explained how Barn and Boobok Owl pellets (regurgitated compressed bones, skulls, fur and feathers from their prey) are effectively scientific grab samples of what’s there at the exact time the prey animals were caught by the owl. Collecting ancient owl pellets from a variety of caves and fissures across SA and expertly processing and identifying their contents (volunteer work based at the South Aus-

tralian Museum), has allowed Graham and team reveal the distributions over time of many small mammals across regional SA. A great many of these species have become extinct soon after European settlement, while many other living species are rarely documented any other way than being in pellets.

Participants were able to examine the results of one such pellet collection from a cave nearby on the River Murray that contained

**‘...many species of small mammals that are now extinct, two of which ... are only known from a handful of sightings or specimens ...’**

## **A Day and Night in the Life at Lenger Reserve** *continued*

many species of small mammals that are now extinct, two of which, aside from the pellet material, are only known from a handful of sightings or specimens during early settlement.

Staying on into dusk and early evening, adults and children were shown two live bats by Dennis Matthews and Aimee Linke. They also showed the group how bats are captured in harp traps that had been set earlier, the new MidLAP bat brochure –Making Friends

with Backyard Bats—and talked about the Mid Murray LAP focus on learning more about bat populations through community monitoring. In a live demonstration AnaBat technology was used to record high frequency bat calls and identify the bat species present at the time.

The group finished the evening under a star-lit sky, with a spotlighting tour looking for nocturnal creatures and re-

cording bats along the edge of Saunders Creek.



Dennis Matthews explaining how a harp trap works to the group

## TurtleSAT Community Turtle Monitoring App

Smart phones could soon be a turtle's best friend with a new app for Australians to report turtle sightings launched today, World Turtle Day.

*TurtleSAT* - Turtle Survey and Analysis Tools – is an easy to use free mapping app for all smart phones and tablets. “By downloading the *TurtleSAT* app every phone becomes a sophisticated data logger and every user becomes a field assistant in the biggest study of freshwater turtles ever undertaken in Australia,” says Dr Ricky Spencer a zoologist at the University of Western

Sydney and one of the app's developers. The app is designed for quick data entry with picture guides to help users identify the turtle they have spotted. The phone's inbuilt GPS automatically records the location. Users can also easily adjust the coordinates on a map to make it more accurate or log previous sightings. For those without a smart phone there is an easy to use website ([TurtleSAT.org.au](http://TurtleSAT.org.au)) to record sightings once people get home or to work.

“We're hoping everyone with

a smart phone or a computer will join this unique study to map the distribution of turtles in Australian waterways. There is a turtle crisis happening at the moment, with declines of over 90 percent in parts of the Murray River,” says Dr Spencer.

Turtles live in almost all rivers, creeks, lakes and ponds throughout most of Australia, yet scientists have been unable to build a complete picture of these quiet environmental cleaners.

“Turtles play an essential role in the ecosystem,” says Dr

*‘... a turtle crisis happening at the moment, with declines of over 90 percent in parts of the Murray River...’*

## TurtleSAT Community Turtle Monitoring App *continued*

Spencer. “They help maintain water health for plants and other animals by ‘vacuuming up’ algae and dead material and eating young pest fish, such as European carp.”

Dr Spencer runs turtle field surveys in some of the nation's most famous rivers, including the Murray and he raises several hundred hatchlings every year at the UWS Hawkesbury campus.

However, there are many dangers for turtles in Australia, which could threaten their

future; from foxes eating nesting females and their eggs to droughts and urban development. Dr Spencer says data collected through ‘citizen science’ using the *TurtleSAT* app or website, will help scientists better protect turtles.

“If people report lots of sightings near busy roads or frequent road kills, there are some simple and inexpensive measures we can introduce at those locations, which help direct turtles and other wild-

life to safer areas,” says Dr Spencer. “A hot spot on the *TurtleSAT* maps will identify nesting grounds, which could be targeted to reduce the number of foxes at critical times of the breeding season.”

“It's about getting current and geographically accurate information so we can respond in the most efficient way to give turtles the best chance of survival,” Dr Spencer says.

*TurtleSAT* is a collaboration of the University of Western



Predated turtles eggs at Marks Landing

## TurtleSAT Community Turtle Monitoring App *continued*

Sydney, The University of Sydney, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Invasive Animals CRC, The Field Naturalist Society of South Australia and the Barbara Hardy Institute at the University of South Australia. Link to *TurtleSAT* - <http://turtlesat.org.au>

The Mid Murray LAP is supporting the plight of our River Murray Turtles and has successfully secured **\$8,000**

from the **SAMDBNRM Board** for a local project to improve access for turtles to known nesting sites. The aim of this project is to work with landholders and volunteers at various wetlands in the Mid Murray region to improve access for turtles to nest. Turtles like to lay there eggs on sandy sites near wetlands with suitable vegetation, there are several sites already known in the area which are restricted by the reeds that

grow in dense stands. Awareness will also be raised on the impact foxes are having on turtle nests with remote cameras set up to capture footage of predation with the intent to support ongoing fox control. More information on the turtle project and access to the Murray River Turtle Information Package by Thompson and Spencer can be found on the Mid Murray LAP website [www.midmurraylap.org.au](http://www.midmurraylap.org.au)

*‘..a local project to improve access for turtles to known nesting sites’.*

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of South Australia



Government of South Australia  
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin  
Natural Resources Management Board

Mid  
Murray  
Council



Murray Bridge ALOC Cactus Control *continued*

is a declared plant that has major environmental and economic impacts, *continued pg 4* and to date there has been lots of work done to control cactus both on and off park in this area. The aim of the project therefore was to extend the existing work, particularly west from the Eastern boundary of Ridley Conservation Park. The team initially met on site with Aimee Linke (Mid-Murray Local Action Planning

Committee) and Scott Hutchens (Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin) who introduced wheel cactus to the team and demonstrated the preferred control technique. Most of the work occurred in April this year, with one final day in May due to wet weather. The team started on the eastern (Ridley CP) side of the property, where work has previously been done, and

treated cactus west of that line over a 25 hectare area. The team used cordless drills to create a hole in the main trunk of the plant where herbicide (neat Daconate) was injected using injection guns and backpacks. On the final day, the team GPS mapped the treated area and plants were already showing significant signs of decline. Following the team's cactus

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Murray Bridge ALOC Cactus Control *continued*

control work, they headed into the busy revegetation period with site preparation and tubestock planting at several sites including Mount Barker Creek near Callington and Narrinyeri Hills near Monarto. Funding support for the Murray Bridge ALOC Cactus Control project was provided by the Australian Government and the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Levy. The team is employed by Ngarrindjeri Ruwe Contracting, and is supported by the Ngarrindjeri

Regional Authority, Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin, Rural City of Murray Bridge, and Local Action Planning groups (including Mid-Murray, Eastern Hills and Murray Plains, Goolwa to Wellington, and Murray Mallee).

Simply Saltbush  
by Nadine Brown

Order your copy today for  
\$25.00 plus p&h

[www.midmurraylap.org.au](http://www.midmurraylap.org.au)

Upcoming AGM

Put the date in your diaries for the Mid Murray LAP's Annual General Meeting, to be held on the 13th of November at Swan Reach. Our guest speaker this year will be Professor Mike Thompson from the University of Sydney talking about our Murray River Turtles. The meeting will be from 10-12pm followed by lunch, catered by the local Swan Reach Community, look forward to seeing you there.