

# Malleefowl Matter

**MALLEEFOWL**  
Preservation Group Inc.

PO Box 29, Ongerup, Western Australia 6336  
PH: (08) 9828 2007 FAX: (08) 9828 2018

E-mail: malleefowl.wa@wn.com.au  
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## ARID LANDS PROJECT EXTENSION

*Peter Clough, Manager, Corporate Affairs West, WMC Resources Ltd made this important announcement at the MPG Ten Year Celebration weekend.*

“WMC Resources Ltd has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to the conservation and research of the malleefowl in Western Australia.

*Action Malleefowl, Mulga to Mallee*, a program recently developed by the Malleefowl Preservation Group, is being sponsored by WMC Resources for the next two years. The program aims to complete the recommendations in the Arid Lands Project 2001 and

identify Yeelirrie Station as the most northerly link for the *Mulga to Mallee* Protection Zone (corridor) link. The WMC sponsorship will also allow the MPG to increase community awareness through the introduction of the “Malleefowl Magic” education program to West Australian Primary Schools in the Goldfields region.

WMC Resources is committed to achieving compatibility between economic development and the maintenance of the environment. It therefore seeks to ensure that, throughout all phases of its activities, WMC personnel and contractors give



*Malleeben Bore Yeelirrie Station*

proper consideration to the care of the flora, fauna, air, land and water, and to the community health and heritage which may be affected by these activities.”

## SNAKES ALIVE!

*By Brian Bush*

*Brian is a familiar "snake man" identity known by many through his displays at field days and shows. Thank you BB for your contribution.*

Around October, the local serpents will be doing their thing. They will be on the move: males actively searching for females,

while the females and immature individuals forage for mice. Now there is a far greater chance for snakes to enter gardens and investigate sheds, aviaries and chicken runs. If an adult female passes through your yard, then it is likely that over the next few days a procession of males will follow along her pheromone trail. At this time if a

male contacts another, they wrestle, tightly entwined around each other (see sketch on page 6).

The stimulus responsible for the procreation process, including the male-male combat, is so strong that a so inclined individual may not be as aware of you as would normally be the case. I have grabbed fighting males simultaneously and thrown them in the bag, only to have them continue fighting unaware of their new surroundings.

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**HIGH TECH  
DECISION MAKING**

*GIS software to the value of \$14,000.....*

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**FIRE  
ALERT**

*Mallee habitats are particularly prone to fire.*

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**CELEBRATION  
MALLEEFOWL**

*Ten years on.*

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# HIGH TECH DECISION MAKING

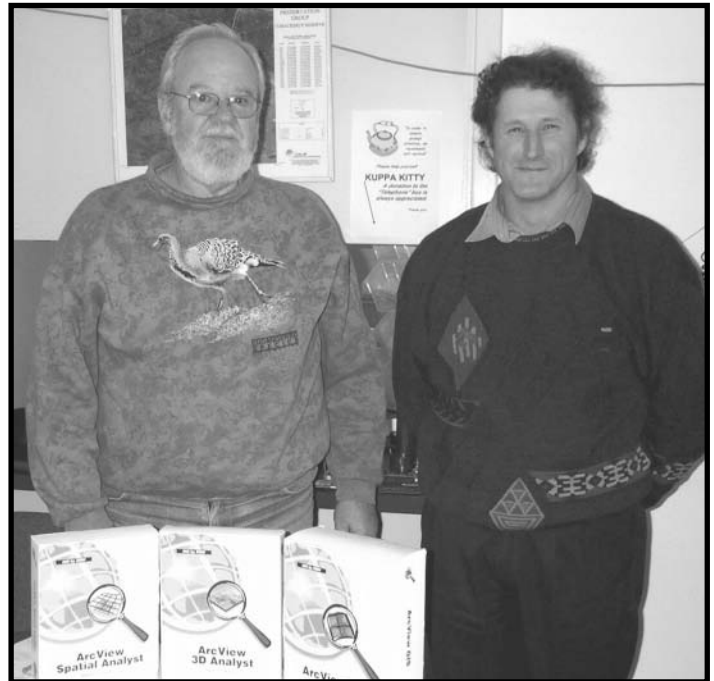
GIS software to the value of \$14,000 and associated training worth \$5,000 has been donated by the South Coast Regional Information Centre (RIC) enabling the Malleefowl Preservation Group to improve natural resource management decision making.

At the meeting on 25 June 2002, RIC Manager Kristina Fleming officially donated the software and praised MPG representative Graham Stewart for his participation in the 2 day geographic information systems (GIS) introduction course in November 2001 and the 5 day advanced course in February 2002.

Not just button pushing, this training has focused on problem solving and making more effective use of geographical information for planning.

The first project identified for high

*MPG Chairperson,  
Alan Dennings with  
Arcview Trainee,  
Graham Stewart.*



tech improvement will be the malleefowl sighting database currently being managed by Jon Price.

These resources and training were made available through the "Opening the Data Tap" project, funded by the State Salinity Council Community

Support Scheme. The RIC is a project of SCRIPT, the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team.

For more information on the RIC and GIS, please contact Kristina Fleming on (08) 9892 8494 or [kfleming@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:kfleming@agric.wa.gov.au).

## THIRD TIME NOT LUCKY

The Malleefowl Preservation Group was proud to represent Western Australia at the National Landcare Awards held in August (Canberra).

Alas we were not successful in bringing home a National Award.

We shared in one particular WA National win however, and extend congratulations to our members, Geoff and Di Bee from Jerramungup who won the National Primary Producer Award—well done.

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**Phone:** (08) 9828 2007

**E-mail:** [malleefowl.wa@wn.com.au](mailto:malleefowl.wa@wn.com.au)

**Fax:** (08) 9828 2018

**Web site:** [www.malleefowl.com.au](http://www.malleefowl.com.au)

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**Phone:** (08) 9304 6983

**E-mail:** [info@virtualseervices.com.au](mailto:info@virtualseervices.com.au)

**Web site:** [www.virtualseervices.com.au](http://www.virtualseervices.com.au)



# FIRE ALERT

*Most of us have been busy ploughing or spraying fire breaks on our properties over the last 6 weeks. This article by Joe Benshemesh gives us a further insight into the need for careful fire management to ensure effective malleefowl conservation practices.*

Mallee habitats are particularly prone to fire, and fire remains one of the most serious threats to the conservation of malleefowl throughout the species range. This is primarily because fires in mallee are usually intense and extremely destructive of both the birds themselves and their habitat. Birds that are lucky enough to escape the initial inferno are likely to find themselves homeless and unwelcome wherever they go. Indeed, burnt habitat is likely to be unsuitable for Malleefowl for many years, and it seems to take several decades before completely burnt habitats can once again support peak numbers of residents.

The news is, of course, not all bad. Fire is also a powerful agent of

rejuvenation in mallee habitats and many plants that provide food for Malleefowl are dependant on, or at least benefit from, occasional fire.

As far as Malleefowl conservation is concerned, the issue really is one of the scale and context of fires within the landscape. Fires that take out most or all of the birds in an area



*Malleefowl prefer to run, rather than fly, from most threats*

obviously threaten these populations, and this does happen. For example, fires of several tens of thousands of hectares occur every twenty years or so in eastern Australian mallee, and in some years fires may consume vast areas over entire regions, such as in

the mid 1974 when most mallee in western NSW was burnt.

While Malleefowl have had to cope with fire for many thousands of years, the threat imposed by fire is recent and is a product of the excessive clearing and the increased fragmentation of the landscape over the past century. If we want to conserve this wonderful species we will have to design means of protecting their strongholds from catastrophic fires, and linking the landscapes so that recolonisation of burnt areas is always possible.

## We Value Your Membership

Annual membership fees were introduced at our AGM in 2001 for members joining the MPG from 1st July that year. These changes were introduced to help cover increasing newsletter and administration costs. If you joined the Malleefowl Preservation Group prior to that date, your membership will have been recorded as a "once only" fee.

We thank those members who have chosen to upgrade to annual subs and encourage others to consider the change over or contribute to our higher costs by making an annual tax deductible donation.

**Subs are due 30th June annually**