

Monday 14 April, 2008

Native grassland restoration field day draws the crowds

A field day on how to restore native grasslands through waterspreading and Invasive Native Scrub (INS) management drew the crowds 80km west of Nyngan last Friday.

Around 75 locals and visitors turned up to 'Florida' station to learn more about the waterspreading land management technique and how INS treatment has been used to restore native grasslands.

The day was hosted by the Central West and Western Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to share knowledge about waterspreading and INS management, and show the benefits that have flowed from this work.

Property owners Kevin and Gwen Mitchell were pleased to demonstrate how they have restored native grasslands and the dramatic improvements in productivity and biodiversity.

"We now have such a diversity of desirable native grasses, with around 120 species of spring and summer grasses and approximately 40 species of autumn and winter herbage across the property," said Kevin.

"A recent vegetation survey of the property revealed that a treated site had on average 35 times the dry weight of groundcover than an adjacent untreated INS site."

A food chain has now been created for all species, including endangered species of fauna not found on INS affected land. Endangered species like Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Superb Parrots and others are also returning to the region.

"Around 121 species of birds have been sighted and documented and some are in abundance. I counted around 230 Major Mitchell in one flock recently – they were simply not there when it was all invasive scrub.

"The difference between treated and INS sites is clear cut. For example, after eight inches of recent rain our grasslands are flourishing, but there is absolutely no groundcover on our scrub sites. The water can't penetrate the surface and just runs off."

"Before INS removal and waterspreading began, invasive scrub meant our best stocking rate was one dry sheep to nine hectares. Now we can run one sheep to one hectare with very good lambing percentages and wool production.

Captions: 1. Inspecting one of the original waterspreading sites on the field day were (L-R) Kevin Mitchell, Chris Higgins (Western CMA Officer), Ray Thompson (Central West CMA Officer), Peter Weston (Central West CMA Board Member) and Justin McClure (Western CMA Board Member)
2. Kevin and Gwen Mitchell.

ENDS

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