

Restoration and management of key large wetlands in the Hamilton region



Rod Bird
Hamilton, Victoria

April 2011



Lake Muirhead in April 2002

Looking south from Yarram Gap Rd to Brolga on the northern edge of the lake. Up to 200 Brolga flock occasionally to this wetland in summer and autumn.



Lake Muirhead in April 2002

Looking north from the southern edge of the lake. The lake held Swan many species of duck. Sheep grazed the entire margin of the lake.

Mount William Swamp lies ~1 km over the rise to the NW

Restoration and management of key large wetlands in the Hamilton region

Background

This paper is a compilation of several articles directed towards the restoration of some major wetlands in the area near Hamilton, but excluding two major wetland complexes which are dealt with in separate papers:

- Buckley Swamp - *Restoration of the Buckley Swamp, formerly known as The Great Swamp (Ko.nung.i.yoke) at Yatchaw, Hamilton, SW Victoria* (Rod Bird) 2007, pp.10.
- Lake Linlithgow and allied wetlands - *History, fauna and flora of Lake Linlithgow (Jenawarra) and associated wetlands in south-west Victoria* (Rod Bird, Steve Clark & Murray Gunn) 2008, pp. 54.

Bryans Swamp, another major wetland in the region, is not covered in this report. That swamp would benefit from the construction of a weir on the outflow to Outlet Creek, in order to better manage the water body. Details and photographs of the landscape and River Red Gums that grace the banks of that swamp can be seen in *River Red Gums at Bryans Swamp and other sites in SW Victoria and in South Australia: photographs & measurements of significant trees* (Rod Bird) 2011, pp.54.

The following papers are presented in this report:

- *Restoration and management of wetlands in the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA region*
Future Directions -
a proposal submitted for the consideration of
Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Authority (GHCMA)
Strategic Natural Resource Management Reference Group
Hamilton (16 Feb. 2007)
- *Wetland Restoration in the GHCMA Region*
Veac submission (Nov. 2009)
- *Restoration of Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp:*
Letter to the Ranger-in-Charge, Grampians/Gariwerd National Park (April 2010)
- *Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp:*
Letter to the Ranger-in-Charge, Grampians/Gariwerd National Park (Feb. 2011)
- *Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp:*
Letter to the Ranger-in-Charge, Grampians/Gariwerd National Park (April 2011)
- *Callistemon wimmerensis at Bradys Swamp, Grampians/Gariwerd NP* (Feb. 2011)
- *Muirhead and Mt William Swamps (photos after summer flood)* (Feb. 2011)

The aim of this report is to better publicise these important wetlands and to show their environmental potential, given restoration of more natural seasonal flows and better management.

Restoration & management of wetlands in the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA region

Rod Bird, Feb. 2007

Introduction

Natural resource management issues of importance to the region include native vegetation management, stream health, salinity management and wetland restoration. GHCMA has prepared plans for these: Native Vegetation Plan (Draft 2000), Salinity Plan 2005-2008, River Health Strategy (Draft 2002), Regional Catchment Strategy 2003-2007, Regional Wetland Management Plan (Draft 2003). The retention and management of native vegetation is a serious issue – especially the problem of invasive environmental weeds and the loss of native grasslands - but it is not the major issue. Neither is salinity, although there are hot spots where remedial action is appropriate. Health of the waterways is also a major concern and to that end the work of the GHCMA in fencing the river and stream frontages is to be applauded, for that will reduce pollution of the water and allow riparian vegetation to be restored.

The major deficiency in the GHCMA strategy plans is in the restoration and management of wetlands. This is where the most serious environmental loss has occurred and it is the area where least has been done to restore the balance, in terms of biodiversity loss. It is a serious omission. The past and on-going shrinkage of our wetlands has had an enormous impact on the fauna, especially of waterbirds. It is also the area where the most benefit can be achieved by undertaking key works. The restoration process is relatively simple, the projects need not be hugely costly, and the returns are immediate and obvious.

While other agencies have the prime responsibility for most of the wetlands on public land, GHCMA could influence their actions (or inaction). These and other actions fall under the following headings:

1. Revision of the Regional Wetland Management Plan – to focus on ways to restore former prime, extensive wetlands and to better manage existing wetlands in the region.
2. Revision of the Drainage Strategy - to include the option of altering some existing drains, allowing restoration of the remaining few prime, major wetland areas.
3. Collaboration with other responsible agencies – to initiate discussion and facilitate change.
4. Funding – sourcing and directing funding that is available from Federal and State sources.

Wetlands and waterbirds

Wetlands now occupy 2% of the State (DNRE 1997). In total, 37% of Victoria's wetlands have been drained, 90% from private land. Drainage of large swamps, such as Buckley, Condah and Strathdownie Swamps in SW Victoria, account for most of the loss.

Wetland grouping and statistics for GHCMA region	Number	Area (ha)
1. Freshwater Meadows – shallow depressions flooded for <4 months/year	2745 (51%)	21197 (29%)
2. Shallow Freshwater Marsh – wetlands that dry out in mid-summer	1103 (20%)	12177 (17%)
3. Deep Freshwater Marsh – usually flooded throughout the year	511 (9%)	12779 (17%)
4. Permanent Open Freshwater – deep wetlands and dams that do not dry out	728 (13%)	17993 (25%)
5. Semi-permanent Saline – wetlands flooded for <8 months, incl. salt pans	243 (4%)	4618 (6%)
6. Permanent Saline – tidal areas or inland saline lakes that rarely dry out	73 (1%)	4145 (6%)
7. Sewerage ponds	9 (0.01%)	36 (0.05%)

On the volcanic plains of western Victoria, 78% of the Shallow Freshwater Marsh and 66% of Deep Freshwater Marsh have been lost or severely modified through drainage (Anon 1999c, DNRE 1997).

Deep Freshwater Marsh include Lake Linlithgow and Lake Bolac; Buckley Swamp would, before draining, have been largely in this category but might now rate (if at all) as Freshwater Meadow. Shallow Freshwater Marsh would include Krause's Swamp and Mt. William Swamp. Saline Wetlands include Lake Kennedy.

The Glenelg-Hopkins Region has lost over 50% of its former wetlands. Only 12 wetlands (including impoundments such as the 3,500 ha Rocklands Reservoir, which comprises 20% of the regions Permanent Open Freshwater) exceed 500 ha but these comprise 22% of the total area (GHCMA Draft Regional Wetland Management Plan 2003).

Some 90% of our existing, depleted wetlands are on private land. Freshwater Meadows & Shallow Freshwater Marsh contribute 70% of the total number of wetlands and 46% of the total area. Over 95% of the GHCMA region's wetlands are small (<50 ha in area), mostly Freshwater Meadows & Shallow Freshwater Marsh, and these comprise >50% of the wetland area of 73,000 ha. These are

subject to raised-bed cropping and plantation development on adjacent catchments. There is an urgent need to gain (restore) several large areas of Shallow Freshwater Marsh & Deep Freshwater Marsh. These wetlands were breeding and feeding places of Brolga and other waterbirds. In Victoria, Brolga numbers now are less than 800 and not increasing. Most artificial wetlands are farm dams less than 1 ha extent and of low value, with unnatural water regimes and poor habitat diversity. There is little hope for Brolga to breed successfully and raise chicks to adulthood on those areas. Sightings of flocks of Magpie Geese, once a common sight, are a rarity - seen at Tower Hill or Hotspur River flats when flooded.

Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy (1997) has several Statewide key directions, including the following:

1. Finalising management plans for significant wetlands
2. Identifying sites of biological significance in the rural landscape and encouraging appropriate use of this information in local planning schemes
3. Focus revegetation and rehabilitation efforts on the riparian environments
4. Maintain appropriate water regimes for freshwater wetlands.

The major environmental negative in this region is the loss of wetlands. Yet, of all the environmental deficiencies that we have, this is the easiest problem to resolve – simply add water! If we want to make a significant and substantial biodiversity gain then this is the one area where that can be done quickly.

Victoria is a signatory to the international Ramsar convention on migratory birds and has 10 sites of international significance. It is also a party to Japan-Australia (JAMBA) and China-Australia (CAMBA) migratory bird agreements to protect the habitat of migrating birds. Many migratory waders use these wetlands, 7 of the 30 most important sites in Australia being in Victoria.

GHCMA Strategy for Existing Rural Drainage Areas

The strategy (GHCMA 2004) was deficient in ignoring the serious impacts of drainage on regional biodiversity. The report by consultants Earth Tech Engineering stated that “*This strategy aims to achieve a sustainable balance between land use and the environment*” but it was soon apparent that no balance was sought. Nor was there a mention of, or links to, Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy, or the Regional Wetland Management Plan. The “Priority-setting” approach was an environmental farce that ratified existing arrangements, to maintain or increase the available area of productive farming land.

Comments were made at length on these matters when the draft was produced, *e.g.* “*This strategy ignores the serious effects of drainage on biodiversity, and ignores the possibility of remedying some of the worst impacts by modifying some drainage schemes*” (Sept. 2004). There was no acknowledgement in the final document of views expressed regarding improving environmental outcomes. The report was also so limited that, in most cases, the numbers of landholders involved in the various drainage schemes was listed as “unknown” and the mapping (with areas defined as “scheme size”) did not appear to be those of actual areas affected by the drains (*e.g.* the Buckley Swamp scheme size was listed as 38,269 ha, whereas the actual area involved is more like 3,800 ha). This distorted the significance of the scheme.

Wetland Management Plan

The Wetland Management Plan of 2003 had a framework that professed to “*guide future investment in wetland protection and enhancement*”. This report is full of detail and statistics, valuable information, yet it had no knowledge of Bryans Swamp, Ettrick Swamp, Buckley Swamp, Condah Swamp or Brady's Swamp – large, key wetlands that ought to be prime targets for restoration.

Part of the deficiency in this document was the lack of organised material in existing databases, but the consultants were not familiar with the region, or people who could have supplied information.

The plan did, however, highlight the impact that current changes in land-use - raised-bed cropping and Blue Gum plantations - will (and are) having on shallow, seasonal wetlands. Restoration of similar, but larger, wetlands will be needed to even offset these losses.

Proposals for major wetland restoration projects

Some key wetlands are presented below where action is required. The philosophy is that if we can concentrate on these few, large wetlands then we will be able to make major gains in biodiversity. Decisions made by local landholders 100 years ago to commit land to agriculture should not be binding today, when circumstances and understanding have changed.

Lake Condah

This 200-ha lake was drained over the years 1886 to 1954. It once supported a *Gunditjmara* community, who modified the landscape and used stone trap arrangements to harvest eels and fish. In 2003 a Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project applied for National Heritage Listing through the Dept Environment and Heritage, and a Lake Condah Water Restoration sub-committee was established in 2004. The *Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation* at Heywood manages these projects.

This project is supported by GHCMA. Yet, it covers only a tiny portion of the original wetlands of that district, the drained Condah Swamp alone once covering 4800 ha. The project is a small but significant step in the right direction. It is expected that work will begin on the weir in the autumn of 2008, after a long period of research, public consultation and examination by various departments.

Buckley Swamp (The Great Swamp)

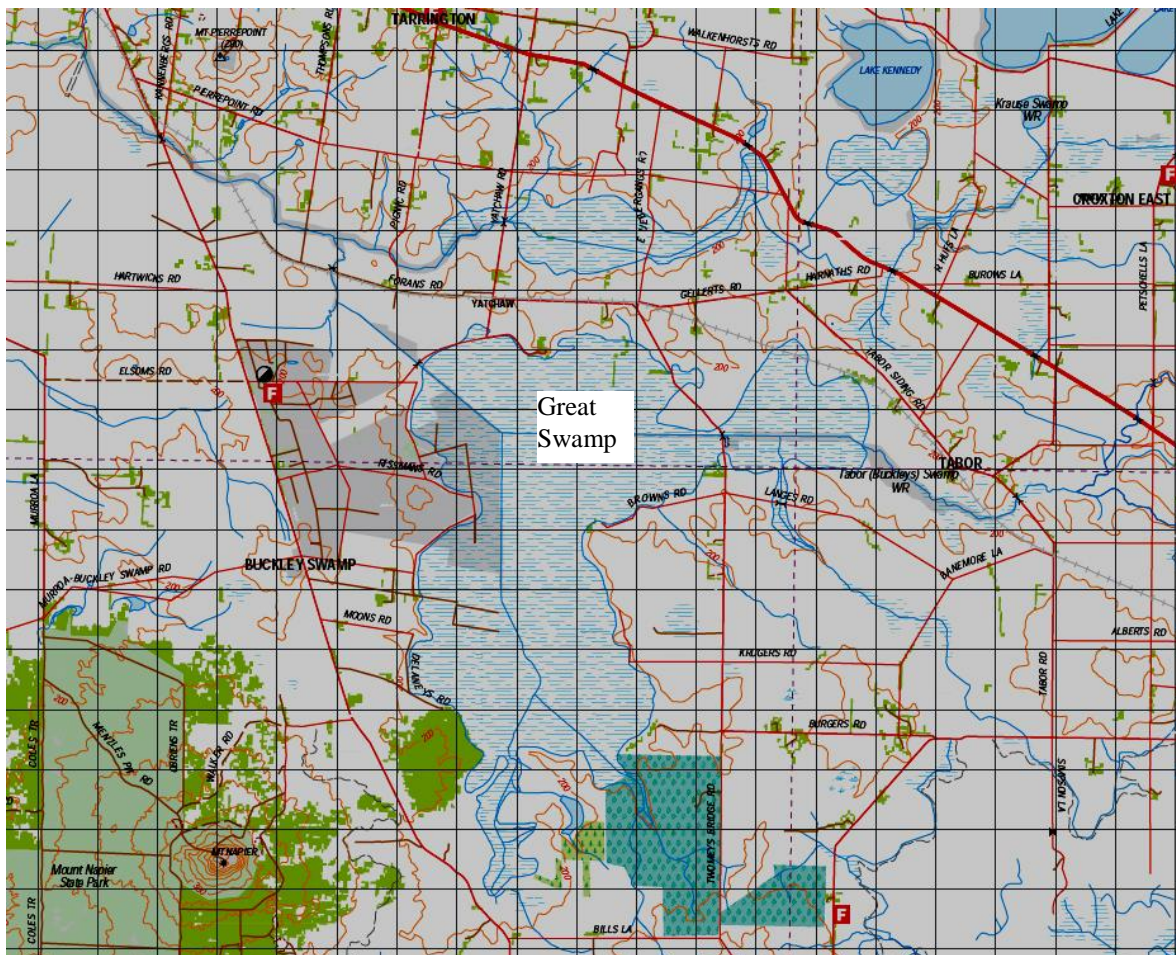
The map shows the location, some 12 km SSE of Hamilton. *The Great Swamp* (later called Buckley Swamp) once covered an area of 3,000 ha of volcanic plain. *"The most remarkable feature in the district around Hamilton is the great morass some miles to the south of the town...It was the home of myriads of waterfowl, who, in the large space in the centre, were safe from the weapons of the natives and the guns of the whites. Snipe were in countless numbers round the edges..."* (Bruni 1903).

Benefits of restoration of this 2,500ha wetland:

- it would add enormously to the diversity of habitat and species protected, and would have a profound impact as regional, national and international waterbird habitat
- economic impact of tourism would be more significant than agricultural returns foregone
- it would help replenish underground reserves of fresh water for the southern district
- the swamp has great significance in terms of Aborigine heritage

Action required

This swamp could be easily restored by providing a weir on the single outlet drain. Some of the swamp is Crown Land. The proposal for the restoration of this wetland is presented separately.



Mount William Swamp, Lake Muirhead & Brady's Swamp

Lake Muirhead – partly State Game Reserve, 280 ha in area (LCC gives 330 ha total). It is Shallow Freshwater Marsh & Deep Freshwater Marsh, with dense patches of sedges and Thatch grass (*Glyceria australis*). The surrounds and drier part of the wetland (slightly saline) are grazed by sheep.

Mount William Swamp – partly State Game Reserve, 635 ha in area (the total area is ~1900 ha). It is a large, Shallow Freshwater Marsh with a partial ring of old River Red Gums (*E. camaldulensis*) around the former extent of the swamp and a large lunette on the eastern margin. This wetland is also stated to be "a high-value wetland for its avifauna... Large marshes of this type are not common in this region" (Wetlands Conservation Program for Victoria 1993). The area also has a high cultural significance. The entire area is routinely grazed by sheep. The area gazetted as State Game Reserve appears to be an unmanaged, unfenced portion roughly central to the former swamp (see map).

Mount William Swamp and Lake Muirhead are rated as wetlands of national importance in the Directory of Nationally Important Wetlands. Both are favourite flocking areas for large numbers of Brolga. Threatened species such as Freckled Duck, Australasian Shoveler, Hardhead, Blue-billed Duck, Pied Cormorant, Royal Spoonbill, Whiskered tern and Musk Duck frequent the wetlands when there is water there. These wetlands need to be restored to make a large impact on biodiversity.

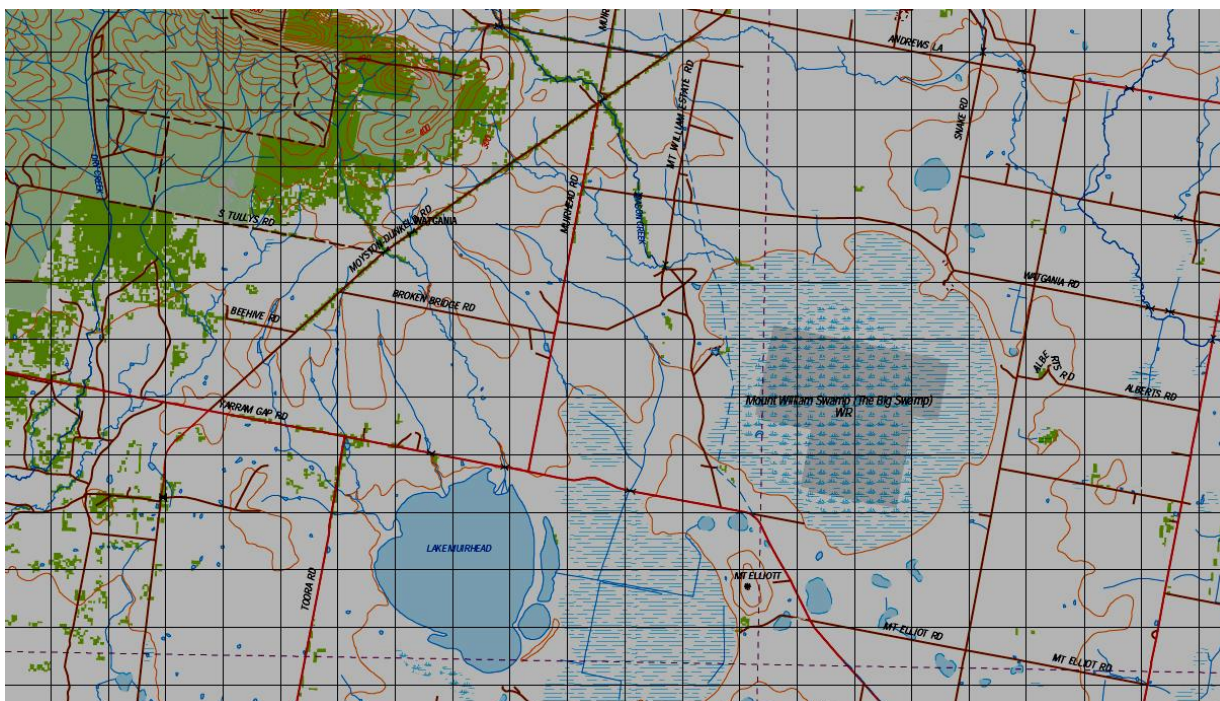
Brady's Swamp – adjacent to, and part in, Grampians National Park. Public land area 200 ha (LCC has total area 240 ha). This once acted as a 'sponge' to lessen the severity of flooding on the Wannon River, into which it drains. This prime wetland could be restored if current drainage was modified.

"The Bioregional Action Planning – Landscape Plans for Chatsworth and Muirhead Zones of the Dundas tablelands Bioregion" (2003) recommended actions for the area included:

- Developing management plans for high value wetlands
- Enhancing and expanding habitat to nearby or adjoining lands, where feasible

Action required

- Survey and acquisition – areas of State Game Reserve at Mt. William Swamp and Lake Muirhead cover only part of the original wetland area. The value of both swamps would be greatly enhanced if the entire area of wetland, including the littoral fringe, were included in the reserves and fenced to control grazing. That should be first priority. Mt William Swamp is compromised by having only about a third of the area (with none of the treed margins) in the reserve. Lack of tree and shrub vegetation markedly reduces the value of the wetlands.
- Investigation of drainage – it appears that drains are reducing the amount and quality of water that can be held in the 3 wetlands. There was a suggestion from a university team that examined the local hydrology, that water diverted from Mt William Swamp had seriously affected salinity in the area. Action is needed to restore the original condition of the swamps.



Wetland Restoration in the GHCMA Region

Rod Bird, Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

(hamiltonfnc@live.com.au) Nov 2009 for VEAC

The source of data is GHCMA Regional Wetlands Status Report 2006, although the document acknowledges that there is insufficient data available to develop a strategy. The data is derived from information that is at least 10 years old and of a time when rainfall was higher and wetlands were in better shape. A precis of the document (with CMA area data from other sources) follows:

"Drainage of this region has produced an environment unrecognisable from that which first greeted the settlers....most of western and southern Victoria including the Hopkins basin, was once a mosaic of seasonal and permanent wetlands. Only remnants of those remain. The process of progressively draining and thereby destroying these wetlands under the guise of 'reclamation' has been unremitting from the commencement of occupation right up to and including the present. As this activity has been carried out on private properties it is not obvious to the public, nor a matter of recorded public concern, and accordingly it has been scarcely commented upon".

GHCMA Management Principle - "wetlands of highest value to both the community and biodiversity will be protected from any decline in their environmental condition and will be enhanced to an acceptable condition".

GHCMA Resource Condition Targets:

- " There is no further decline in values of wetlands of international and national importance and by 2008 there will be an improvement in any values that have been deteriorated"
- "Across the region, there is no further decline in the condition of high value wetlands, and by 2013 there will be a 'net gain' in wetland condition"
- "There is no further decline in the number and extent of shallow or deep freshwater meadows or shallow freshwater marshes, and by 2008 there will be a 'net gain' in the area and extent of these wetland categories".

Wetland statistics for GHCMA Region (2,600,000 ha)

- Total = 5,412 wetlands
- Area = 73,188 ha (2.81% of GHCMA region)
- No. of wetlands <50 ha in area = 5222 (96%) = 37,250 ha (these represent 51% of total area of wetlands in the GHCMA region).
- No. of wetlands 500-1000 ha in area = 9 (0.17%) = 6,589 ha (these constitute 9% of the GHCMA region's wetland area).
- No. of wetlands >1000 ha in area = 3 (0.05%) = 9,528 ha (these constitute 13% of the GHCMA region's wetland area).
- Privately owned wetlands cover 61% of the total wetland area in the GHCMA region.
- 60% of the GHCMA region's wetlands (mostly shallow freshwater wetlands) were drained for agricultural purposes between 1788 & 1994.
- Artificial impoundments total 649 (5,800 ha), with Rocklands the largest at 2,600 ha.

Wetland sub-categories:

- Freshwater Meadow, Herb 20,163 ha (28%)
- Shallow Freshwater Marsh, Herb 9,369 ha (13%)
- Deep Freshwater Marsh, Open water 8,103 (11%)
- Permanent Open Freshwater, Shallow 6,908 ha (9%)
- Permanent Open Freshwater, Impoundment 5,810 ha (8%)
- Permanent Saline, Shallow 3,937 ha (5%)
- Permanent Open Freshwater, Dead timber 3,686 ha (5%)
- Semi-permanent Saline, Salt pan 3,287 ha (5%)
- Shallow Freshwater Marsh, Sedge 2,217 ha (3%)
- Deep Freshwater Marsh, Sedge 1651 ha (2%)
- Deep freshwater marsh, Cane Grass 1272 ha (2%)

Significant aspects of wetland type and future restoration in the GHCMA Region

- Only 22 wetlands (13% by area) contain 3 or more of the above sub-categories – these are the largest and most ecologically diverse wetlands in the region – but only 3 of these have been listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. Another 691 wetlands (13% by

number or 20% by area in total) are listed but most (577) are located in the lower Glenelg River sub-catchment.

- 78% of the Shallow Freshwater Marsh and 66% of Deep Freshwater Marsh on the Volcanic Plains Bioregion have been lost to drainage.
- Approximately 90% of the existing depleted wetlands are on private land and subject to drainage, loss from climate change or altered land-use.
- Wetlands comprise approx. 2.64% of the Shire of Southern Grampians, with some 38% on private land and subject to future loss.

Discussion

We need to consider the restoration of large wetlands such as Buckley Swamp (2,500 ha), Mt William Swamp (1900 ha), Brady Swamp (240 ha) and Lake Condah (211 ha), because gains from wetland restoration will be offset by the continual loss of existing small, shallow wetlands as a result of:

- continued (on-going) drainage on private land for grazing and, now, for cropping
- forestry and cropping further reducing runoff to streams and wetlands
- climate change – reduced rainfall reducing runoff to wetlands

Buckley Swamp has been drained progressively since the 1890s. That wetland comprises at least 2,500 ha, 250 ha of which is Crown land. The outflow for Buckley Swamp is via a single drain through a rise into Muddy Creek. Re-flooding of the swamp could be easily accomplished by installation of a weir. Some 90% of the area that would be subject to inundation is privately owned grazing land – that would need to be acquired over a period of time. The benefit:cost of such a project would far exceed that of a combined number of many smaller projects which would be of uncertain long-term value.

The past losses, and projected future losses, of the small, shallow wetlands is the prime reason why we must concentrate on a few major wetland projects – where the status is secure Crown Land managed by the State – rather than wasting resources on small areas that have an uncertain future:

- a wet year can significantly boost the available water storage in a large wetland, with water lasting over a number of subsequent drier years
- large wetlands like Buckley Swamp have a greater number of catchment sub-categories and are thus much more biologically diverse
- large wetlands allow Brolga and other waterbirds a better chance to breed – and become major feeding areas for migratory waders that depend upon large areas of shallow water and mudflats. These large areas, where stock are excluded from critical areas, also have sufficient reed growth to permit nest-building and provide refuge for species such as the vulnerable Australasian Brown Bittern and Little Bittern.

The following species of birds have also been listed as threatened, endangered or vulnerable: Australasian Shoveller, Glossy Ibis, Great Egret, Hardhead, Latham's Snipe, Royal Spoonbill and Whiskered Tern. The future of these species, a host of migratory Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-kneed Dotterels and other waders, together with Brolga, Magpie Geese and other waterbirds, would be safeguarded if we are able to restore a few large wetlands.

The economic benefit to the region from tourism is also a substantial benefit – a project such as the restoration of Buckley Swamp would create a tourism resource for waterbirds superior to that at Bool Lagoon in South Australia. It would also have significant appeal as part of the Volcanic Trail.

Buckley Swamp also has a substantial, documented Aboriginal heritage of considerable importance. Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines from 1839-49, described The Great Swamp and the substantial dwellings there when he met the Tappoc Conedeet clan in May 1841 (see Presland 1977 – Journals of Robinson. Records of the Vic Arch. Survey No. 6.). Lionel Elmore of the Hamilton Field Naturalist Club mapped 25 midden sites around the swamp in 1962 and gave to the Museum of Victoria the map and artefacts he collected there.

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



20 April 2010

To:
Ranger-in-Charge
Grampians/Gariwerd National Park
PO Box 18, Halls Gap Vic 3381

Dear Sir

We would like to follow up on the matter of restoration of **Gooseneck Swamp** and **Bradys Swamp**.

You may recall that, on 17 March 2007, there was an inspection of these drained wetlands by GHCMA (Peter Waldron), adjoining landholders (Roger Burgher, Doug Craig and Van Tromph), Gavin Cerini (ex. Fisheries & Wildlife Officer who prepared or was involved with the original plans for restoration in 1987-96), Hamilton Field Naturalists (Rod Bird, John & Glenys Cayley and David Munro) and a Parks Victoria officer from Ararat Office.

Gavin Cerini (Swampcare – Wetland Management & Consultation) provided details of previous history and GHCMA provided maps. Gavin would be prepared to provide additional information.

The current situation is that 253 ha of Bradys Swamp remains in private hands (Burger 170.4 ha & Craig 83 ha) and 235 ha is Public Land within the park. The Bunnugal Drain runs into Bradys Swamp on the eastern side and water is drained out on the western edge, at a point where it is possible to construct a weir to regulate the water level. These swamps were very significant breeding areas for Brolga and Magpie Geese and that capacity has vanished with the drainage that has occurred. With a drier climate, continued loss of wetlands to cropping, plantations and further agricultural drainage, the outlook for Brolga, Magpie Geese and many other waterbirds is bleak. Local landholders reported that, with vegetation partially blocking the outlet drain from Bradys Swamp, the wetland retained water for long enough in 2004 and 2005 to allow nesting of Ibis – the first time since 1957.

Gooseneck Swamp (all of which lies within the park) is fed from a small drain to the north but predominantly from the Wannon River that discharges water over a wide fan within the park. This is a clean source of fresh water and perhaps the most reliable flow to any wetland in SW Victoria.

Gooseneck Swamp was illegally drained into Bradys Swamp by a landholder to the north, and this was not part of the official Bunnugal Drainage works of 1957. In 1987, and following the purchase of the land on which the swamp lies, a levee bank was constructed by Horsham DCF&L on the eastern side of the swamp. In the event of a major flood that bank would now prevent water from spilling onto private land to the east (currently a Blue Gum plantation). Photos of the drain from Gooseneck Swamp and one of Bradys Swamp are shown over the page.

In the interim, before consideration is given to the purchase of the remaining private holdings on the Bradys Swamp, we ask that Parks Victoria urgently consider restoring Gooseneck Swamp. All that would seem to be required would be to back-fill the 80 m cutting that was made across the lunette that separates the swamps. This would at least allow some water to remain in the area and provide nesting and feeding opportunities for many species but especially Brolga. With the planned construction of well over 500 wind-driven electricity generators in SW Victoria (Glenthompson, Hawkesdale, Peshurst and Macarthur areas) there will be a continual loss of Brolga from inevitable collisions with the windmills – breeding success must be increased to compensate for those losses.

Yours faithfully

Rod Bird OAM
Secretary,
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club



Bradys Swamp, from the eastern side looking west to Mount Abrupt.

Photo 4 April 2010.



Gooseneck Swamp, from the south, near the drain, looking north.

Photo 4 April 2010.



Gooseneck Swamp drain through the lunette to Bradys Swamp. View looking north to Gooseneck Swamp.

Photo 4 April 2010.

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:
Ranger-in-Charge
Grampians/Gariwerd National Park
PO Box 18, Halls Gap Vic 3381

28 February 2011

Dear Sir re. **Bradys Swamp & Gooseneck Swamp**

I am writing to you about Bradys Swamp and Gooseneck Swamp that lie on the far SE corner of the National Park. No doubt you are aware of the past correspondence (20 April 2010) we had regarding these important wetlands– and current interest by GHAMA – so I will not go over old ground in this letter. Suffice to say, we believe that these very significant swamps have been much neglected by DSE and PV in years past.

A waterbird survey was conducted at Bradys Swamp and Gooseneck Swamp on 25 February 2011 and thought you might like to have some information on the current water levels at Bradys Swamp and other matters of relevance – and some photos.

Walking access is along the bank of the drain off Lynchs Crossing Road. However, when the embankment along the channel and down that eastern fence (adjacent to the Blue Gum plantation) was made it was supposed to also double as an all-seasons track for vehicles. Apparently the job was never completed (the top is level and dry but not quite wide enough) and it still needs a little grading to achieve that objective.

Many photographs of the wetlands were taken and I will append some for your records. As you will see, this is a very picturesque location, especially when there is water in the swamps. The water level has dropped about 0.5 m from its highest level (judging from the debris lodged in the fringing vegetation) but is still high. The southern part of the swamp can be seen from Nth Boundary Rd, where the water on the paddock approaches within about 120 m.

Someone suggested that water would not flow through the drain that now connects Gooseneck Swamp with Bradys. The photos clearly show that it does. There has obviously been a very large flow through that old drain and it is still flowing.

There is an old marker post about 40 m east of the drain, fairly high on the bank of Gooseneck Swamp. That must have been put in by Fisheries & Wildlife Div. a long time ago, perhaps before the drain was cut through the bank. The photo (037) shows a scale to 0.5 m above ground surface so we presume that the old levels reached at least the foot of that post and some distance higher, perhaps as much as 1 m higher than the present level in Gooseneck Swamp. In those days the water in Gooseneck probably banked up almost back to Lynches Crossing Rd, judging by the present swamp vegetation there.

You will also note the pile of shotgun cartridge shells near the post (and not put there by me). There are also many shells around the big River Red Gum (034) on the shore of the Bradys Swamp. We are not sure whether these shells were deposited this year (some are slightly tarnished) but it certainly means that illegal shooting occurs here in the National Park. We did not see these shells 3 years ago and, since no legal duck hunting has happened in the last 2-3 years, this site seems to be the place to indulge in poaching.

There is no sign on Lynchs Crossing Rd indicating that the area is part of the Grampians/Gariwerd National Park. Duck shooters might be innocently breaking the law by shooting on the National Park. We anticipate that there will be plenty of action there when the open season on ducks begins on 19 March – when the track in may be dry enough to drive along (some shooters would go in regardless,

using 4-wheel motor bikes). Hopefully DSE will visit that area to check. The ducks near the shore were very wary and took flight on approach.

As a matter of urgency (before 19 March), would it be possible for PV to erect National Park signs at 2 points adjacent to Lynchs Crossing Track:

1. On the Channel Track, adjacent to the Blue Gum Plantation that forms the SE boundary of the park (this is the main access to Bradys Swamp) – the track follows the drainage channel for a short distance before crossing it.
2. At the right angle bend in Lynchs Crossing Track, 1.3 km from the Channel across Lynchs Crossing Tk (1) – the bush track from that corner winds in to Bradys Swamp and is also a major access for wood cutters from Dunkeld and Glenthompson who have raided the area over many decades.

Without such signage there is no indication that a visitor who approaches this area from the east (as most do) is in the National Park – and no disincentive to shoot wildlife or remove firewood.

These were magnificent wetlands prior to drainage in the 1960s. The Wannon River issues from the park in this area, spilling over a wide area as it does, including Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp. We believe that it is both desirable and feasible to recreate the water regimes that once operated there. The wetlands are scenic jewels and once were also very significant breeding or feeding grounds for Brolga, Spoonbills, Magpie Geese, Ibis and other waterbirds.



Regards

PR Bird PhD OAM

Secretary

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

Photograph above :

From N side of Bradys Swamp (from big tree near the Gooseneck drain), looking west to Mt Abrupt

Photographs next page:

Top left – look east from big tree

Top centre – look south

Top right – look west

Left – marker post on Gooseneck, 40 m east of the outlet drain into Bradys Swamp

Middle – outlet drain from Gooseneck Swamp, looking south across Bradys Swamp

Right, middle – old River Red Gums on bank of Bradys near the Gooseneck drain, looking SW

Bottom middle and right – outlet drain and Gooseneck Swamp looking north from Bradys Swamp.



HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:
Ranger-in-Charge
Grampians/Gariwerd National Park
PO Box 18, Halls Gap Vic 3381

17 April 2011

Dear Sir re. **Bradys Swamp & Gooseneck Swamp**

I am following up on a letter I sent you on 28 February 2011 concerning Bradys Swamp and Gooseneck Swamp – a matter of duck shooting and lack of National Park signage.

Our group conducted another excursion to the swamps on Saturday 16 April 2011, always a pleasant place to visit, with glorious views across the waters to the Serra Range and waterbirds in good numbers, especially Gooseneck Swamp where 2 Brolga were calling and Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills were feeding, along with about 70 White-faced Herons and many ducks.

From North Boundary Rd we saw three vehicles parked on the forest (National Park) side of the Bradys Swamp and, after we had walked in to the swamp from Lynches Crossing Track, it was apparent that these belonged to duck shooters. They had just driven out leaving a fire burning and remains of dead ducks in a pile nearby. Their access is off Dog Leg Rd, through tracks in the Blue Gum plantation that lead to the eastern edge of the swamp adjacent to the Bunnugal Drain. There is quite a well-beaten track now. (The vehicle access off Lynches Crossing Rd is at present impassable).

The refuse pile contained heads and wings of 12 Teal, 4 Pacific Black Duck and 2 Hardheads (other refuse, some partly buried, was seen 20 m north but appeared to be from another group left a few days or a week earlier).

We are aware that Parks Victoria has urgent issues regarding cleanup and opening of tourist tracks and sites in the park but felt that we ought to make you aware of the current situation at Bradys/Gooseneck Swamp area.

In our previous letter we requested that Parks Victoria erect signs at 2 points on Lynches Crossing Track to notify the travelling public that they were entering the National Park. Since the public also gain access to this site from a point adjacent to the NE corner of Bradys Swamp we would also like to see a National Parks sign erected at the boundary near the ridge that separates Gooseneck Swamp and Bradys Swamp. Our experience has always been that lack of signage is used as an excuse to plead ignorance when people are confronted when engaged in illegal activities.

Some photographs are attached from the day's excursion, 2 showing duck shooters refuse and 3 of general views.

Yours faithfully

Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club



Photographs 16 April 2011

1. Top left – Bradys Swp from Nth Boundary Rd
2. Top right - Bradys Swp from NE side
3. Mid left – duck shooters spoil, N bank Bradys
4. Mid right - duck shooters spoil, N bank Bradys
5. Bottom – Gooseneck Swp (& Brolga) from E side



Grampians National Park and Reserves

Ph (03)5361 4013

M 0429 387 537

Fx (03)9619 0768

PO Box 18, Halls Gap, 3381

19/04/2011

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

Hi Rod,

RE: Bradys Swamp

Apologies for my late response. I did receive your earlier letter and immediately requested an update from the GHCMA as to the status of the Management Planning process being undertaken for a number of significant wetland reserves in the Southern Grampians. This briefing is yet to occur for a range of reasons.

I appreciate your communication and would welcome a meeting with your group soon to discuss a range of issues associated with the National Park and associated reserves. You may also be aware there has been a recent restructure in Parks Victoria locally which has resulted in a change in management arrangements in reserves across the Grampians District.

The issue of duck hunting is again topical and has seen recent media interest. We've been dealing with a few similar issues around Mt William Swamp and Lake Muirhead. We'll forward your correspondence to DSE for their records also.

Would early May 2011 be a good time to meet you and the group? Please nominate a convenient time.

Regards

David Roberts

Ranger in Charge

Grampians National Park and Reserves

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:

3 Feb 2011

Adam Bester
Glenelg-Hopkins CMA
Hamilton 3300

Dear Adam

***Callistemon wimmerensis* at Bradys Swamp, Grampians/Gariwerd NP**

A note on the distribution of this species (or sub-species?). I first saw this plant in a thicket at Bradys Swamp on 16 March 2007 (near 37-35-11/142-27-00 GPS Aust84, not far from the Aborigine scar tree and mound) and thought it rather tall (8 or more m tall) for *Callistemon rugulosus* but was unaware of the *C. wimmerensis* connection until some time later when I mentioned it to David Pitts (DSE). I believe that you and David have seen it recently. Looks like the site featured with Jacinta Herrmann in the Hamilton Spectator of 22 Jan. 2011.

Yesterday I walked in to a part of the Wannon discharge a little further west and found several dozen *C. wimmerensis* shrubs there (37-34-25/142-27-08 GPS Aust84). That site is seen by driving 0.5 km in on the old wood cutters track from the right angle bend on Lynchs Crossing Tk (this corner is 1.3 km west of the drain that leads to Bradys) to a clearing with a ring-barked Red Gum on the left. Walk south of the track down an old track for 150 m and see a large cut stump in the open space. A large bush of the species is seen 10 m to the north and another 25 m to the west – and a lot more in the wet area of the watercourse to the south. No doubt the population extends even further west.

I followed the track further east for a while and saw that someone had a lot of fun getting bogged! I had thought of walking through there to Bradys, but still too wet. I did not have time to walk the 3 km from Lynchs Crossing Tk along the drain bank to look at Bradys Swamp – hopefully it still holds some water. A great pity it seems so difficult to return that to a native state. It could be a marvellous swamp, with fresh discharge from the Grampians keeping a good supply.

Regards

Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:

3 Feb 2011

Jacinta Herrmann
Glenelg-Hopkins CMA
Hamilton 3300

Dear Jacinta

re. **Muirhead and Mt William Swamps**

I do not know whether you have visited either of the above swamps lately. If not, you may like to have these photos taken after the recent heavy summer rains that have filled Muirhead and almost filled Mt William Swamp:

- 3 photos from the eastern side of Mt William Swamp (Sandhills Rd) taken on 2 Feb 2011
- 3 photos from north side of Muirhead Swamp (Yarram Gap Rd) taken on 2 Feb 2011

These photos show what both wetlands could look like – particularly Mt William Swamp – if only we could get changes to management (including drainage) and a purchase of parts of the swamp that I think were sold off years ago. The swamp needs to be fenced off from stock to allow it to revegetate.

Incidentally, do you have the name/phone number of the property owner on the Sandhills Rd side of Mount William Swamp – HFNC might like to visit the lake later this year and, since there does not seem to be any obvious public access point, we would have to get permission to cross private land.

Ditto for Lake Muirhead – not clear where the public access point is there, or how far the public lands extends.

Cheers
Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club



**Lake Muirhead from
Yarram Gap Rd
2 Feb 2011**

(3 views)





**Mt William Swamp
from Sandhill Rd on
the eastern side**

2 Feb 2011

(3 views)

