

Mexican feather grass -flowering now!

Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) is now flowering so please keep an eye out for it in your area. If you see a grass you think may be Mexican feather grass, please do not disturb it. Report the location as accurately as possible to Biosecurity Queensland on 132523

For more information visit the Primary Industries home page on the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation website at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_8943.htm



Hi,

My name is Pippa Bagshaw and I have actually been working with QMDC for three years in the Communication, Evaluation and Capacity Building team. My role was as the Landcare Education and Communications Officer. I have only recently made the change into the Border Rivers Vegetation Technical Officer role, and look forward to the exciting opportunities that it will bring my way.

Prior to working with QMDC I was a primary school teacher, and taught in far north Queensland (Cape York), the UK and Goondiwindi.

I grew up on a sheep and cattle property east of Tamworth in NSW, and still visit the family farm regularly to help out where I can. I also enjoy being outdoors (especially if it involves travelling to new and exciting places) and like to keep fit through sport. I think the Goondiwindi region is a fantastic place to live in, with lots to do and plenty of friendly people to help make it home.

I hold a Bachelor of Education and a Graduate Diploma in Natural Resources. I look forward to meeting some of you out and about during the coming months.

Did this newsletter reach you at your new address?

If you have changed your postal address, phone number or email address, please contact the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee to tell us your new details.

email: landforwildlife@qmdc.org.au ■ phone (07) 4637 6228.

If you would like to arrange for a Land for Wildlife assessment on your property, please contact the Land for Wildlife representative nearest to you.

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Land for Wildlife online: via www.qmdc.org.au
(follow the links via 'projects' to 'Land for Wildlife')

Land for Wildlife
in the Queensland Murray Darling-Basin
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Summer 2010/2011

"...country of droughts and flooding rains..."

Greetings,

As we bring you this delayed edition of the Land for Wildlife Newsletter, the sentiments of Dorothea Mackellar's "Our Country" couldn't ring more true than it has during recent weeks. After so many years of drought, floods have devastated much of Queensland and other eastern states, whilst heat waves and bushfire have wreaked havoc in Western Australia. In these difficult times, our thoughts and best wishes go out to those who have suffered loss of loved ones, homes and livelihoods. We hope that the recovery is swift and look forward to the good that will eventually come from these life giving rains.

With massive stock and crop losses, there would also no doubt be significant impacts on the native flora and fauna. This land, however, like its people, has a remarkable ability to recover and in the coming months we should see a snowballing effect of life and procreation. Already the profusion of insect life, butterflies, dragonflies and spiders (try to walk anywhere without picking up a trail of silk at the moment) is testament to the improvement in ecological conditions which will ultimately radiate throughout the food web.

On another note (and part of the reason for this late edition), Kate Steel has left QMDC for more tropical pastures and is currently working with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in the Reef Guardians program. For me it seems I have come full circle. I spent four years delivering the Land for Wildlife program in Toowoomba and across four shires in the Lockyer Valley some 10 years ago. I have been with QMDC in the Training Coordinator role, and now, in the wake of Kate's departure, I have agreed to take on the role of Land for Wildlife Coordinator for the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin. It feels like coming home. I think Land for Wildlife is a fantastic program and am thrilled to see extensions of the program into concepts such as Land for Wildlife Plus, where landholders can access resources to help them to implement their LfW objectives. I look forward to meeting many of you during the coming months/years and I welcome any contributions or story ideas that you may have for this (your) newsletter.

We are also joined by Pip Bagshaw (introduction on page 4) as the new Vegetation Technical Officer based in Goondiwindi. Feel free to contact Pip, Matt or myself about any Land for Wildlife queries or issues.

Sandy Robertson
Regional Land for Wildlife Coordinator
QMDC

In this edition...

- Wildlife friendly fencing
- Basin Flood Recovery Team
- Weed alert
- Meet Pip Bagshaw

Contacts

For general information about Land for Wildlife, please contact the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee on 07 4637 6200 or go to qmdc.org.au

Wildlife friendly fencing

With many fences down due to flood damage, and in particular those in riparian areas which are also hotspots for many wildlife species, it is timely to maybe consider some alternative options to traditional barbed wire fences.



A distressing image. The Australian Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*, one of the sad victims of a barbed wire fence.

Barbed wire is a major hazard for wildlife. Each year thousands of animals face a cruel death from entanglement on barbs, usually on the top strand. More than 70 species of Australian wildlife have been identified as occasional or regular victims of barbed wire fences. Wildlife friendly fencing is fencing that is safe and effective for wildlife, people and livestock. It involves avoiding the use of barbed wire particularly on the top strand and especially in areas where fences are potential hotspots for entanglement such as along ridgelines, near feed trees and wildlife corridors, and near or over water bodies.

Fences made from high tensile plain wire and utilising long strains (sometimes referred to as suspension fences) are better able to absorb the impact of a frightened or panicked animal without losing tension or causing damage to the strainer assemblies and without causing some of the horrendous injuries that barbed wire can cause.

The high tensile wire used in this type of fence is thinner but stronger and its wider elastic limits allow it to stretch

and relax and it is therefore able to cope with the expansion and contraction caused by heat, cold and animal pressure. Its "springy" nature, however, can make it difficult to handle and dangerous, especially for inexperienced fencers, and should therefore be handled with care.

Further ideas on methods of wildlife friendly fencing as well as testimonials by those who have trialed and tested various types of wildlife friendly fencing can be found on the wildlife friendly fencing website

www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com

This website was set up to help raise awareness of the impact of fencing on Australian wildlife, and to develop guidelines for good practice, not only in the minimising of the use of barbed wire but also in the design and placement of fences to take into account the needs and welfare of our unique wildlife.

Unseen flood victims will take time to recover

Loss of habitat will be a significant issue for many wildlife species as a result of the recent flooding. Grasses and shrubs can die after long periods underwater, causing a severe loss of habitat, which in turn will make it harder for smaller species to recolonise previously flooded areas.

Whilst turtles and frogs are something we would normally associate with plenty of rain, numbers are likely to be significantly reduced, at least in the short term due to destruction of nests and breeding sites.

Echidnas and small mammals and other critters with low mobility or ability to climb or fly may also see significant impacts on their numbers.

Maintaining and protecting corridors of vegetation across the landscape will be crucial to ensuring the reestablishment and continuation of viable populations of wildlife.

The stunning rainbow bee-eater is another potentially unfortunate victim of the recent floods. Found throughout Australia, they breed from August to January and build their nests at the end of a long tunnel (approx. 90cm) excavated into an earth bank. Many suitable nesting sites are likely to have been inundated or eroded away with the recent flooding rains. This species could be helped by protecting creek banks and gullies from excessive stock access. Photo courtesy of Neil Fifer.



This four strand fence (1 plain 2 barb 1 plain) where the top wire can be electrified for extra security if needed has proven sufficient to control cattle and is a much safer option for wildlife.

Community partnership to help flood recovery

Four community-based organisations and regional businesses are banding together to help land managers across the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin as they start the long road to recovery.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) Chief Executive Officer Geoff Penton said the volunteers from QMDC, Landcare, Conservation Volunteers Australia and importantly, Victoria's BlazeAid were ready to help rural residents start the repair process.

"As everyone is aware, the region is in the grip of the aftermath of a major natural disaster and as community-driven and community-based organisations, we are all fully committed to flood recovery efforts," Mr Penton said.

BlazeAid Founder Kevin Butler said the organisation's volunteers were honoured to be able to help and return the favours that many Queenslanders did for Victorian farmers after the Black Saturday fires.

"Back in Victoria, radio and television channels have been dedicated to bringing the news home to Victorians of the flood devastation and it is our firm resolve to come up and lend a hand when times are tough because we are all Australians and we are all together in on this one," Mr Butler said.

Conservation Volunteers Australia Regional Manager Mark Dwyer said the organisation had put together an on-ground practical response program, based on their experiences facilitating support programs in the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, and Cyclone Larry in Far North Queensland.

"We do have considerable resources at hand to manage teams of volunteers to assist landholders, groups and organisations with practical recovery projects. Conservation Volunteers will do its bit to aid those in this time of need in partnership with QMDC," Mr Dwyer said.

Mr Penton said rural land managers across the region faced a mammoth repair task with the loss of essential infrastructure, including fences.

"QMDC staff and Landcare coordinators have already started the important task of contacting land managers to assess their needs and to find out what assistance they may require and this will continue in coming weeks.

"Initially, these extraordinarily generous volunteers have helped landholders around Toowoomba, Highfields and Crows Nest but as more of their colleagues travelled to Queensland and they were joined by local volunteers, Conservation Volunteers' crews and QMDC and Landcare members, their area of operation is expanding both south and west."

Mr Penton said while the volunteers would carry out work across the Basin, the timing would be determined by access, the availability of materials and landholder needs.

"Parts of the region are still underwater and even when those waters recede, we are going to have to wait for roads to re-open and paddocks to dry out before we can safely send these teams in," he said.

If you would like to volunteer to help QMDC, BlazeAid, Conservation Volunteers and Landcare in these efforts, please contact QMDC on 07 4637 6200 (Toowoomba), 07 4620 4600 (Roma) or 07 4671 7900 (Goondiwindi). If you would to find out what sort of assistance these organisations can provide, please contact QMDC, BlazeAid on 0418 530 471 or your local Landcare coordinator.

More information on BlazeAid can be found at www.blazeaid.com, Conservation Volunteers www.cva.org.au and QMDC has a webpage with links to various disaster information sites, visit www.qmdc.org.au.

Follow the basin Flood recovery team's activities on Facebook or Twitter



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