

HFNC excursion – Green Swamp on ‘Pollockdale’ and Jackson’s Big Swamp 23 November 2013

Rod Bird

Participants: Diane & Rod, Lyn & David, Reto & Yvonne, Craig & Amanda, Janeen & Ken, Hillary Turner, Ross Simpson and Sally Jackson. Lachlan Farrington from Nature Glenelg Trust was our guide for the ‘Pollockdale’ visit. We met at the Hamilton Visitor Information Centre at 9 am and then headed to Dunkeld where others joined us. We turned off the Glenelg Highway onto Burnside lane and Red Hills Rd, stopping near the pines where Lachlan and his two children met us.

Green Swamp



This wetland covers about 90 ha and about 2/3 is Crown Land and there is a fence that crosses the swamp, marking the position. Some years ago the landholder put a drain on his land that drained the entire swamp.

The recent new owner of ‘Pollockdale’, Charles Cay from near Corowa in NSW, was interested in restoring the major part of Green Swamp. Nature Glenelg Trust was able to assist in their *Wetland Restoration Program on Private Land*.

We walked about 400 m across the paddock from the pines and saw a shallow stretch of water across about a half of the wetland.

Lachlan showed us where the planned levee was to be constructed across the drain (photo below) which is near the NW corner of the swamp. This would restore water to about half of the private land and, of course, to all of the Crown land. It is expected that the current maximum water level would be lifted by 30-50 cm when the drain is blocked and the levee is constructed to run across the little valley at that site.



We walked past the fence that crosses the wetland (photo above), which defines the eastern boundary of the Crown Land, and inspected the vegetation on the lunette on the northern side of the swamp.

Ghania trifida (Coast Saw-sedge) grew there in clumps and *Mimulus repens* (Creeping Monkey-face) and *Samolus repens* (Austral Brooklime) on the flats.

Birds seen on or near Green Swamp on 23 Nov 2013:

1. Banded Lapwing 1
2. Black Swan ~20
3. Grey Teal ~40
4. Yellow-billed Spoonbill 4
5. White-necked heron 4
6. Masked lapwing ~6
7. Unidentified waders ~30 (Greenshanks?)

Returning to the vehicles, we decided to have lunch there, then we proceeded along Red Hills Rd to the Glenthompson-Ararat Rd, turning right and soon entering the 'Pollockdale' lane to view the small wetlands adjacent. The deep wetland hosted about 400 ducks – mostly Hardhead and a few Australian Shelduck.



Back on the Glenthompson-Ararat Rd and we stopped at a swamp (GPS Aust84 37-37-02/142-33-03) that the road had bisected. The elevated road gave a good view of the wetland on both sides of the road. On the lesser swamp to the east were a few Masked Lapwing but the western side, then dry, had a nesting Banded Lapwing. A low-flying Brown Falcon had roused the bird. We had not seen this species since the SEANA weekend in Oct 2009, when we took a group along Forest Lane to Lake Linlithgow. There were then several Banded Lapwings on a bare paddock adjacent to Forest Lane.

The Big Swamp

Sally Jackson kindly offered to show us the Big Swamp, an area of about 160 ha that sits in a shallow depression on the basalt plains. Some old River Red Gums (*E. camaldulensis*) mark the outline of the original swamp. The drain had been partially blocked about 7 years ago, a few years after the Jacksons acquired the property. This has restored a shallow cover of water to the lake bed.



We walked to the lake from a higher point on the east side, noting the array of Blue Devils (*Eryngium ovinum*), Onion Orchids (*Microtis* spp.), Chocolate Lilies (*Arthropodium* sp.) and other natives among the pasture species on the long bank. The Swamp had many native species including Marsh-flower (*Villarsia* sp.), Prick-foot (*Eryngium vesiculosum*), Pale Swamp Everlastings (*Helichrysum rutidolepis*), and Woolly-heads (*Myriocephalus rhizocephalus*). Photos of the latter two are seen above.



We drove to the southern side of the swamp and walked to the place on the outlet drain where a low barrage was made to retain some water in the swamp (see photo). Consensus of opinion was reached that increasing the height of the drain blockage at that point may result in some elevation in the level of swamp water but a better solution might be arrived at by plugging the outlet drain nearer the edge of the swamp. The sandbagging approach would be the best way to test that option. The old River Red Gums at this site indicated the original upper level of the swamp before it was drained.

We finished our interesting wetland day at about 3.30 pm. Lachlan left us at the Big Swamp and returned to Warrnambool while we adjourned to Dunkeld for afternoon tea and coffee before setting off home.