

VOLUNTEER TREE PLANTERS SHINE!

Winton Wetlands volunteers can give themselves a much-deserved pat on the back after achieving a target of 2,000 new trees planted across the wetlands reserve during Winter.

The trees were planted by volunteers and staff in planting days held on Friday 29 July, Sunday 31 July, and Sunday 28 August.

The Friday 29 July event involved around 100 students from three schools: Marian College Myrtleford, Numurkah Secondary College, and Sacred Heart College Yarrowonga.

A second school day due to be held on Monday 29 August, which would have involved students from St Bernard's Primary School, Wangaratta, needed to be cancelled due to bad weather. An additional staff planting day was carried out to help make up the planting targets.

The Sunday 31 July event was open to members of the public,



Student volunteers at one of the recent Tree Planting Days held at Winton Wetlands.

with more than 20 volunteers and staff on board. Similar numbers came to the second public day on 28 August.

Thanks to everyone's combined efforts, the target of 2,000 trees for volunteer planting over July, August and September was reached.

A further 5,600 trees and shrubs have subsequently been planted for Winton Wetlands by

employees of Merriwa Industries, a Wangaratta and Wodonga-based packaging firm and social enterprise which employs local people of diverse abilities. This brings the Winter-Spring total of trees planted close to 8,000!

Restoration manager Dr Lisa Farnsworth says the latest tree planting drive has helped to achieve important targets for revegetation of the wetlands reserve, thereby contributing to

the ecological balance of the land being restored.

"Apart from the direct benefits coming from the plants themselves, this work has helped support native bird and animal populations," Dr Farnsworth says. "We couldn't have got it all done without the fantastic contributions that have been made by local schools and members of the public."

POLLUTER PAYS

An unusual aspect of the latest planting events was that they were funded by Victoria's Environment Protection Authority as part of a new scheme under which convicted polluters have to pay for environmental restoration work.

Benalla Magistrate's Court ordered a particle board manufacturer, D Monsbent Pty Ltd, trading as D & R Henderson, to pay for revegetation work being done at Winton Wetlands instead of paying a fine of \$80,000 to the court. The company and

its director David Henderson were fined after the Benalla manufacturing facility exceeded its licence limits for airborne emissions and failed to notify the EPA of the breaches.

Winton Wetlands Committee of Management worked with the EPA and others including Merriwa Industries, Park Lane Nursery, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, the Regent Honey Eater Project and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, to come up with a suitable project.

This is in line with the Victorian Government's Biodiversity 2037 Plan for Protecting the Victorian Environment.

Other items flowing from the EPA funding package include additional seeding by members of the Regent Honey Eater Project, further aerial seeding planned for summer 2022/23, and development of an indigenous planting guide that will be made available to the general public.

All in all, a great community effort, a great example of

cooperation across diverse organisations, and a fine outcome!

There are more opportunities for volunteer tree-planting over the summer period. It's friendly, healthy, and fun for all ages. To register interest and get more information, go to: <https://wintonwetlands.org.au/get-involved/volunteers/>



COFFEE AND CULTURE ON THE WETLANDS

Around 30 people participated in a morning tea held at Winton Wetlands in honour of NAIDOC Week, on Friday 8 July.

NAIDOC week is an annual event which each year celebrates all things indigenous, highlighting the richness, variety and history of the world's oldest living culture — and all that's happening in the here and now.

Winton Wetlands is known as Mokoan to Yorta Yorta people, the traditional custodians of the land, and so the morning tea was devoted to giving some insights into what Mokoan is and what it has meant to Yorta Yorta people for countless generations.

The reserve area has long been a gathering place and meeting point for indigenous people, both Yorta Yorta and others passing through, with an abundance of wetland wildlife and places like the Lunette (shown on maps of Winton Wetlands) that are seen to have spiritual significance.

Koori cultural officer Nikki James welcomed members of the public with a smoking ceremony outside the Hub and Café, and over morning tea she told stories of the wetlands and answered questions about indigenous culture.

Attendees who chose to stay on were also treated to a tour of part

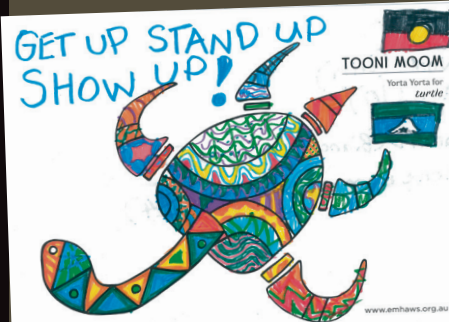


Koori Cultural Officer Nikki James, a proud Yorta Yorta woman, conducts a smoking ceremony to welcome visitors to the NAIDOC Week morning tea.

of the new indigenous outdoor sculpture walk recently installed at the wetlands, known as *Lotjpatj Natjan Danak*.

This walk features the work of 15 talented Yorta Yorta artists and is easily accessible in a short walk from the Hub and Café.

As part of our NAIDOC Week celebration, there was a colouring competition for children featuring drawings of indigenous species to be found at Winton Wetlands.



A sample of one of the colourful winning entries.

BIODIVERSITY: WHAT A MOUTHFUL!

September was Biodiversity Month in Australia and that — of course — includes here at Winton Wetlands.

At Winton Wetlands we are all about biodiversity. In lay terms, biodiversity is simply about having the widest possible range of native plants and animals and other life forms able to grow and prosper together, in a way that contributes to the health and welfare of all.

The existence of one species contributes to the success of another, by being a source of food, or by helping to clean and purify, or by serving some other purpose.

A planet with biodiversity is a healthy one, much more capable

of sustaining human life both now and into the future. A planet **without** biodiversity is one which becomes severely depleted and less 'liveable' for species of all kinds — including us in the end!

So we all need to get behind activities which help to encourage biodiversity.

Did you know that wetlands make a particularly big contribution to biodiversity simply because of the sheer number and variety of flora and fauna species they can support?



The brolga, an occasional visitor to Winton Wetlands that we're hoping to see more often.
Photo: Chris Tzaros

As the biggest wetland restoration project in the southern hemisphere, Winton Wetlands is able to be especially useful. Did you know, for example, that Winton Wetlands is home to:

- NEARLY 250 NATIVE BIRD SPECIES**
- MORE THAN 830 PLANT SPECIES**
- NEARLY 30 REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**
- AT LEAST 5 DIFFERENT FISH SPECIES**
- AND MUCH MORE.**

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

A major part of the work going on at Winton Wetlands is about bringing back native species which were once abundant in the area, attracted at different times by the varying phases of growth and rebirth that come with water levels naturally rising and falling.

Some species, such as the growling grass frog, became locally extinct during the period that Lake Mokoan existed on the

wetlands site. They were not able to adapt to a permanently flooded environment created by humans.

Important work is under way now (subject to approvals) to bring growling grass frogs from other parts of Victoria where they still exist and relocate them back into the Wetlands.

You might ask: Why bother? The reason is that these frogs make a

contribution to a more balanced and healthy environment in many ways, including as a source of food for many of the magnificent native bird species once common on our Wetlands. Bring back growling grass frogs and we bring back many more native birds too.

And so it goes on, with each species contributing in some way to the local environment being more liveable for others.

While the word 'Biodiversity' can be a bit of a mouthful, it really matters. In too many places around the world, biodiversity is in retreat — but without it, we're all in serious trouble.

It's at the forefront of most things we do on the Wetlands. In fact, if Winton Wetlands was to be given a middle name it might just be **Biodiversity!**

GOTTA LOVE THOSE YELLOW FEET!

The **yellow-footed antechinus** (*antechinus flavipesis*) is a small marsupial mouse that can be found in various locations around the Winton Wetlands reserve, holding its own against a wide array of potential predators both day and night.

Not enough is known about members of this species, partly because a great deal of persistence and patience is required to locate and study them closely.

Better known and studied is their cousin, the so-called **agile antechinus** (*antechinus agilis*), a tree-dweller which typically lives in heavily wooded environments rather than the more varied wetlands environment to be found around Winton North.

The two varieties do seem to have a lot in common but there are interesting differences too.

Some of these differences are being brought to light and documented through fantastic ongoing field observation work by a dedicated antechinus enthusiast **Derek Hilton**, a regular visitor to Winton Wetlands.

Derek's interest in the antechinus began more than 11 years ago at his home in the Dandenong Ranges close to Melbourne. He observed the **agile antechinus** — so named for its very rapid movements — in nearby trees, and his curiosity was piqued. When he couldn't find enough information to satisfy his curiosity, like any dedicated



A yellow-footed antechinus on the move at Winton Wetlands.

naturalist [amateur or otherwise] he set out to carefully observe, photograph and document what he could access for himself.

Over more than a decade — and with lots of amazing photos and



Derek Hilton in 'observation mode' during one of his regular site visits.

videos — Derek has contributed to a better understanding of the **agile antechinus** close to his own home, and more recently has travelled further afield to view other varieties of antechinus.

Here at Winton Wetlands, he continues to study the life cycle of the yellow-footed antechinus — and has some beautiful photo and video work to show for it.

We'll aim to update you regularly on Derek and his work in future editions, but for now it's worth checking out one of his most recent videos made at Winton Wetlands, in which he seeks to capture the yellow footed antechinus busy in the process of nest-building.

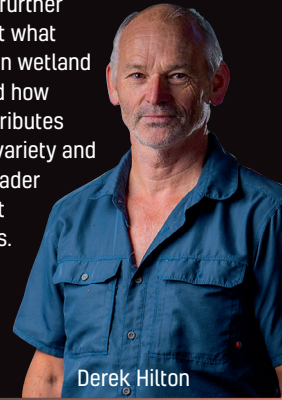
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ci05hRDsh8

You can find other work of Derek's here: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DerekHilton>

KNOWLEDGE WORTH SHARING

Derek is a great example of the commitment shown by a wide range of people who regularly volunteer — often at their own initiative — to come to Winton Wetlands to follow their naturalist passions and help build a rapidly growing body of further knowledge about what exactly goes on in wetland eco-systems and how this activity contributes to the richness, variety and health of the broader environment that supports all of us.

We salute you Derek!



Derek Hilton



Don't count me — I'm not real! One of the beautiful pieces of outdoor sculpture created by Yorta Yorta artists for the recently opened Lotjpatj Natjan Danak sculpture walk. More at: <https://wintonwetlands.org.au/sculpturewalk/>

KEEPING INVADERS AT BAY

Feral animals continue to be a problem at Winton Wetlands, threatening native species and their habitats. For this reason there is regular feral shooting on the reserve, carried out by licensed pest control contractors.

These events are held on scheduled dates, with ample warning given to neighbours and visitors, and signs placed around the reserve.

The most recent shooting event was held after hours from 26 September to 1 October, resulting in hundreds of invasive animals being shot.

Primary targets were foxes and feral pigs, but other feral animals including hares, rabbits and deer



A wild pig (boar), an occasional intruder onto the Winton Wetlands reserve.

were targeted as well.

Feral pigs have been a priority target due to the increase in the incidence of pig activity in and around the reserve.

If you see pigs or their diggings anywhere on the reserve, please report these sightings — along

with GPS or other location information if possible — to the Winton Wetlands Project Office: phone (03) 5766 4462 or email info@wintonwetlands.org.au .

We're committed to doing all we can to reduce pest animal impacts on the region's wildlife and livestock.

COUNTING KANGAS

We keep careful track of the number of kangaroos across the Winton Wetlands reserve, with regular counts made by field staff, who make comparisons with earlier years.

The population of kangaroos can vary according to seasonal and other factors, but at present there are plenty to be found by animal watchers.

The most recent kangaroo count was conducted in various locations across the reserve during September 2022.

Latest counting of the population of eastern grey kangaroos suggests the population density is currently 1.2 kangaroos per hectare, a slight reduction on last year, estimated at 1.4 per hectare.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE RIVER RED GUM!

River Red Gum trees across Winton Wetlands are celebrating the recent crowning of the River Red Gum — or *Eucalyptus Camaldulensis* — as "Australia's favourite tree".

According to viewers of the ABC television series of the same name, the river red gum is the tree that has the most special place in the affections of Australians.

And who are we to argue? There are thousands of river red gums to be found across the Winton Wetlands reserve, along with many thousands of red gum

'stags' — remnants of dead trees — left over from the days when the wetlands area had been artificially flooded for irrigation purposes to form Lake Mokoan.



BLOOMIN' DELIGHTFUL

From Spring and often well into Summer, Winton Wetlands is a riot of colour from a wide variety of native wildflowers, blooming in all their glory. Here's just a few of those to be found right now.

If you are out and about on one of our many walking trails, see which ones you can find!



Eutaxia



Happy Wanderer



Bursaria



Wattle

Enjoy great food and drink with your WINTON WETLANDS WALKABOUT

No trip to Victoria's north-east is complete without a stop-off at the Mokoan Hub and Café, located at Winton Wetlands.

We reckon our coffee is some of the best you'll find anywhere in regional Victoria. And as for our cakes and meals, we've got just one word: **YUM!**

All with a view out across the expansive Winton Wetlands.

The Mokoan Café and Hub is available for hire as a great location for **EVENTS** too! Just ask.

- 🕒 Open 7 days 9am-4pm
- 📍 @MokoanHub
- 📷 @mokoan_hub_cafe
- 👉 wintonwetlands.org.au/cafe-function



📍 652 Lake Mokoan Road, Winton North
wintonwetlands.org.au

Download our free Winton Wetlands app.

For limited mobility options, please check out our website.

MOKOAN HUB & CAFÉ

