

Report and Evaluation

World Wetlands Day 2004, Australia

“Water for Wetlands – Water for Life”

Introduction:

World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated each year on the 2nd of February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971.

WWD was first celebrated in 1997. Since this time government agencies, non-government organisations and community groups have celebrated WWD by undertaking actions to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. These activities include seminars, nature walks, festivals, launches of new policies, announcement of new Ramsar sites, newspaper articles, radio interviews and undertaking wetland rehabilitation.

This report and evaluation has been coordinated by the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) to document the activities organised to celebrate WWD 2004, across Australia. It also includes an evaluation of the national communication products provided by the Department.

It is hoped the information presented within this report will encourage and guide future planning. The information gained in relation to the national communication products will assist the Department in planning future production and distribution.

Summary of Activities:

The theme for WWD 2004 in Australia was “Water for Wetlands – Water for Life”. The total number of activities across Australia, that the Department was asked to include in its WWD events calendar, was 26 events spread across all States and Territories (ACT 1; NSW 3; NT 1; QLD 10; SA 3; Tas 1; Vic 6; and WA 1). Reports from some of these events are outlined within this report.

Activities across Australia received much media attention during the weeks before and of World Wetlands Day/Week. There were over 40 newspaper and radio announcements, with 17 radio announcements occurring on WWD. Newspaper articles featured within the Australian, the Daily Telegraph, the Sunday Mail (Adelaide), the Advertiser (Adelaide), the Canberra Times, and the Courier Mail. Much of the information ranged from promoting WWD activities, promoting WWD generically, and providing information on specific wetlands issues. Many organisations and community groups also gained good promotion in local media.

WWD Reports (from activity organisers)

“Celebrating WWD in the Hunter”, NSW - The Wetlands Centre

The Shortlands Wetlands, which are a part of the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site, were a hive of activity on WWD 2004. Over 480 people came to celebrate the beauty of the wetland and the exciting program of events that were on offer.



*Left: Visitors to The Wetlands Centre on WWD getting involved in some water testing;
Right: People enjoying a day at The Wetlands Centre on WWD;
Photographer: Kylie Yeend*



A wetland plants stall was set up offering advice and sale of native wetland plants throughout the day.

Furthermore, the beauty of nature was celebrated through nature craft activities. Children and adults alike used their imaginations to dress up cicada shells, make jewellery out of fallen leaves, seed pods, and flowers, or create small arrangements of nature's sheddings. The bugs came to play as dipnets scooped into the waters of the permanent water pond. People investigated white trays with dipnet collections. Conjectures were had about the identity of the many waterbugs found in the wetland.

The day had been specially designed to give people the chance to really 'experience' the wetland. We had wanted people to walk away having learnt something about the value and functions of wetlands and to have planted a seed to create some sense of place in this wetland area.

People had the opportunity to learn about native reptiles and amphibians; tempt and broaden their tastebuds with a bushfood experience; gather some interesting and practical ideas on transforming their backyard into a haven for birds, butterflies and frogs; or to capture the beauty of nature on film under the guidance of a wildlife photography expert.

People's comments as they left for the day were a great inspiration for future WWD events. Some of the comments:

- "We have had such a wonderful day! We've been here since the beginning of the day and the kids haven't complained once about being bored."
- "The place is so beautiful, we'd love to camp overnight."
- "Thank-you for organising such a great day! This has been our first experience with the wetlands and we've learnt so much."

Gosford City Council, NSW

Gosford City Council undertook two WWD activities for 2004:

1. a community wetlands information night; and
2. a display of local wetland photographs at the Erina Centre.

Both these events were very well received. The presentations at the information night attracted 40 people. The display was judged as a competition, where participants answered questions relating to the photos displayed. 40 correct answers to the competition were received.

Bunyip Swamp, NSW - WetlandCare Australia

WetlandCare Australia held a wetlands discovery day at Bunyip Swamp, which included very interesting activities for the community.

About 20 people including landholders, Bird Enthusiasts, the Clarence Valley Bird Watchers Group and some people interested in wetlands from as far as Mullum participated in a great day!

The day included a display of various waterbirds, waterbugs and aquatic plants found within the local area. Presentations throughout the day included: a waterbird presentation from Gary Whale, Clarence Valley Bird Watchers; a presentation on wetlands plants from Jo Green, WetlandCare Australia; a short talk and demonstration on water quality from Nigel Blake, Department of Primary Industry and Natural Resources (DIPNR); and Linda Beaumont, WetlandCare Australia assisted participants to catch and identify waterbugs from the swamp.

Furthermore, participants compared the water in a shallow back swamp environment to the water in the open

water area of the Bunyip Swamp. This enabled participants to witness the differences between various wetland areas.

Belongil Wetlands, NSW – WetlandCare Australia

The Belongil Wetlands were the focus of WWD 2004 in Byron Bay. WWD was chosen to premiere the film: 'Belongil Catchment Rehabilitation Project Guided Tour', presented by Byron Shire Council and Southern Cross University.

Padaminka Nature Refuge, QLD

Padaminka Nature Refuge with assistance from Mackay Conservation Group held a public day for WWD 2004. Approximately 100 people attended the day. They had a wonderful day and the children spent hours painting a wetlands mural, which is now displayed at the Centre. Children and adults spent three hours with waterbug identification - catching the bugs in nets, sucking them up in pipettes and placing them on slides under the microscope. Carl Mitchell from Waterwatch was like the Pied Piper of Hamlyn. The children also enthusiastically joined in the Dredge Spoil game, trying to block the dredge master so he couldn't destroy the valuable ecosystems of our Harbour wetlands.

John McCabe gave a presentation on "Wetlands - Sustainable Management and Conservation" for the visitors. It was enjoyed by all. The displays were a

great success with people going back several times to discuss various aspects. Most people were very happy with the day and the activities, expressing that they had learned lots and would come again.



Above: Dredge Spoil game; Photographer: Alison Jones

Lake Bindegolly National Park, QLD

The Ranger at Lake Bindegolly National Park provided a presentation on the Parks wetland system, which includes three lakes. At the moment Lake Bindegolly is still dry after 12 months, but Hutchinson and Toomaroo have a little water in them. The three lakes join when full of water. The presentation was focused on the lakes' importance to the fauna, both local and migratory, and what grows and lives in the waters of the salt lakes and what depends on these things for food. It also included how the lakes came to be there and how the wind cleans the silt from the lake floor when they are dry. Topics such as feral plants/animals and the control methods in place to help conserve the wetlands were also outlined.

Landcare and Catchment Management, QLD

Activities organised by the Maranoa Balonne Landcare and Catchment Centre included displays at the five Landcare Offices and conducting water monitoring with local schools. A photo competition was also organised, and some amazing photos of local wetlands were submitted. Overall the activities were a great success and there was plenty of media coverage.

Kyabram Fauna Park, VIC

WWD was celebrated at Kyabram Fauna Park on Sunday 1 February 2004 with a day of free activities for all the family. The day was a great success with over 300 people visiting the park, of which 130 were children who received a showbag full of goodies!

Activities on offer included: froggie face painting, GV Regional Waste Management's interactive Ecovan, Waterwatch's Waterbeastie Hunt, displays from Landcare, Ky Field & Game Association and the Shire of Campaspe and an Animal Discovery Trail, which took children exploring the Fauna Park and all the animals that inhabit it. Wetland tours were conducted by Ron Pope, Manager of the Fauna Park, who highlighted to visitors the important role

that wetlands play in our environment.

Many thanks must go to: the Friends of the Fauna Park who volunteered to supervise the animal trail stations; Ron Pope for sharing his knowledge of the Park's wetlands; Heather and gang in the café for keeping the cool drinks coming; and finally to Cheree Conley (Kyabram Fauna Park) and Emily Boucher (Shire of Campaspe) for organising and co-ordinating the day. Well done everyone!

Wimmera Wetlands Tour, VIC – Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

'Wetland Hot Spots' in the Wimmera's west were the focus of the region's fourth annual celebration of World Wetlands Day on February 6. Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (CMA) ferried people from Stawell, Dimboola, Nhill, Kaniva, Gorokey and Horsham to explore West Wimmera's best-kept environmental secret. Around 300 people visited Lakes Charlegrark, Ratzcastle and Wallace during the tour. The West Wimmera contains more than 3000 wetlands (about one quarter of Victoria's wetlands) and was the perfect spot for a tour in 2004.

Guest presenters were: years five and six students from Gorokey and Edenhope Colleges; local identities Gordon Mitchell, Roy Pretlove, Geoff Carracher and Andrew Bradey; wetland ecologist Dr Rhonda Butcher; hydrogeologist Mark Hocking; Greening Australia senior ecologist Dale Tonkinson; Birds Australia ornithologist Chris Tzaros; and botanist Randall Robinson.

Although a wetlands tour in western Victoria in February involved visits to 'dry' wetlands, the community remained keen to be part of the event. This was Wimmera CMA's fourth annual wetlands celebration, with community response to the event doubling since the first tour to Lake Albacutya Ramsar site in 2000. This year it was also fortunate that Lakes Charlegrark and Wallace contained some water, enabling keen birdwatchers to get a closer look with their binoculars.

Wimmera's WWD is a part of the CMA's Healthy Waterways program, funded through the National Action Plan for Water Quality and Salinity (NAP).



Left: Guided tour about the birds of Bool Lagoon Game Reserve, taking the opportunity to get out onto the boardwalks; Photographer: Bryan Haywood

Bool Lagoon Game Reserve and Hacks Lagoon Conservation Park, SA

WWD at Bool Lagoon was a great success. We had approximately 60 people that made the trip out to see Bool Lagoon, including not only people with an interest in conservation, but a large number of people from the general community.

The activities were held on Saturday 31 January 2004 to mark WWD on Monday 2 February. Local Rangers organised guided tours and information talks from local experts covering water management,

flora, fauna, threatened species and Waterwatch. There were also hands-on activities, displays, stickers, posters and handouts about local animals.

The information day gave people in the local area an opportunity to learn about the international importance of the Ramsar wetlands. The lagoons are an important breeding and refuge site for waterbirds, including rare, vulnerable and endangered species. They provide habitat for 19 species of migratory birds, 15 of which are protected under the Japan-Australia and China-Australia Bird Agreements (JAMBA and CAMBA).

The weather on the day was excellent and we had such a positive response that we're planning to organise further activities again for next year.

Thankyou to SA DEH staff in Mt Gambier who helped organise and gave presentations on the day.



Right: Copperhead Snake at Bool Lagoon; Photographer: Bryan Haywood

Feedback and Ideas to Consider for Future World Wetlands Day/Week Activities and Promotional Products:

The success of World Wetlands Day has been evaluated taking into consideration the comments and feedback received from participants/organisers of events. This has largely focussed on the products and services provided by the Department to implement WWD activities as identified under the *Wetlands Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) National Action Plan: 2001-2005*. The products and Action Plan are available from www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands. The following pages provide feedback received for each of the specific WWD products. The products were assessed by participants according to how valuable they were for the WWD activities they undertook.

The WWD poster was ranked as the most valuable, closely followed by the sticker series, postcard and fridge magnets. Many participants also found local media/promotion very effective to encourage people to attend events.

Events calendar

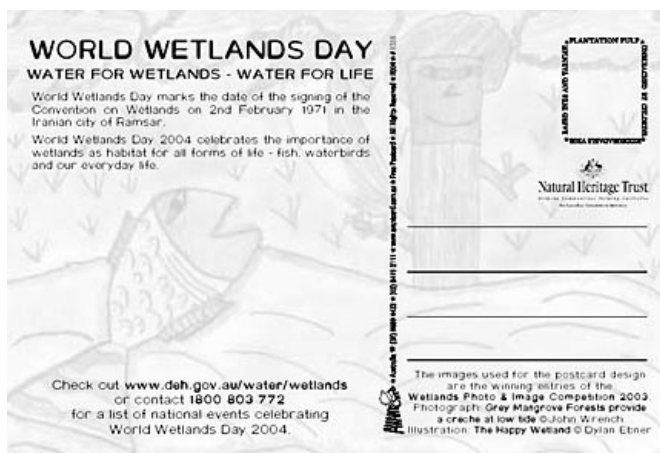
The events calendar is accessible at www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands during the lead up to WWD.

- The calendar was useful for gathering ideas about possible activities to run. It is also good for contacts.
- Found the events calendar extremely useful.
- Events calendar was very useful to see what other organisations were doing.
- The events calendar was a good resource and very valuable in promoting activities. Having the information on a website was very useful as it provided easy access to information.
- It may be useful to use existing wetland network/s to send a bulk email about WWD three months before the event. State government agency networks should also be utilised to their full potential.
- I am uncertain of how many participants looked at the website – I think our mail announcements and newspaper advertising attracted most people. From my point of view I found it useful to see what was happening in other areas to inspire us in our selection of activities.
- I don't know if anyone attended because they saw your Calendar or if it was because they read our blurbs in the local papers. We were given a pretty good airing by the media and I sent out lots of flyers by email/post and put them up around town.
- Easy to access. Maybe earlier updating so other people could be contacted (that is, increasing networking between organisations).
- Feedback from our WWD event indicated that

people mainly heard about the day through their local paper (we had good local media coverage). Not sure to what extent general public used DEH's website to be aware of events? Perhaps the calendar could be promoted through the NRM Facilitators and other key nodes. The poster could also give a direct reference to the WWD webpage.

World Wetlands Day Postcard and *Wetlands Photo and Image Competition*

- A useful visual aid. Though it would have been more effective if released earlier than it was.
- Widely accessed via public.
- It would be good to include schools to raise awareness in our youth.
- Postcard was great. The competition was a good way of getting people involved. I did not hear of the competition until now, it would be good to advertise this more (eg. another medium other than the web).
- Picture was very good.
- I am afraid the postcard caused much mirth as it reminded people of the Mangroves Dieback. It is species specific and is killing the *Avicennia marina* so the postcard picture resembled our dying forests because it showed mainly the trunks.
- We needed to order earlier, as it would have been useful for local publicity to print local details on back and letterbox drop to reach wider audience.
- The photo competition is a good idea. Could use local contacts made through WWD to locally promote competition – launching on WWD. Could hand out the postcard and say “next year this could



Above left: Front design of the WWD postcard, featuring the winning entry for the 15 years and over category in the *Wetlands Photo and Image Competition 2003*; Above right: Back design of the WWD postcard featuring the winning image for the 14 years and under category of the *Wetlands Photo and Image Competition 2003*.

be your photo”.

- Attractive... good amount of information, although text could have been smaller to allow for more space for someone to include their own writing.
- Perhaps a postcard series on Ramsar wetlands of Australia, which could include postcards that have embedded seeds.
- All participants enjoyed the postcard, and generally took another home for the kids/grankids.

World Wetlands Day fridge magnet

- Kids love them!
- We believe the magnet is more effective than stickers because the whole family can view them.
- Kids liked these and the sticker series. It is always hard to determine how ‘effective’ these are, that is: what’s their real value? how do people use them? Do they ever refer to them later?
- Perhaps the DEH website could be included on the magnet and stickers to encourage people to look for further information.

Wetlands sticker series

- Kids love these even more than the magnet!
- Readily accessed by students visiting during World Wetlands Week.
- Very popular with children.
- These were snapped up by children.
- Good. They are ‘kid focused’ and tend to be placed on folders etc.
- Would have been more valuable if a few more were provided.

World Wetlands Day poster

- This year’s poster was beautifully done. It would be great to see future years have more of an “inland” wetland focus.
- Found this the most valuable resource for promotion of the event. The poster was placed up in local business, local council and on site.
- Images attracted a lot of attention.
- Great – I put it up with the poster produced by the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and some 8 x 12 photos.
- We needed to order earlier.
- Beautiful poster – really well done!! We used the pdf version of the poster, amended to include information on our WWD event. This was very valuable, as we did not have to design our own poster and the poster images were diverse enough that they had relevance to our wetland system. In future it may be useful to provide this option.
- Useful for advertising the event.

Wetlands Australia: national wetlands update 2004

- Very useful extension tool. The more case studies the better for use by community groups/members.
- Valuable in portraying more info to the public.
- Helpful for those people who wanted to know more.
- A couple of teachers took copies for students.
- Very comprehensive and well produced. We used this on WWD and have been making it available after the event.
- Good resource to keep up to date on what is happening.

Wetlands Australia

NATIONAL WETLANDS UPDATE 2004

ANNUAL UPDATE FOR AUSTRALIA’S WETLAND COMMUNITY

Wetlands Australia: national wetlands update 2004 banner



Video – *Wetlands, water and sustainability* (Ramsar Bureau, 2003)

- People said it was most educational.
- Long-term, great resource.
- On WWD we used a video which had a local focus and direct relevance to the Centre.
- Extremely useful to inform participants between site visits.

Factsheets

- The Ramsar factsheet helped to relay the areas that are protected by Ramsar, we would have been lost without this information.
- Taken by teachers, but not the general public.
- We received the factsheet on Australia's Ramsar sites, which was useful for our information, but not sure how useful it is for the general public. Maybe it needs to be extended to include contact details related to each site.

- Extremely useful. It may be useful to have a factsheet for different areas, to enable choice for distribution.

Generic

- It would be great if resources were available earlier in the year so that they can be easily incorporated into displays.
- Material was great, very useful and was appropriate.
- Various visitors came to the Centre and browsed through the display, taking many stickers and postcards. I do like the stickers and the magnet and the poster was most eye-catching! Resources are lent out to teachers upon request.
- Schools and community groups were approached but very little interest was given from schools as they were only back from holidays three days prior to the event. Advertising and promotion nationally to schools would be good.

Conclusion:

Firstly, thank you to all who organised and coordinated activities for WWD 2004. Also, thank you to those who took the time to provide us with summaries of these activities and feedback/comments on ways to improve WWD in Australia. The comments and feedback will be taken into consideration when coordinating production of communication products for future WWD. We hope this report will provide people with ideas and enthusiasm to continue celebrating WWD.

If you would like further information please contact Alison Beard on (02) 6274 2555 or alison.beard@deh.gov.au.

Information sources

Department of the Environment and Heritage WWD website:

www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands/day/index.html

Ramsar Convention Secretariat's WWD website:

www.ramsar.org/wwd_index.htm

International reports for WWD 2004:

www.ramsar.org/wwd2004_reports.htm

WWD 2005:

www.ramsar.org/archives_trans_wwd2005.htm