



MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP OF VICTORIA INC.

SURVEY CAMP REPORT

LOCATION/NAME *'Mali Dunes', Yanac North* **DATES** *31/10 - 3/11/2015*

WEATHER The weather was variable during the survey period starting with a hot 34°C on Saturday 31 Oct followed by a cool change later that day. The next three days were cooler and mostly under cloud with daily temperatures getting up to the high 20's, but down to as low as 10°C in the evenings. It was windy for the entire duration of the survey with a moderate to strong southwest wind.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA SURVEYED. Include brief physical and botanical description, Modifying factors (fire, logging, grazing) geology if known, and any significant faunal or floristic observations.

The site surveyed was a private property "Mali Dunes" owned by Bernie Fox and Sue Hayman-Fox. It is located on Millers Rd, Yanac North about 40 km north-west of Nhill (VicRoads Country Directory Map 24G2).

"Mali Dunes" is 621ha (1552 acres) in size (approximately 4kms by 2kms) consisting of rolling sand dunes some 12 km south of the Big Desert Wilderness and 30 kms east of the SA border. It has been cleared and farmed in the past (as late as 1995) but is now a Community Land Management (CLM) project site and is fully protected under a 'Trust for Nature' covenant. There is significant natural regeneration supplemented by extensive revegetation from direct seeding and plantings of local provenance.

Although almost all of the area has been regularly chained and rolled for several decades until 1995, it has shown remarkable recovery with evidence of the past destruction not being readily evident over much of the vegetated area on the property. Vegetation consists of cleared areas with remnant pasture dominated by exotic grasses and evening primrose from past agricultural activity; mallee heathland with shrubs up to a height of 2 metres including Heath Tea-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, Broom Honey-myrtle *Melaleuca uncinata*, Pink Velvet Bush *Lasiopetalum behrii*, Wallowa *Acacia calamifolia*, Muntries *Kunzea pomifera*, Common Fringe-myrtle *Calytrix tetragona* and Spinifex *Triodia scariosa*; and mallee woodland up to a height of 5 metres including Yellow Mallee *Eucalyptus incrassata*, Dumosa Mallee *Eucalyptus dumosa* and the shrubs listed above.

Conditions were very dry after three years of below average rainfall. Despite this numerous species of shrubs, especially Muntries, Common Fringe-myrtle and Xanthorrhoea were in flower attracting and feeding numerous insects.

Survey Report

Overall a total of 37 species was recorded during the survey; this consisted of 3 mammals (not including signs such as tracks and scats), 32 birds, and 2 reptiles. Refer to attached survey sheets for detailed results on mammals and birds.

Most of the MSGV motion sensing cameras (14 out of 17) plus 5 privately owned by members, a total of 19, were set in a number of locations over three nights. As the MSGV trailer was not towed to this camp only eight cage traps were brought and were set over the three nights. Bat 'Harp' traps were not set due to the windy conditions.

After a total of 57 camera nights over three nights (31 October – 2 November) only three videos were captured; a single video of a Short-beaked Echidna captured by a camera set on House Dune on the first night, a single video of a Southern Scrub Robin having a peck at the bait early in the morning of the 2nd of November on Big Dune, and a magpie walking past

a camera set along the track to Big Dune. No animals were captured by the eight cage traps that were set over three nights, a total of 24 trap nights



Echidna on the House Dune south west of campsite



Southern Scrub Robin having a peck at the bait in front of the camera

Other mammals seen or heard during the day as chance sightings over the long weekend include an estimated 10 to 20 Western Grey Kangaroos and up to 10 rabbits. These approximate numbers are based on sightings by four experienced MSGV members, each providing similar numbers of kangaroos and rabbits seen, but assuming that not all the same animals were seen by each member for the duration this survey.



Uway motion sensing camera set for the night



Western Grey Kangaroo

Of the 32 species of birds recorded the increasing number Malleefowl were the highlight. There are five confirmed mounds on the property and another three in the neighbouring reserve to the east. All the other bird species recorded are what would be expected to occur in this reserve, but it was interesting to note the large number of juvenile and immature Red-capped Robins present during the survey. No adult males were seen.



Malleefowl near entry into Mali Dunes off Millers Road



Owlet-nightjar looking out of nest box at campsite



One of many juvenile Red-capped Robins seen during the survey



Tawny-crowned Honeyeater in Heathy Mallee along Munday Motorway



Golden Whistler

Photos Andrew McCutcheon

Reptiles seen include a Rosenberg's Monitor, *Varanus rosenbergi* which is uncommon and at the very edge of its range of distribution and a Gould's Goanna *Varanus gouldii*, a more common species, plus a few Stumpy-tail Lizards, *Tiliqua rugosa*. Bearded, Mallee Military and Painted Dragons recorded at previous camps were not seen by anyone this year, probably because the days were cooler than usual and mostly overcast.

To identify the species of monitor both individuals photographed below have a pale-edged dark stripe running back from the eye, but the monitor identified as *V rosenbergi* has transverse bands curving forward toward the lower side of the neck. *V gouldii* on the other hand has longitudinal stripes on the neck at least laterally. *V rosenbergi* also usually has some transverse banding on the lips clearly visible on the image of the head on the right. The pale tail tip is typical for *V gouldii*, but the pale tail tip has banding on *V rosenbergi* which can be seen in the image of the individual below left.

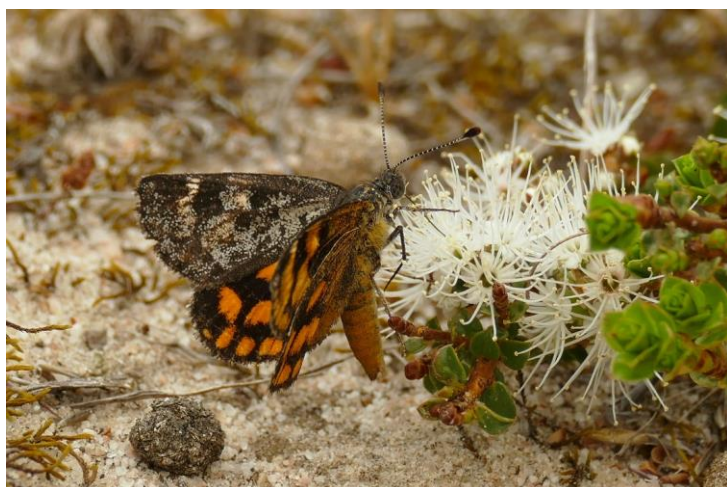


Two images of *Varanus rosenbergi* over 1 metre in length seen during the survey
Photos by Chris Wilson, left and Les Mill, right



Two images of *Varanus gouldii* about 700mm in length seen during the survey
Photos by Margaret Whipp

Invertebrates of note were numerous Orange Spotted Sun-moths *Synemon parthenoides* within the southern part of the property. These day-flying moths with clubbed antennae were very active and taking flight when there was sunlight, but settled immediately under passing clouds that blocked out the sunshine.



Orange Spotted Sun Moth, left and Satin-green Forester Moth, right feeding on nectar from Muntries, *Kunzea pomifera* heavily in flower



Blue-banded Bee, left and Painted Lady Butterfly, right on Common Fringe-myrtle *Calytrix tetragona*
Photos Andrew McCutcheon

I would like to thank zoologists, Ian Smales, Daniel Gilmore and Clare McCutcheon at Biosis Pty Ltd. for their assistance in identification of the two species of monitors.

TRAPPING AND SPOTLIGHTING MAPS :



LOCATION MAP :



CAMP COMMANDANT: Andrew McCutcheon

CAMP HOSTS: Bernie Fox & Sue Hayman-Fox

PERSONNEL

Nancy McMurray & Trevor Caldwell

Christopher Wilson

Mary & Duncan Frost

Faye Chapman

Margaret & Jenny Whipp

Leslie Mill

Michael & Elizabeth Vaughan (part)

Christoph Binder

**Andrew McCutcheon – Mammal Survey Group of Victoria Inc.
WSIEAC Approval 22.11**