

"WILDLIFE ON FARMS"

An Informal Seminar  
Held at Narrogin  
11 March 1991

INFORMAL SEMINAR WITH ROLAND BRECKWOLDT - MONDAY 11 MARCH  
1991

VENUE: Narrogin Department of Agriculture, Tim Negus' church

TIME: 2pm

FORMAT: Format for the seminar will be very informal. To provide some structure to the meeting, I propose that several topics be introduced (two to three minutes) by local speakers, and that these then be followed by general discussion.

- TOPICS:
1. What are the values of wildlife to farmers?  
(Introduced by Ken Wallace).
  2. What can we best do to encourage farmers to manage for wildlife? Advice versus resource input.  
(Introduced by Patrick Pigott).
  3. What are the best ways in which we can get information across to farmers - pamphlets? Electronic media? Demonstration trials? Meetings? Face to face contact? Etc? (Introduced by Tim Negus/Phil Hawker).
  4. Do exotic plants have a role in wildlife management?  
(Introduced by Steve Vlahos).
  5. Should women and school children be a special target for messages concerning wildlife management on farms? (Introduced by Greg Leaman).
  6. How are these things done in NSW, what lessons can we learn? (Roland Breckwoldt).
  7. General discussion and refreshments.

K J Wallace  
CHAIRMAN

DISTRIBUTION

Brown, Paul  
Burgess, Mike  
Clifton, Rod  
Durell, Greg  
Gorton, Steve  
Hawker, Phil  
Hilder, Dennis  
Humphreys, John

Leaman, Greg  
Negus, Tim  
Pigott, Patrick  
Silvester, Leon  
Vlahos, Steve  
Wallace, Ken  
Wardle-Johnson, Ian  
White, Peter

## TOPIC 1: - WHAT ARE THE VALUES OF WILDLIFE TO FARMERS?

Introduced by Ken Wallace

The values of wildlife on farms were discussed, and it was agreed that these values are summarised by the categories listed below. Whether or not specific values are achieved by maintaining flora and fauna on farms will vary depending on the circumstances in each case. For example, native vegetation of suitable dimensions left in an appropriate position will provide stock shelter, but not in other cases.

Note that items marked with an asterix within each category are examples, and are not intended to provide a complete list of values.

Accepting the above comments, wildlife may enhance the values of farms by contributing to the following.

### Soil Conservation

- \* salinity control
- \* soil erosion

### Water Conservation

- \* protect catchments, and thus water quality
- \* decrease siltation of farm dams

### Plant Production

- \* strips of vegetation may increase crop/pasture yields
- \* direct use of native plants (eg to provide firewood, fenceposts, cut flowers, etc)
- \* phytophagous invertebrates predated by fauna? While this is often suggested, there is no firm evidence of direct contribution to farm production by fauna through predation on invertebrates. Dr S Davies suggested at the main seminar that fauna will keep phytophagous invertebrates at a low level if their populations are low, but that they will not control plagues. This issue requires further research.

### Animal Production

- \* production increased by sheltering effect of vegetation
- \* production increased by grazing (only appropriate in limited circumstances)
- \* honey production

### Amenity

- \* house shade
- \* dust and noise abatement

### Heritage Values

- \* linked with tourism and recreation, but note in particular that emotive element also important eg this native vegetation is "the land my forefathers battled, feel the spirit of our pioneer forbears" etc

### Tourism and Recreation Values

#### Nature Conservation

- \* note that there may be an "altruistic" element here - there are a number of farmers who conserve wildlife on their properties "just because they want to"

### Future Options

- \* particularly, maintain biodiversity (eg as source for future economic species)
- \* maintain ecosystem processes (eg maintaining various pathways for the maintenance of the nitrogen cycle)

### Research

- \* eg, reference points for soil changes brought about by farming

### Capital Gains in Property Values

Because:

- \* property more aesthetically attractive
- \* well revegetated property, if this is properly planned, gives impressions of adequate land conservation measures, a property which is wealthy and well managed etc - note that presence of land care works are being used as selling points in advertisements for eastern states properties

### ACTION

Actions which could be taken in this area include:

1. quantify the value of wildlife on farms in farm production terms.
2. start keeping a record (on a regional basis) of the percentage of advertisements which include land care issues, aesthetics etc as property selling points. This would be an index of the capital value of revegetation.
3. research the positive effects of fauna in farm production, particularly the predators.

While the economic value of wildlife is important, the dangers of "selling" wildlife on this basis alone (eg shift in economic circumstances may degrade the value of wildlife) was stressed during the discussion.

TOPIC 2: - WHAT CAN WE BEST DO TO ENCOURAGE FARMERS TO MANAGE  
FOR WILDLIFE?

Introduced by P Pigott

ADVICE versus INPUT

Many advice structures in place:

CALM District Offices  
Information Officers at some regions

Agriculture Department  
District Offices, Advisers, LCDCs  
Project and Other Extension Officers

1. Our knowledge base on the management of remnant vegetation in the wheatbelt is slim.
2. Few scientists working on these - a few more are working on fauna.
3. Many questions relating to management problems and environmental events we are unable to answer.

NOTES FOR TOPIC FROM DISCUSSION

Best use of resources

ADVICE versus RESEARCH

- (SV) 1. Older ideas on wildlife management not corroborated.
- (DH) 2. Demand at present is for advice.
- (O'Neil) 3. Not enough monitoring of environmental problems.
- (SV) 4. Management of single species versus ecosystems.
- (PP) Not enough ecosystem research.
- (SV) Collapse of ecosystems that we need active input for.
- (RB & SV) i.e. fencing off not enough.
- (KW) 5. Cut advisory staff? Change to research!
- (PP) Yes.
- (SV) Need balance of staff.
- (PH) No.

- (RB) 6. *Can farmers do research?*
- (SV) Needs to be set up properly.
- (KW & PP) No, monitoring of changes.
- (IW) Some farmers monitoring groundwater.
- (PH & O'Neil) Increased awareness can help solve problems. Caution in use of advice
- (TN) 7. *Rural databases are needed on a local scale.*
- Turnover of personnel can effect monitoring (losses)
8. *Do we need RVPS and other schemes?*
- (KW) Schemes versus advice.
- (RC & PP) Yes, we need to keep it!
- (O'Neil) A freshwater lake is threatened, farmer can't afford fencing.
- (All) All present agreed that the scheme should be kept.
- (RB) 9. *Extension people can put ideas into the system, lateral thinking, advisory people should not be reduced.*
- (SV) Agreed.
- (KW) Many schemes won't fund research.
- (TN) There is a lot of information not being issued about previous research.

### TOPIC 3:- INFORMATION ACROSS TO FARMERS

Introduced by Phil Hawker/Tim Negus

#### Mass Media

1. Radio
2. Rural Press
3. Television
4. Ag Memo
5. Farmnotes

#### Group Extension

1. Land Conservation Districts
2. Farm improvement Groups
3. Friendship or cells groups

#### Individual Extension

1. Site specific information
2. Expensive to deliver
3. Essential for species identification.

#### Effectiveness of Ag Memo

- Suggested that it is probably quite good.

#### Effectiveness of Direct Mailing Service

- Limited circulation of direct mailing service. 5 000 =  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of states farming population. Do these people read this information?

#### Roland Breckwoldt

- People need to maintain enthusiasm. Must be made not to feel alone. Input into catchment groups etc. should be maintained.

### Land Conservation Districts

- A, good medium to work within.
- Operate through advisers:  
Technical Officers  
Project Officers
- Could run a series of technical update days for people in advisory positions. Extend valuable information CALM may have.
- CALM input into the Ag Memo.

### ACTIONS

- \* Work on extension through LCDCs.
- \* Update people involved with extension in land conservation matters.  

Technical Officers	Research results
Advisers	Technical Information
Project Officers	Practical farmer-usable information
- \* CALM input welcomed in Ag Memo.
- \* Maintain enthusiasm.



## TOPIC 4: - DO EXOTIC PLANTS HAVE A ROLE IN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Introduced by Steve Vlahos

### INTRODUCTION

- In some circumstances the original environmental conditions have changed therefore local species are not suited. i.e. saline soils.
- To revegetate these areas introduced plants can/are used.  
Introduced from:
  - overseas in poplars, tamarix
  - other regions i.e. blue gums (*Eucalyptus globulus*) or river gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*)
- Potential problems of exotics
  1. become weeds themselves and displace endemic species
  2. conserve fauna but lose ecosystem e.g. wandoo/salmon gum woodlands become a river gum woodland?

### DISCUSSION

- Environment is so altered local species cannot persist/establish.
- Further research needed to determine if local species are suited.
- Possibly use exotics to manipulate environment, making it suitable for locals. Then eliminate exotics and replace with locals.
- Effect of exotics on wildlife. Are they suitable replacement for locals. Wandoo harbours insects and attract high numbers of birds relative to other species.
- Preference should be for locals (within district or provenances) where possible.
- Use exotics as last resort.
- Exclude all species which are potential weeds.
- Research needed on maintaining genetic integrity of provenances.
- Research on exotics and weeds required. Revegetation has been proceeding in WA for about 20 years. Time to assess these plots and their effect on animals/ecosystem. Need to develop management guidelines from experience gained to date.

TOPIC 5: - SHOULD WOMEN AND SCHOOL CHILDREN BE A SPECIAL  
TARGET FOR MESSAGES CONCERNING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ON FARMS?

Introduced by Greg Leaman

- \* Men and women have similar attitudes - therefore need to target both equally.
- \* Women may be better educated, and therefore may have a greater capacity for understanding and appreciating conservation and interest in doing conservation-type work.
- \* Children are a special opportunity for conservation education.
- \* The school syllabus should be used as the main means of getting messages to children.
- \* Children should be encouraged to become practically involved in conservation works (e.g. foster a remnant?).
- \* Talking to/working with school groups is time consuming.
- \* Wildlife management information should be included in Ag College syllabus.

TOPIC 6: - HOW ARE THESE THINGS DONE IN NEW SOUTH WALES, WHAT  
LESSONS CAN WE LEARN

Roland Breckwoldt

Roland gave an informative summary of management of wildlife on farms in New South Wales. He believes WA more advanced at this point in time, and encouraged us to continue the good work. He also pointed out that:

- (i) we must not expect too much, too quickly, but we must persist;
- (ii) extension officers must say (to farmers) what they think to ensure that farmers are exposed to new ideas.