

SPUR ISLAND

Managing a threatened vegetation community

A UNIQUE PLACE

Spur Island is a 90ha parcel of land situated within Gunbower National Park and is considered important for both its natural and indigenous cultural values.

By standing in the centre of Spur Island you will notice the flora differs from the surrounding red gum and black box dominated vegetation. Here it consists of an intermediate patch of endangered Plains Woodland and Semi-Arid Chenopod Woodland Ecological Vegetation Classes.

At the islands highest 'point', Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) is the dominant tree which transitions to Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*) in the lower lying areas.

There is also a very open smaller tree layer represented by Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*), Sugarwood (*Myoporum platycarpum*) and Hooked Needlewood (*Hakea tephrosperma*).

A scattered shrub layer consists of Umbrella Wattle (*Acacia oswaldii*), Gold-dust Wattle (*Acacia acinacea s.s.*), Desert Cassia (*Senna form taxon 'filifolia'*), Berrigan (*Eremophila longifolia*) and Sweet Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*).

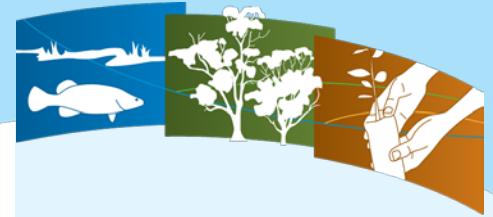
The field-layer is grassy-herbaceous with a high diversity of indigenous annual species and there is a diverse, well developed cryptogamic crust.

HABITAT FOR WOODLAND BIRDS

The Plains Woodland/Semi-Arid Chenopod Woodland vegetation community provides critical habitat for a wide range of woodland bird species, many of which are considered rare or listed as threatened.

Some of the significant birds species that are regularly recorded on Spur Island include:

- Hooded Robin
- White-browed Babbler
- Southern Whiteface
- Brown Treecreeper
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Restless Flycatcher
- Diamond Firetail
- Red-capped Robin
- Jacky Winter



White-browed Babbler nest in *Hakea tephrosperma*. Photo: Adrian Martins

MANAGEMENT OF THREATENING PROCESSES

With funding through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program (NLP), the North Central CMA has collaborated with Parks Victoria to address threats to the vegetation and habitat values on the island. These include reducing overgrazing by both native and introduced herbivores such as kangaroos, wallabies, rabbits and fallow deer.

High threats weeds being treated on the island include bridal creeper, boxthorn and prickly pear.



Plains Woodland/Semi -Arid Chenopod Woodland EVC. Photo: Adrian Martins

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NEW FIND FOR SPUR ISLAND

During the establishment of vegetation monitoring quadrats a new population of a nationally endangered orchid was discovered on the island. The Floodplain Rustyhood (*Pterostylis cheraphila*) was discovered during a baseline survey to monitor the effects of grazing pressure at a relatively undisturbed patch of endangered woodland vegetation. Ninety five plants were found occurring in a concentrated area.



Floodplain Rustyhood (*Pterostylis cheraphila*). Photo: Adrian Martins

The find is significant because the only other site where the species has been found is on the Wimmera River between Murtoa and Dimboola in the west of the State!



Flooding on Spur Island, November 2016. Photo: Adrian Martins

FENCING AIMS TO IMPROVE SPUR ISLAND'S VALUES



Spur Island total grazing exclusion fencing; Photo: Adrian Martins

To monitor the effectiveness of the fencing, vegetation quadrats have been established both inside and outside the enclosed areas.

Fencing that has been erected on the island may look like people are being locked out, but the aim is to enhance the vegetation structure inside it. There are many reasons for this:

- Threats: overgrazing
- Natural recruitment objectives:
 - If the area is fenced, nature can take its course and natural recruitment can occur.
- Increasing habitat diversity:



Bush Stone Curlew
Photo: Chris Tzaros

By protecting the area, habitat for threatened fauna such as the Bush-stone Curlew is increased. The fence may also provide nesting protection from foxes and where required it can be manipulated to be predator proof.



Accessing Spur Island during flood, October 2016. Photo: Adrian Martins



Map of Spur Island

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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