

OUR PROJECTS



ENHANCING THE VALUES OF THE KERANG RAMSAR WETLANDS

PROTECTING THE BEST... ... FROM RABBITS!

The Kerang Wetlands complex (commonly known as the Lakes) forms an extensive system of over 100 unique wetlands. The Kerang Wetlands are recognised for their Cultural Heritage significance, plant and animal values and their ability to support large waterbird populations. The wetland significance is recognised by their listing under several international conventions, including the *Ramsar Convention*.

The purpose of the project is to improve the natural values of the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands by reducing the impacts of threatening pests, such as rabbits. The North Central CMA is the lead agency in North Central Victoria coordinating and monitoring natural resource management programs for the region.

SOCIAL & ECONOMICAL IMPACTS

During the drought, rabbit populations in Australia have reached plague proportions. Rabbits are one of Australia's most damaging pest animals. They cost hundreds of millions of dollars per year in agricultural production costs alone.

To combat numbers, farmers and community groups undertake rabbit control yearly, often working with their neighbours to maximise the effectiveness on the rabbit populations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Rabbits can cause extensive damage by their eating and burrowing habits. Through these activities they can cause soil erosion, reduce water quality and alter the natural characteristics of the landscape and waterways. Without management they can wipe out native flora and fauna species that rely on fragmented habitat for survival.

CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACTS

The entire area surrounding the Kerang Wetlands is rich in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and unfortunately sites that are located in soft sandy soils can be destroyed through rabbit warrens and activity. Cultural Heritage places and objects are protected by law and it is an offence to harm Cultural Heritage unlawfully. It's important to know what to look for when assessing rabbit-prone areas for Cultural Heritage sites, how to undertake effective rabbit control works and what to do when you find a Cultural Heritage site.

For more information and advice Contact the North Central CMA Indigenous Facilitator, telephone: 03 5448 7124.



Protecting our wetlands from rabbits.
Photo: Courtesy David Kleinert Photography

WHERE WE ARE WORKING

The North Central CMA is working with landholders and other agencies to control rabbits - regardless of whether they are on private or public land - around the Kerang Ramsar wetlands.

The project area includes:

- Reedy, Middle and Third lakes;
- Bael Bael; and
- The Avoca Marshes.

... spanning approximately 2,000 hectares.

HOP ON BOARD

Local flood waters have increased the natural mortality of rabbits living in warrens around the Kerang wetlands and Avoca Marshes. If rabbit management continues we can have a big impact in reducing the large rabbit numbers.

Rabbit Buster Month will be held annually in February and - this year - extended through March.

We encourage everyone living and working around the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands and Avoca Marshes to get involved and undertake rabbit control activities.

For more information on **Rabbit Buster Month**, rabbit management techniques and tips for identifying sensitive environmental and cultural sites, please contact the North Central CMA on telephone: 03 5448 7124.

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OUR OBJECTIVES

- To reduce rabbit populations;
- To protect threatened flora and fauna species;
- To protect Cultural Heritage sites;
- To reduce soil erosion;
- To raise awareness and offer support; and
- To map and monitor works.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

The project has employed a wetlands work crew to assist with the onground requirements of the project. The Wetlands Enhancement Crew includes Aboriginal representatives from both the Barapa Barapa and Yorta Yorta Aboriginal nations.

Elders from both Barapa Barapa and Yorta Yorta, along with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV), have been engaged and will continue to play an active role in providing technical guidance with regard to challenges faced in the field - such as how to undertake rabbit control near Aboriginal heritage-sensitive areas.

The wetlands crew have been working full time on this project as well as its sister project in the Gunbower Forest since 2009. The wetland crew has been actively identifying Cultural Heritage sites and mapping and destroying rabbit warrens around Lake Bael Bael and the Avoca Marshes. A rabbit management trial has been run at the Avoca Marshes, with the aim of improving information about:

- Using different warren destruction methods;
- Cost of those methods;
- The impact on Cultural Heritage values; and
- The long-term effectiveness of the methods used.



OUR PARTNERS

No one can deliver effective rabbit control alone. We are working with the community and with agencies such as the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Parks Victoria (PV), Trust for Nature (TfN) and the Fairley Bael Bael Sandhill Lake Landcare Group to get the job done.

PROJECT FUNDING

Funding has been secured from the Caring for our Country (CfoC) and the Natural Resource Investment Program (NRIP) for the next three years. This financial commitment will allow us to reduce rabbit numbers and make a difference to the Kerang wetlands.

IN OUR COMMUNITY



Colin Gitsham at Kerang PPA Community Meeting
Photo: Courtesy North Central CMA

MEET: The 'Fairley Bael Bael Sandhill Lake Landcare Group'

The Fairley Bael Bael Sandhill Lake Landcare group has secured funding in 2010-2011 to undertake rabbit management in their area.

They have been working on rabbit control for many years and can offer practical advice on monitoring rabbits, control methods, equipment and support. The group holds monthly working bees and meetings.

More information please contact:

Colin: 03 5452 2606 or

Glenice: 03 5452 2607.

Alternatively, telephone the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Tel: 03 5448 7124
Web: www.nccma.vic.gov.au



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY