



# Wandoo Recovery GROUP

Bulletin No. 6

October 2009



*This is the sixth bulletin developed by the Wandoo Recovery Group (WRG) to provide information about wandoo crown decline, progress of research, and related activities. The WRG appreciates and acknowledges the considerable contributions of volunteers who offer their time, knowledge and labour to assist with various WRG projects.*

## Praising volunteers: everyday people – extraordinary contributions

### Working together for wandoo health

Across south-west Western Australia, many wandoo trees and woodlands are experiencing decline of the tree crown. This decline is widespread and a cause for significant concern. During the past six years, many people have helped the WRG in its quest to better understand the likely causes of wandoo crown decline. Volunteers from different backgrounds and interests have become involved in surveying the health of wandoo trees; assisting researchers; providing local knowledge on factors affecting wandoo; attending workshops and field trips; and have subscribed to the WRG mailing list. These contributions are valuable and have ensured the success of many projects.

### Community surveys

Since 2006, local environment groups, TAFE colleges, and staff from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) have been helping the WRG record and monitor the health of wandoo at 23 sites throughout its range. During 2008, 69 transects were surveyed across 21 sites and 2,690 trees along seven kilometres covering 14 hectares were assessed. These surveys have provided information on stand structure (number and density of trees), extent of recent branch death, and current crown health at each site. Results show that while decline still occurs

in some areas, decline has stabilised at other sites, and tree health is gradually improving (Whitford et. al, 2008).

### Assisting research

In 2007, the WRG coordinated an oral history project about wandoo to find out whether the current decline episode is historically unique or cyclical and to elucidate possible causes. The research involved interviewing people who have lived and worked in wandoo areas, as well as examining photographic, archival and other documentary sources. In all, 24 interviews were conducted with 31 people, in addition to informal communication with several others. The resulting booklet, *Wandoo in health and decline: a history*, analyses and discusses the results of this research and includes detailed extracts from the oral history interviews and historical sources (Gaynor, 2008). The testimony of many keen observers strongly suggests that decline has only emerged at a significant level since the 1980s. Moreover, the stories and recollections have produced some fascinating insights into wandoo and its woodland settings which could be very useful in further scientific research.

*Above: Volunteers attend a WRG workshop at Chittering to learn how to conduct crown health assessment surveys on wandoo trees from DEC forest researcher Kim Whitford.*



## Workshops

Workshops provide opportunities to learn about the latest research and find out how to get involved in looking after wandoo. Attending workshops, field trips and information days helps the WRG raise appreciation of healthy woodlands, share knowledge about wandoo, and enable people to meet with others who hold similar interests and concerns.

The WRG has hosted numerous workshops and information days at places such as Dandaragan, Wyalkatchem, York and Perth. Rural shire councils, community groups, local businesses and individuals generously offered free use of venues and provided catering, advertising, loan equipment such as audio visual, sound, screens and furniture. They also assisted with set up and take down. DEC and WWF-Australia staff donate their time to speak at these events. Such generosity ensured that these events ran smoothly and successfully.



**Above:** Participants on a field trip at Dandaragan learn about wandoo crown decline with UWA researcher Dr Pieter Poot.  
**Top, above and centre right:** Participants in a workshop at Wyalkatchem, learn about different ways to care for wandoo woodlands. Mike Griffiths from WWF-Australia (upper) and Penny Hussey from DEC (centre) sharing their knowledge about woodlands.  
**Bottom right:** Rosanna Hindmarsh and Katerina Neve from Chittering Landcare Centre supply morning tea for volunteers surveying wandoo crown decline at Chittering.

## Five-year review of wandoo crown decline

In October 2008, the WRG hosted a seminar on wandoo conservation in York, which attracted 100 people including community group leaders, land managers, scientists and researchers. The seminar reviewed major achievements in research and mapping, encouraged information exchange, and acknowledged the significant contribution of local communities, in particular York residents, whose help behind the scenes ensured the day was both successful and effective.

## Collaboration and partnerships

Many WRG projects owe their success to the partnerships forged between government agencies, research institutions, local groups and individuals. In 2008, the WRG coordinated a broad scale survey of wandoo decline across the Wheatbelt and State forest to investigate factors thought to predispose wandoo trees to decline, and to establish trends in wandoo health (Mercer, 2008). A total of 129 sites were surveyed covering 600 kilometres across three broad transects. Many sites, located on private property, were accessed with permission from the individual landowners, some of whom provided important information on local rainfall statistics and land use history. The Avon Catchment Council, Southwest Catchments Council, South Coast NRM Inc. and DEC funded the project. WWF-Australia helped the WRG administer these funds.

## Centre of Excellence

The new State Centre of Excellence for Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health has created many new opportunities to unite research efforts into the decline of native tree species. Community groups, non-government and government organisations are helping researchers address the issues of woodland decline by getting involved in local projects and volunteers have been helping restoration activities in tuart woodlands during the past few years (Tuart Bulletin No.12).

## Getting involved

The WRG is seeking the participation of local groups and individuals in a recovery project designed to raise awareness of the importance of healthy woodlands and provide landowners with information and skills required to manage the health of trees on private land. The project involves collecting seed to help restore, connect and create patches of wandoo bushland.

## National register of big trees

Started in May 2009, the national register of big trees is an integrated list of Australia's largest native trees and naturalised trees of a particular species. Anybody can nominate and measure a tree. The WRG is requesting that people measure and nominate large wandoo trees growing on their properties. Information on how to nominate can be found online at [www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au](http://www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au).



**Top:** Liz Manning (WRG Executive Officer) collects wandoo seed for restoration projects. **Above:** This veteran wandoo tree has a girth exceeding five metres.



# Wandoo RECOVERY GROUP



**Top:** Julyan and Susan Sumner manage their 260 hectares of remnant wandoo at Boyup Brook for conservation and wood production. Julyan volunteers his time to undertake crown assessment surveys for the WRG (photo courtesy of Julyan Sumner).

**Above:** Bruce McGregor (founding member of the WRG) and his wife Pat volunteer thousands of hours in support of the environment.

## More information

Copies of reports and information about wandoo, WRG projects and research are available online at DEC's website: [www.dec.wa.gov.au/forests/conserving-our-wandoo](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/forests/conserving-our-wandoo).

For more information on how you can help, contact Executive Officer Liz Manning on 0427 441 482 or email [Elizabeth.Manning@bigpond.com](mailto:Elizabeth.Manning@bigpond.com).

## References

Gaynor, A. (2008). *Wandoo in health and decline: a history*. Prepared on behalf of the Wandoo Recovery Group, August 2008. Department of Environment and Conservation, Kensington, Western Australia.

Mercer, J. (2008). *Second survey of Eucalyptus wandoo decline – final report June, 2008*. A report on wandoo decline on behalf of the Wandoo Recovery Group. Department of Environment and Conservation and WWF – Australia.

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Photos by Liz Manning.