SOME NATURE RESERVES OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WHEATBELT

PART 23

YORK SHIRE

B.G. MUIR

1979

Some Nature Reserves of the Western Australian Wheatbelt

Part 23: York Shire

B.G. Muir

1979

Western Australian Museum

A report prepared for
and funded by the
Department of
Fisheries and Wildlife.

This report may be referred to as:

MUIR, B.G. (1979). Some nature reserves of the Western Australian wheatbelt. Part 23: York Shire. Perth: Dept. Fish. Wildl. unpubl. rept.

This series of reports may be referred to as:

MUIR, B.G. (1978-1979). Some nature reserves of the Western Australian wheatbelt. Parts 1-28. Perth: Dept. Fish. Wildl. unpubl. rept.

A NATURE RESERVE OF THE YORK SHIRE

B.G. Muir

INTRODUCTION

York Shire lies in the western-central wheatbelt and has an area of 2010 square km. There are only 3 Nature Reserves within the Shire, totalling ca 3.5 square km or ca 0.17% of the area of the Shire. The reserves are all small, being ca 215 ha (21981), ca 12 ha (24179) and ca 118 ha (30591) respectively. The two largest are vested in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority. None have 'A' classifications.

This survey was carried out in July 1979 and consisted of a brief examination of Reserve 24179. A report is attached.

METHODOLOGY

Physical characteristics of the reserves were obtained directly from the most recently available lithographs as published by the Department of Lands and Surveys, and interpreted from observations made on the reserve.

Reserves were examined by vehicle where tracks were available, and on foot. Local knowledge and air-photographs were consulted to find areas of particular interest. Only a very short time could be spent on each reserve, the smaller ones being examined in 1 or 2 hours, the larger ones in a full day.

Vegetation was classified using Muir's (1977) system (Table 1), which was designed specifically for describing wheatbelt vegetation. In the presentation of the abbreviated descriptions (in the section titled "Vegetation") capital letters in descriptive terms refer to

TABLE 1: VEGETATION CLASSIFICATION AS USED IN WHEATBELT SURVEY

LIFE FORM/HEIGHT CLASS		CANOPY COVER			
		DENSE 70-100% d	MID-DENSE 30-70% c	SPARSE 10-30% i	VERY SPARSE 2-10% r
T	Trees >30m	Dense Tall Forest	Tall Forest	Tall Woodland	Open Tall Woodland
M	Trees 15-30m	Dense Forest	Forest	Woodland	Open Woodland
LA	Trees 5-15m	Dense Low Forest A	Low Forest A	Low Woodland A	Open Low Woodland A
LB	Trees <5m	Dense Low Forest B	Low Forest B	Low Woodland B	Open Low Woodland B
KT	Mallee tree form	Dense Tree Mallee	Tree Mallee	Open Tree Mallee	Very Open Tree Mallee
KS	Mallee shrub form	Dense Shrub Mallee	Shrub Mallee	Open Shrub Mallee	Very Open Shrub Mallee
S	Shrubs >2m	Dense Thicket	Thicket	Scrub	Open Scrub
SA	Shrubs 1.5-2.0m	Dense Heath A	Heath A	Low Scrub A	Open Low Scrub A
SB	Shrubs 1 0-1.5m	Dense Heath B	Heath B	Low Scrub B	Open Low Scrub B
SC	Shrubs 0.5-1.0m	Dense Low Heath C	Low Heath C	Dwarf Scrub C	Open Dwarf Scrub C
SD	Shrubs 0.0-0.5m	Dense Low Heath D	Low Heath D	Dwarf Scrub D	Open Dwarf Scrub D
P	Mat plants	Dense Mat Plants	Mat Plants	Open Mat Plants	Very Open Mat Plants
H	Hummock Grass	Dense Hummock Grass	Mid-Dense Hummock Grass	Hummock Grass	Open Hummock Grass
GT	Bunch grass >0.5m	Dense Tall Grass	Tall Grass	Open Tall Grass	Very Open Tall Grass
GL	Bunch grass <0.5m	Dense Low Grass	Low Grass	Open Low Grass	Very Open Low Grass
J	Herbaceous spp.	Dense Herbs	Herbs	Open Herbs	Very Open Herbs
VT	Sedges >0.5m	Dense Tall Sedges	Tall Sedges	Open Tall Sedges	Very Open Tall Sedges
VL	Sedges <0.5m	Dense Low Sedges	Low Sedges	Open Low Sedges	Very Open Low Sedges
X	Ferns	Dense Ferns	Ferns	Open Ferns	Very Open Ferns
	Mosses, liverwort	Dense Mosses	Mosses	Open Mosses	Very Open Mosses

specific classes of life form, height and canopy cover as used in the classification.

As the survey period on any reserve was very brief only the commonest plant species could be noted. Any species in which less than 3 individual plants were encountered within a space of 10-15 minutes examination of the vegetation were considered uncommon and are not listed. As much of the survey work was carried out rapidly and in unfavourable seasons, many plants were not flowering and so identifications were made from foliage alone. Only if an important dominant plant was not recognised were specimens brought back to the laboratory for examination.

Soil was examined very briefly and classified according to Northcote's (1971) texture groups and Munsell (1954) colour terms.

Fire history was determined from observation of the area, appearance of air-photographs and information from nearby farmers.

Fauna were not specifically sought, but some species (usually the most obvious) were encountered while examining vegetation. The lists provided are only a small fraction of the species present on nearly every reserve examined. Scats, footprints, burrows, nests and other indirect evidence is used only where identification is certain. Observations by farmers are used if considered reliable.

Opinion and recommendations expressed in these reports are entirely those of the author and are based on extensive experience in vegetation mapping and description in the wheatbelt, and association with faunal and habitat studies conducted by suitably qualified researchers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reserve 24179 is ca 12 ha in area and is a long, linear reserve probably originally intended to be a roadway. It is heavily grazed and only large trees remain. It has little value

for conservation in the long term as eventually the trees will die and they will not be replaced because of understorey grazing by stock. The reserve is at the moment valuable as a windbreak, and as a passageway for transient birds.

REFERENCES

MUIR, B.G. (1977). Vegetation and habitat of Bendering Reserve. Biological survey of the Western Australian wheatbelt. Pt. 2. Rec. West. Aust. Mus. Suppl. 3.

MUNSELL COLOR COMPANY (1954). Munsell soil color charts. Baltimore, Md., Munsell Color Co.

NORTHCOTE, K.H. (1971). A factual key for the recognition of Australian soils. Glenside, S.A.: C.S.I.R.O./ Rellim.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jennifer Muir and Ian Simpson assisted in the field. Staff of the Western Australian Herbarium offered helpful advice with identifications.

Reserve 24179

Located ca 14 km NE of Kauring Siding and ca 14 km due N of Balkuling Siding. Shown on lithograph 3/80,B2.

Background

Originally set aside for "Flora" on 10 June 1955 and regazetted 17 June 1955. Its original area of ca 8 ha was increased to 11.8851 ha on 25 October 1957.

Physical characteristics

Linear, 'L' shaped, ca 4.6 km long by ca 20 m wide, with an area of 11.8851 ha. Lowest part ca 240 m above sea level, with a topographic range of ca 25 m.

Vegetation

Open Tree Mallee with scattered Salmon Gum at the eastern end and Wandoo Open Low Woodland A on the SW corner. Some areas of salt encroachment with York Gum.

Plant species

Six species recorded, 5 of which are exploited by the wildflower seed trade.

Nest hollows

Scattered; no young trees.

Weeds

Abundant ephemerals.

Fire history

No evidence of fire for at least 30 years.

Fauna

Port Lincoln Parrot (Platycercus zonarius): common

Pallid Cuckoo (Cuculus pallidus): 1 heard

Weebill (Smicrornis brevirostris): common

Yellow-rumped Thornbill (Acanthiza chrysorrhoea): common

Singing Honeyeater (Meliphaga virescens): 3 seen

Magpie-lark (Grallina cyanoleuca): 3 seen

Western Magpie (Cracticus tibicen dorsalis): 8 flying over Reserve

Australian Raven (Corvus coronoides): common

Exotic fauna

Sheep have grazed all understorey from the Reserve.

Firebreaks and fences

The N side is fenced with 5 strand ringlock and barbed-wire. The S side is unfenced.

Human usage

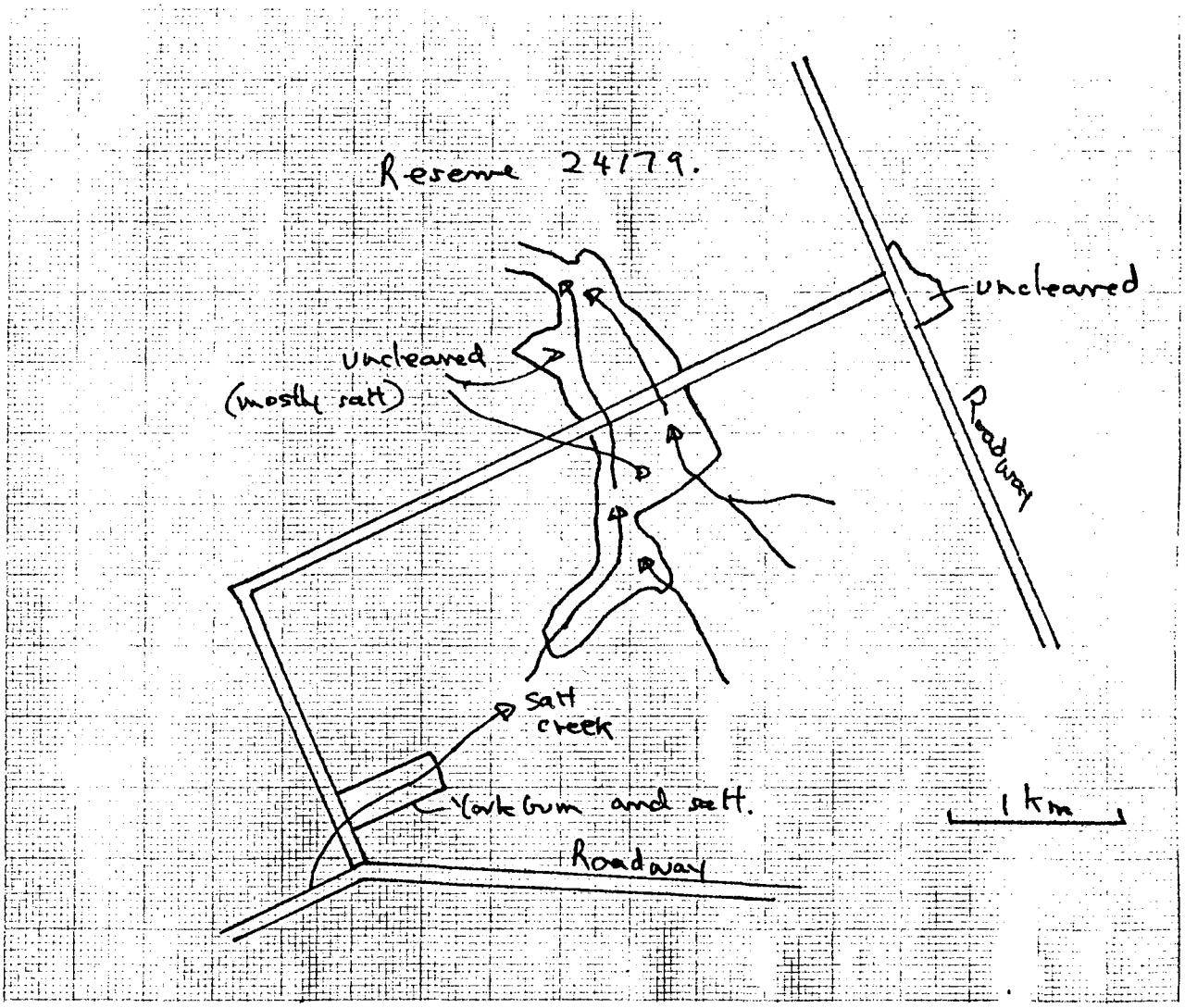
Heavily grazed by sheep for a long time. Timber has been removed. A water trough and tank are present at the E end. Part of the central portion has been cleared.

Adjacent uncleared land

About 100 ha of uncleared woodland and salt complex are adjacent to the Reserve (see map).

Opinion and recommendations

Reserve 24179 has minimal conservation value but has a few nest hollows and is a valuable windbreak. I recommend it be retained in its present form and be vested in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority.



APPENDIX

Reserve 24179

Eastern end

Eucalyptus calycogona tree mallee, 4-10 m tall, 30-70% cover. Scattered *E. salmonophloia* to 20-24 m tall. No understorey except ephemeral weeds. Soil pinkish grey, medium clay with 10% laterite. Poorly drained.

South Western corner

Eucalyptus wandoo trees, 4-12 m tall, 2-10% cover. Scattered *Acacia acuminata* to 8 m tall and *Casuarina campestris* 4 m tall. Areas with salt encroachment are mostly *E. loxophleba* trees. Soil pinkish grey, medium clay with *ca* 10% laterite. Poorly drained.