

PANBOOLA UPDATE No 13

Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project Inc.
PO Box 154 Pambula NSW 2549

August 2008

The Annual General Meeting was held in the CWA rooms of Toalla Street on 27 February. The meeting was well attended and nominations were received for all positions. The Committee for 2008 is:

President: Jay Devine
Vice President: Peter Roberts
Secretary: Gail McCombie
Treasurer: Graham Waldon

Rob Bruce
Mary Anne Palmer*
Mandi Stevenson

* Mary Anne has subsequently resigned for personal reasons

At the meeting Jay thanked the outgoing Committee and noted the tremendous development and growth of Panboola under their stewardship. The new Committee is looking forward to a period of consolidation and maintenance at the Panboola site but the good ideas keep happening and there is still much to do. A priority for the management team this year will be to focus on the long-term sustainability of the site by seeking to achieve self financing. The farmland is currently a significant source of finance.

We have been very lucky to receive financial support from the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority to enable us to continue the employment, on a part time basis of Aimee Curtis as our project coordinator. Aimee fulfils a vital role in site management and coordination of volunteer and other support. While new developments continue, as highlighted below, the Committee is conscious that, at this stage of the project, it is vital to consolidate on infrastructure and planning to ensure that the benefits of projects are maximised by a cohesive approach and consistent emphasis on maximising the benefits to the biodiversity of the site.

With this in mind, the Committee is consulting with the bird watcher groups, has commissioned a weed impact study of the area, and is cooperating in a joint project to establish a catchment based water quality monitoring project to enable us to better assess the impact of our efforts on the habitat. The combined result of these studies will provide good benchmarks into the future.

PANBOOLA ACTIVITIES

There has been significant activity within and adjoining Panboola: - the Road Transport Authority have completed the new Pambula Bridge and upgraded the adjoining Princes Highway, the Council has installed the pipeline infrastructure for the reuse sewerage project. The Project Coordinator and site volunteers have been busy with coordination and facilitating these projects to minimise the disruption to our ongoing activities. In particular, Rob Bruce was able to negotiate with the RTA to receive many tonnes of fill from the old highway and

this has been used to fill the Yowaka access roads within Panboola. This will be an exciting upgrade of the entrance road, and will provide all weather access to the new shed being built.

THE NEW SHED



A new shed is under construction at Panboola thanks to a very generous donation from the Wood Family Foundation. The volunteers and work teams will have a shelter for their tools and equipment and a much appreciated place for having their morning tea and lunch.

The shed is being constructed by community workers and volunteers using recycled corrugated iron and local hardwood timbers. It will enable improved maintenance efficiencies as well as providing an appealing place for all of Panboola's volunteers and staff to gather and work

The new shed under construction , July 2008.

The Shed was designed by Eric Rice who kindly donated the drawings and designs. Donations have also been gratefully received from Southcoast Hire in Pambula, in the form of scaffolding for the construction period and a permanent portaloos for the comfort of workers at Panboola.

COMMUNITY WATER GRANT

We have achieved a long held ambition to better manage the storm water run-off along Bullara St.



One of the five sediment dams which have been constructed along Bullara St. Pambula

We managed a project to construct a series of sediment dams along stormwater entrance points adjacent to the billabong which lies to the south of Bullara St. The work was undertaken by the Bega Valley Shire Council in Partnership with the Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project Inc. and funded by the Australian Government under the Community Water Grant .

The billabong lies within a protected area of Panboola known as the Waterbird Sanctuary and the sediment dams will help to prevent a build up of pollutants and sediment, aiding in the maintenance of water quality in the billabong and in the catchment below it.

NEW PLANTINGS

A big project occupying the time of our Project Coordinator has been the fencing and planting of the corridor to link the Pambula River with the existing wetland plantings. This has seen the revegetation of approximately 4 ha of floodplain with over 3000 tree, shrub and lower level species. One and a half kilometres of fencing was constructed to enable the protection of the plants from grazing and create a wildlife corridor linking the Waterbird Sanctuary with South Ben Boyd National Park.

Pedestrian tracks have and will continue to be developed through the corridor to allow access for visitors and maintenance teams and a series of timber passages will enable cattle passage across the corridor so that the floodplain can continue to be sustainably farmed.

This project has been implemented over an eight month period and with assistance from the Envirofund, Bega Valley Shire Council, Southern Rivers CMA, Mission Australia, and DECC.

INFORMATION BOOTH

Pambula Rotary Club has completed this structure near the first gate into Tips Billabong and it was officially opened with the traditional red ribbon and Champagne on 15 April. About 30 people attended this beautiful evening event and the setting sun was shown to great advantage looking through Eric Rice's beautifully designed structure. The panels within the structure carrying interpretive messages continue the high standard of design and layout undertaken by local company Eye Spy Signs. As the President noted, this structure symbolises what a small community of people with good will and a love of their local environment can achieve. It is a wonderful demonstration of a community working together and will be there for future generations. Alan Elton, from Rotary, was asked to cut the ribbon in recognition of his outstanding contribution in coordinating the building work.

FINALLY some less positive news about the decline in migratory shorebird populations and the important role for Panboola

The importance of Panboola as a wetland bird habitat has been highlighted by recent reports of an alarming decline in migratory shorebird populations. A recent large scale aerial survey by researchers at the University of New South Wales has identified that migratory shorebird populations have declined by 73% between 1983 and 2006, while Australia's 15 species of resident shorebirds have declined by 81%.

Loss of habitat has been identified as a major cause of this decline. Professor Richard Kingsford, the author of the report, has highlighted the fact that the wetlands and resting places that the birds rely on are shrinking virtually all along their 10,000 kilometre migration path from Australia to their northern hemisphere breeding grounds. [Nebel. S., J.L. Porter & R.T. Kingsford. 2008. Long-term trends of shorebird populations in eastern Australia and impacts of freshwater extraction. *Biological Conservation* in press]

Regular bird surveys have been carried out at Panboola since October 1997 by members of the Far South Coast Birdwatchers Inc. Some 142 species have been identified including three species of International migratory shorebirds which are protected under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* – Latham's Snipe, the Red-necked Stint and the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

Loss of habitat has also been identified as a major cause of the decline in Australia's resident shorebirds. Panboola, which comprises an area of 77 ha, is playing its part in halting this decline by providing a diverse estuarine and wetland environment comprising billabongs, saline areas, a tidal channel, tidal mud flats, mangroves and threatened saltmarsh. Resident shorebirds recorded at Panboola include Black-fronted Dotterels and Masked Lapwings.

Panboola also provides habitat for a wide-range of Far South Coast birds and the numbers and types of birds seen at Panboola will hopefully increase as recent large-scale plantings provide additional habitat and older plantings continue to mature.

The continued success of Panboola depends very much on the continuing support of the members of Panboola and the local community and with that continuing support we can make a difference and do our bit to halt the decline of bird species.

Thursday workers: The Panboola Landcarers Group continues to welcome newcomers to the Thursday morning activities any time after 8:30 am. Every half hour of volunteer assistance is valuable. Just turn up and you will be most welcome.

Membership and donations: Thank you to those who responded to the membership renewal notice (\$5 per household) and sincere thanks to the many that chose to include a tax deductible donation to the Panboola Fund. Donations are a welcome source of revenue for ongoing expenses not accessible through grant applications. Membership indicates support for Panboola and allows us to maintain our status as an Environmental Organisation with a stable membership.

.