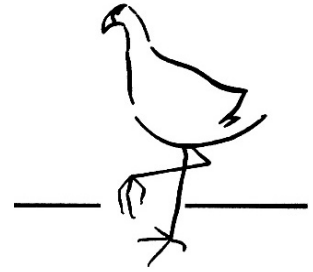


PANBOOLA

Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project Inc



NEWSLETTER NO: 14

The good news is that we finally have some significant rain. The even better news is that our all weather access road from the Bullara St entrance is withstanding this first test of its ability to cope with weather. The new ephemeral ponds along the edge have been planted out and have been full for the first time. It is very satisfying to see this hard work by volunteers is not only visually attractive but is a practical water management device. This area is now basically established and its ongoing maintenance should be restricted to mowing and spot maintenance of the road surface. Of course, as with all our projects, the excellent results from this transformation from a rutted flood prone track, has meant that the entrance now needs to be upgraded.



Again our volunteers have come to the rescue and we have some well developed plans for a dry rock feature wall and bollards at the entrance, based on concept drawings by Scott Waldon. Rob Bruce and Graham Waldon marked out with steel pickets the proposed location of the wall and Lotte Pors Eriskson has generously developed working scale drawings and Andrew Marshman is doing the engineering specifications for the development application. Thanks to a generous donation we will be able to contract a local company to commence this work as soon as approvals are received.

The Shed. At long last we are able to provide onsite storage for our equipment and amenities for our volunteers and workers. We officially opened the shed on 27 November



but our eager volunteers ‘unofficially opened’ it on 1 October by installing the tractor which apparently responded by turning its headlights on with the ignition – a new and unexplained phenomenon.

The major sponsors of the project were the Wood Family Foundation and they were represented by Michael Wood who officially cut the ribbon (pictured with Rob Bruce). The contribution of the design work by Eric Rice has also been recognised by a plaque on the building.

Rob Bruce tried to thank all who had contributed to the project and as you can imagine this was a long list and therefore a long speech! Needless to say we appreciate everyone’s efforts. Comments on the day were very favourable and the shed proved to be a very pleasant events venue in addition to its primary purpose.

Visitors to Panboola. Panboola continues to attract both people and bird life.

The falling water levels from the drought proved to be a bonanza for birds not regularly seen at Panboola.

Both ends of Tips Billabong have drawn attention from local and visiting birdwatchers to observe three Baillon's Crakes, two Australian Spotted Crakes, two Buff-banded Rails and several Latham's Snipe, all easily seen and photographed. Time will tell whether the welcome rain reduced the foraging areas for these birds causing them to relocate.

Meanwhile in the open grassland across the new corridor plantings Stubble Quail flushed as people walked through and at the southern end of the Waterbird Sanctuary Brown Quail were regularly observed.

We were happy to welcome a tour by new Bega Valley Shire Councillors and the Board of the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) were also able to pay a brief visit and view the works undertaken with their support.

On 24 November, some 22 people visited Panboola as part of the 'Partnerships and Projects' tour organised by the SRCMA and the Far South Coast Landcare Association. The Waterbird sanctuary provided a sheltered spot for afternoon tea and all participants were impressed with the plantings and diversity of projects at Panboola. The tour also took in other local projects which had been developed in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver sustainable management of natural resources at Candelo, Bega, Tathra and Pambula Lake.

Unfortunately some unwelcome visitors to the site have been several unaccompanied dogs wreaking havoc around Tips Billabong and some environmental vandalism in terms of unauthorised motor bike access. We appreciate the efforts of responsible dog owners to restrict their dogs to the designated areas and cleaning up after their animals.

We are again going to have to deal with unwelcome visitors from an increased number of foxes on site by engaging the services of a licensed shooter.

Plantings. We were very concerned about the impact of the continuing dry spell on the new plantings in the corridor and after undertaking a survey decided to water some areas with the use of a water tank kindly lent by a local resident Peter Reeve. Hopefully the recent soaking rain will allow these plants to become fully established and hand watering will not be required again.

We commissioned a weed assessment of the site and were pleased that generally things are being controlled. This information will be incorporated into a weed management plan currently being developed by our Project Coordinator. This will provide a useful reference for guiding weed management into the future at Panboola.

Water Quality. Panboola is a designated site for water quality testing under a water quality monitoring program which will cover the whole of the Pambula estuary land lake catchment. The first samples for testing were taken on 26 November and these will provide important baseline data for detecting changes in water quality and identifying any sources of pollution to water across the catchment.

Longer term economic viability of Panboola. The project continues to be successful in so many ways and attracts heart warming community and business support. We are also quite successful in our funding applications; however, the Committee has always recognised that a medium term objective must be financial self sufficiency. The management of the site alone requires more than can be supported by volunteer labour and we are very grateful to the SRCMA which has provided grant funds to maintain our project coordinator, Aimee Curtis for the remainder of 2008.

Aimee, supported by a subcommittee, has put a lot of work into developing a draft business plan with the objective of identifying income earning options. This will require some innovative thinking and further work – any ideas would be welcome. Ideally our project would like to reduce our dependency on government grants but we continue to need and appreciate all financial and other support.

Committee News. Our President, Jay has decided on an exciting move to tempestuous Brisbane and will be resigning from the Committee. Panboola supporters will know of the invaluable contribution Jay has made to the project and she will be greatly missed.

In the lead up to the AGM in February members may wish to consider if they have the time to make a personal contribution by joining the Committee. If anyone would like to discuss the commitment involved in committee membership they should contact, Peter Roberts 64951678 our Vice President or foundation committee member Rob Bruce 64956627

The importance of wetlands has been reinforced at the recent 10th Ramsar Convention. The Declaration highlights the importance of wetlands to the future wellbeing of the environment and the need to include wetland management in effective strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change and in regulating natural climatic processes. More information if available at <http://www.ramsar.org/index>

Seasons greetings to all Panboola Supporters and a safe and relaxing holiday.