

All fired up at the Tutanning Nature Reserve

The Fire Program combined a Program meeting and a field trip to examine fire research and management issues in the Wheatbelt Region.

Members of the Program, Wheatbelt Regional Manager, Ken Wallace and Narrogin District Manager, Ken Atkins, assembled at Boyagin Rock at 10.00am on 23rd of February. While the Manjimup contingent argued over whether or not they really got lost en route from the deep south, we made for the first stop on the itinerary. Following brief introductions by Gordon Friend and Ken Atkins, we inspected recent buffer burning in Boyagin Nature Reserve and discussed aspects of monitoring vegetation within the burnt buffer. As is the case with most wheatbelt reserves, the main fire management issue was how to manage fuel levels to minimise the impact of wildfire, yet at the same time, maintain conservation values. It was agreed a compromise could be reached. Continued monitoring of vegetation in the burnt buffers would provide information on which decisions about the frequency of burning could be based.

We then trekked south east to Mockerdungulling Hill Reserve near Tutanning. Here, Ken Atkins spoke about attempts to regenerate Jam Wattle and York Gum using prescribed fire. The debate centred on whether it was necessary to interfere with prescribed fire, or to allow the stands to senesce and regenerate without the use of prescribed fire. This small reserve is infested with weeds and rabbits and while fire could be used to regenerate Jam, the young seedlings standing in flammable grasses, were vulnerable to subsequent fire. There was considerable discussion about defining the conservation values of this reserve and opinions were varied. Lack of information was the only area of certainty.

We lunched at the Tutanning Nature Reserve field station and Gordon Friend and Angas Hopkins outlined past and current research activities within the reserve.

After lunch it was off to Gordon's fire ecology study sites on Tutanning Nature Reserve. Gordon described his sampling techniques, designed to study the effects of fire on fauna. God, and the Regional Manager willing, Gordon hopes to burn his study site in the coming weeks. Ted Griffin and Lachie McCaw outlined aspects of a field/s and fire behaviour study to be conducted in connection with the burning of Gordon's fauna plots.

We then headed down to Toolibin Nature Reserve. Ken Atkins explained the chronic salinity problems and we inspected results of activities designed to revegetate areas of the Reserve including burning and planting.

The group then adjourned to Tutanning field station where the issues of the day and other topics of

lighter note were further discussed over a "Bishop" (2.2) or two. After a hearty meal (prepared under the direction of Angas) and more to drink, we retired to our swags.

The following morning was spent briefly reviewing the progress being made by Fire Program scientists. Dave Ward presented a thought provoking seminar entitled "Ecology Question Maps". Dave's ideas on establishing a framework for setting ecological questions and for assembling ecological information was well received. In the coming months and with help from Dave, we will attempt to put his system to the test (or put our research to the test!!!!?)

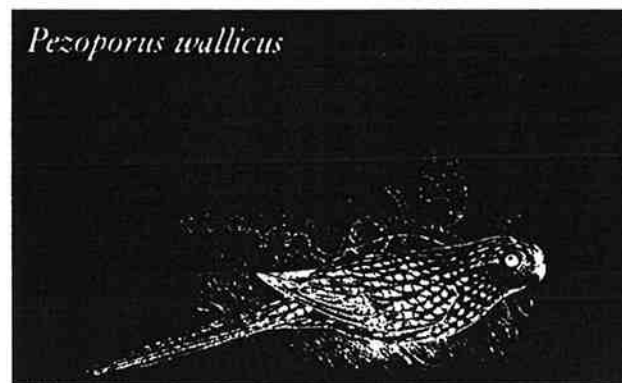
The meeting was declared a success, the format a good one and we plan to emulate it in 6-7 months at the Perup Ecology Centre.

Thanks.....

Ken Atkins
Ken Wallace
Gordon Friend, and
Angas Hopkins

for your efforts.

Neil Burrows, Fire Program Leader



A Word From The Scientific Editor

The once heavy backlog of scientific and technical manuscripts waiting to be edited has been cleared, so if you have any papers you want published now is a good time to submit them.

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Marianne Lewis

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Editorial



"We Need Contributions"

Any kind of interesting contribution will do (stolen cartoons, snippets, jokes *et al.*). We're particularly interested in original articles - results of latest research, highlights from field trips and of course what about spreading the news on any interstate or local conference you may have attended (after all Research Division does pay the costs in many instances).

The only barrier between you and being immortalized in print is the Editor's power of veto and she doesn't exercise it all that often. What've you got to lose?

Ed

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