

Media Release - Completion of the Boogerabba Flats Revegetation Project

A great big congratulations to local landcare legends, Peter and Paulina Wittwer. With over 50 hectares of revegetation completed, over 50,000 mixed native seedlings planted and the whole site fenced off, it's certainly a project to be proud of.

Carnamah farmers Peter and Paulina Wittwer have been the real driving force behind the project. With a large area of degraded land along the valley floor, which was subject to water erosion when it does get wet, and also affected in parts by salinity, it is not ideal cropping country. Rather than leaving it to quietly degrade further, Peter and Paulina were keen to see the valley revegetated, the water erosion controlled, and greater biodiversity brought back into the landscape. The revegetation works also link up previous revegetation and restoration efforts across their property, which are the culmination of several years' hard work.

The site used to be one of the most productive areas of the property when Peter's father was farming the land and at its most productive during the 1950s. However by the 1960s the land was losing productivity, remaining wet and waterlogged, likely due to a perched water table and was beginning to succumb to salinity. The Wittwer family had stopped cropping this area by the 1970s, and since the property was destocked in 1998/99 the area has been of limited agricultural value.

In 2015, in partnership with the Yarra Yarra Catchment Management Group, the Wittwers successfully applied for funding through the State NRM office's Community Action Grants Program. Along with assistance from another landcare legend, Ian Pulbrook of Greenoil Tree Nursery, the Wittwers sprang into action as soon as the funding was granted, and were out in the summer heat, madly collecting local provenance seed for germination in the nursery and ready to plant on site in 2016.

In winter 2016, Ian and his planting team arrived to undertake the large scale planting (all by hand), and in March 2017 we carried out a site assessment to determine the success rate of the revegetation. The average survival rate was around 85% which was a great result. During the sign off visit I nearly trod on two snakes who seemed to be enjoying this new biodiverse habitat!

Paulina Wittwer is a keen bird watcher, and as part of the project has carried out monitoring at the site, and plans to continue this annually. We hope to see an increase in the number and variety of species recorded at the site over the coming years. Always generous with her time and knowledge, Paulina encourages others to join her with this ongoing monitoring program.

The site was included in a recent field day organised by the Carnamah Landcare Group, allowing the Wittwers to share what they have been doing with the wider community, and hopefully inspiring further revegetation efforts in the district.

On behalf of the YYCMG it has been a pleasure working with two such dedicated individuals, and on behalf of all of us involved in the project, a huge thanks to the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program, supported by Royalties for Regions, for supporting this project and turning it into a reality.

