

## **5. Malleefowl at Monarto Zoo**

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### **Summary**

This poster presentation is an update on the progress made to re-establish a wild population of Malleefowl on the Monarto Zoo property.

### **Abstract**

The Monarto area, including the 1,000 hectare area of Monarto Zoo, once had a diverse range of fauna living in a mosaic of dryland habitats. With European settlement, and large scale clearance of arable land, this mosaic of habitats slowly reduced and, with the introduction of feral predators and herbivores, the fauna diversity also reduced. With this decline went the Malleefowl from most of its local territory.

In recent years, much work has been carried out on the Monarto Zoo property to reverse these trends, including re-establishing a mosaic of habitats on the variety of soil types; ensuring vegetation corridors connect all vegetation zones; excluding and removing all feral predators and controlling feral herbivores; determining what fauna species remain; and working towards the introduction of locally extinct fauna species.

To re-populate Malleefowl onsite, a number of Malleefowl eggs were removed, under DEWNR permit, from mounds in nearby Ferries McDonald Conservation Park. The number of eggs removed, and from which mounds, was strictly controlled to ensure there was minimal impact on the wild population, while providing as diverse a captive population as possible. The resulting chicks have now grown to full size and will hopefully breed once mature. The resulting hatchlings, it is hoped, will then be able to be released into the feral free environment recreated at Monarto Zoo, thus not only protecting the species but increasing its range back into areas where it is now extinct.

# Zoos SA Supporting Malleefowl Conservation

## The work of our restoration project so far

- The MRP employs a small dedicated team and involves volunteers from all walks of life. Over the last three years 1,200 volunteers have contributed 5,000 hours. The financial value of their contribution is estimated at \$125,000 however their support is priceless.
- As part of our team we host an Aboriginal Learning on Country program which enables a small team to gain hands on work experience and make a valuable contribution to our team while studying to achieve certificates in land management.
- The project includes a feral predator-proof upgrade to the zoo's 14km perimeter fence and management of cats, rabbits and foxes. The ultimate goal is to feral proof the entire 1,000 ha site.
- Since 2011, 33 hectares of degraded agricultural land have been restored and planted and 44,000 tubestock representing 60 native plant species have been propagated and planted on site.
- In the last year alone 120,000 visitors had the opportunity to travel through and find out more about the work that we are doing via guided zoo bus tours.
- We monitor our success via regular bio-surveys.

## What we plan to do next

- Develop a Land Management Plan that takes in to account all the different natural resources on the Monarto Zoo property to ensure we manage the whole site well and maximise the benefits for animals and visitors.
- Continue weed and feral species management on site.
- Infill previous large revegetation sites to ensure tree planting becomes future habitat for wildlife.
- The Zoos SA's Master Plan (2014-2034) highlights a number of opportunities to make more of our education role at Monarto including a mallee trail, mallee ecosystem exhibits including one for malleefowl, a precinct dedicated to Australian species and the history of Monarto's land management and more breeding facilities for threatened native species. The MRP will play a valuable role in the delivery of this plan.



**Poster presented by**  
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## Zoos SA's Monarto Restoration Project

- The Monarto Restoration Project (MRP) commenced in 2010 under the stewardship of Zoos SA's conservation department. Over that time it has received valuable funding support from several State and Australian Government funding programs and sponsorship investment.
- The project's aim is to: protect and restore existing native habitat on the property, manage the natural assets on Monarto well such as our ephemeral waterways, improve connectivity across both the property and the surrounding landscape, and to provide opportunities for our visitors to experience and learn more about the mallee and grassland habitat and wildlife we enjoy on our site.
- The MRP fulfils the two aspects of Zoos SA's Mission and demonstrates that - **we exist to save species from extinction and connect people with nature.**



## Insurance Population of Malleefowl for Ferries McDonald Conservation Park

- Monarto Zoo provides accommodation to eight adolescent Malleefowl provenanced to Ferries McDonald Conservation Park. As there is a very real risk that a significant fire event could do serious damage to the population of Malleefowl within Ferries McDonald, we will continue to hold an Insurance population to guarantee the genetics of this outlier population continue.

## Breed for release

- The establishment of captive breeding of Malleefowl at Monarto Zoo has the capacity to provide a large number of captive bred young which may be released to natural environments both within the park and beyond.

## Display and Interpretation

- The endearing qualities of our captive birds can be used to take advantage of the large visitor base at the zoo to promote an increase in public awareness of the plight of Malleefowl and other species under threat in the region due to habitat loss and predation by feral animals. New interpretation graphics have been installed at the Malleefowl aviary, while during the last school holidays, Malleefowl activities and threats were also highlighted to all young visitors and their families.

## School Holiday Activities

- During the last school holidays, Malleefowl activities and threats were highlighted to all young visitors and their families through the use of the "Mallee Tales" trail. These holiday activities encouraged visitors to visit all of the platforms on foot leading to an informational display highlighting Malleefowl unique mound building activities.



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