

## WORD FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Over the past few months very welcome rain has fallen in some regions of Australia, revitalising river, floodplain and wetland systems. However, other regions have received little in the way of rain or water allocations and this may lead to loss of flora and fauna in these natural habitats.

The importance of wetlands is illustrated by the analogy that wetlands are the kidneys of the earth – they store water, filter and absorb unwanted nutrients and waste. They provide quality drinking water – for everyone and everything.

World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2006 was celebrated nationally with a range of activities conducted under the theme of "Wetlands is water – supporting life, sustaining livelihoods". Revive involves volunteers in wetlands conservation, and we help raise awareness of the importance and value of wetlands for everyone – that is how attitudes start to change.

Revive 2 has produced some outstanding results and social outcomes, and as we near the end of the sixth year of the partnership, the focus of this newsletter provides a summary of achievements from two wetland sites on the lower north coast of NSW.

Creating a Better Earth



Conservation Volunteers Australia



bhpbilliton

## What's Inside

CATTAI WETLANDS

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

ABOUT REVIVE

MEASURING UP

ACHIEVEMENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

## WETLANDS WARRIOR

Anita, a volunteer at Tom Thumb Lagoon Wetlands – Wollongong NSW

"I first heard about the Revive program during a presentation at the University of Wollongong by a Conservation Volunteers Australia staff member. I was undertaking my final year of Biological Science at the time, and had always wanted to do voluntary work, so thought 'why not, that'd be great experience and would look great on my CV'.



Wollongong University volunteers on site at Tom Thumb

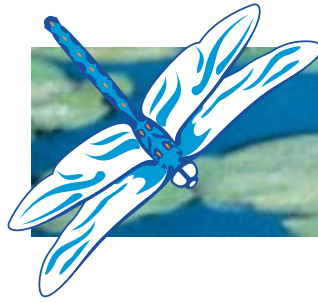
I started volunteering at Tom Thumb Lagoon Wetland in January this year. My team leader took me for a walk around Tom Thumb, and I couldn't believe that such an ecologically significant site could exist within such an industrial landscape.

We worked to rehabilitate a section of the Saltmarsh, an Endangered Ecological Community, including a massive rubbish clean up along the banks of the Lagoon. The wetland is at the bottom of Wollongong City's catchment, so any rubbish that goes into the stormwater drain ends up at Tom Thumb. The amount of Red-fingered Marsh Crabs that were trapped inside empty plastic bottles, aluminum cans and Styrofoam cups was really depressing. It made me rethink the products I buy when I go shopping; I definitely won't buy anything sold in a Styrofoam container anymore, no matter how good the coffee is!

My time volunteering at Tom Thumb has been really satisfying. I've met some great people, it's great exercise and I feel like I'm putting something back into my community – I highly recommend it!"



*our wetlands*



## **CASE STUDY: Cattai Wetlands (Taree) and Darawakh and Frogalla Wetlands (Forster) NSW Lower North Coast**

The Lower North Coast Wetland focus projects comprise two coastal wetlands, the Cattai Wetlands (486 ha) near Taree, and Darawakh Wetlands (1000 ha) near Forster Tuncurry. Both have serious Acid Sulphate Soil (ASS) issues. This is primarily due to unregulated agricultural practices over the last 50 years, where wetland areas were cleared and drained for dairy and beef cattle production. The associated runoff, with high nutrient and acid sulphate levels, has impacted on water quality in river and estuary systems that have a significant fish, oyster and crustacean habitat. Community use of the waterways is regarded as an important part of the social and economic fabric of the towns and villages of the area.

In 1996 the Cattai Wetland Project was accepted as an initiative of the Manning Catchment Management Committee (MCMC) in which they identified the benefits of an integrated natural resource management project aimed at wetland protection and rehabilitation, ASS remediation and floodplain management of the Cattai Creek, Coopernook Creek area. In March 2000 the Lower Manning Wetland Advisory Group was established, including local landholders, State Government departments (Fisheries, Environment &

Conservation, Natural Resources), local specialist group representatives (birdwatchers etc) and officers from Greater Taree City Council.

The Darawakh Wetlands Project is an initiative of the Great Lakes Council, based at Forster. The wetlands have similar land clearing issues. A program of land rehabilitation by owners, support from council in the form of grants and equipment, and technical assistance has enabled a Plan of Management detailing strategies for the resolution of the ASS and nutrient rich runoff to be tackled.

Both wetland sites had several issues tackled by Revive teams. The control of invasive weeds (particularly those choking native remnant bushland and wetland fringes) has been undertaken. In particular, large sections of lantana, camphor laurel, and many climbing vine weeds have been removed to enable the establishment of native plant buffer zones around the remnant vegetation. Along sections of cleared, formerly agricultural land, native seedling planting and conservation fencing has been undertaken to provide important corridors and buffers for biodiversity, and to fence out livestock.

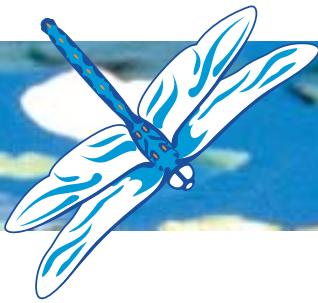
The Lower North Coast Wetlands Management Plans for both sites are seen as innovative. They include private landholders helping to manage the environmental issues. It is hoped these positive results will be regarded by landholders in similar situations throughout coastal NSW, as being achievable and beneficial through careful and sustainable farming practices.



**Lantana before – Cattai Wetlands**



**Lantana after – Cattai Wetlands**



Freecall 1800 032 501

## Monitoring and Evaluation: Managed by Dr Bill Phillips of Mainstream Environment Consulting

Monitoring and evaluation are not only the tools of accountability and transparency; they are also vital for adaptive program management, so that those implementing works at site level and those coordinating that work at the regional, state or national levels can remain vigilant and well informed of progress toward achieving the targets set at the outset of any project.

Monitoring can help guide the re-setting of targets where they were too ambitious or too conservative when the project was designed.

### Method:

Monitoring at each of the 10 Revive 2 focus sites was standardised, with site action plans translated into a simple, single format which grouped together ten "like-activities" such as;

- (i) vegetation management (seed collection, seedling raising, stem planting etc),
- (ii) weed control or eradication,
- (iii) surveys and monitoring,
- (iv) water quality improvement/monitoring and
- (v) education and awareness raising.

For each activity, annual targets were taken from the Action Plan, and, where appropriate, photo-point 'before' and 'after' monitoring encouraged. Wherever feasible, quantitative targets were set. At the end of the calendar year, performance information was provided by the Partner Agencies to CVA using a standard format with self-assessed 'traffic light' scores for each activity along with before and after photos

### Key Findings:

- 60% of Revive's 152 nominated targets for 2005 were either achieved or surpassed and a further 12.5% were rated as achieving 75% or better of their target.
- Nearly 50% of the activities being undertaken now have some form of photo-monitoring associated. This has allowed for visual records to be used to demonstrate the impacts of the Revive work.
- Weed control and eradication, vegetation management and education and awareness raising activities represent 105 of the 152 targets set in 2005; with the pleasing result that these targets were achieved or exceeded in 65-70% of situations.
- The system has added rigour to the process and is encouraging those undertaking the work to set quantitative targets; a significant step-up from Revive I.

For further details of the Monitoring and Evaluation program visit [www.reviveourwetlands.net/monitoring](http://www.reviveourwetlands.net/monitoring) available August 2006.

## ABOUT REVIVE

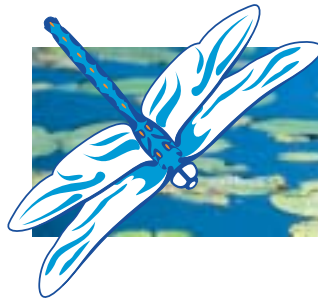
Revive our Wetlands is the largest national wetlands revival program in Australia and it was established by Conservation Volunteers Australia and BHP Billiton. From 2000-2003, \$1.5 million of assistance and more than 17,000 volunteer days contributed to

the revitalisation of 100 of Australia's most significant wetlands.

From 2004-2006, Revive has contributed an additional \$1.5 million and 17,000+ volunteer days invested at 10 priority locations across remote, regional and urban Australia along with many other smaller wetland projects around the country.

# Revive

our wetlands



[www.reviveourwetlands.net](http://www.reviveourwetlands.net)

## MEASURING UP

- Cumulative Statistics from Nov 2003 to April 2006

Seed collected	586kg
Stems and Trees Planted	188,133
Watering of plants (drought affected)	45,000
Track/boardwalk maintained	20km
Area Weeded	1676ha
Plants propagated	29,302
Flora and fauna surveys conducted:	70
Rubbish removed	14,765kg
Old fencing removed	69km
Fencing installed	29km
Volunteer days	16,577
Media articles	186

## RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- *Revive* volunteer days exceeded the three year target by January 2006 with more than 10 months to go - there are *Revive* wetland volunteers everywhere!
- *Revive* presentation at the Australian Water Association's Water Education Network's (WEN) 2nd National Water Education Conference in Alice Springs "From the Waters Edge to the Red Centre"
- *Revive* facilitated 8 specialist 'wetland days' on World Wetlands Day
- *Revive* presented at the Wetland Management Conference in Perth on World Wetlands Day



140 people attended an introduction to wetlands at Coomonderry Swamp, South Coast NSW

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### • "AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR LIMNOLOGY (ASL) 45TH ANNUAL CONGRESS"

The ASL is an Australian-based scientific society whose focus is the study and management of inland waters.

Albury-Wodonga, Australia. 25th - 29th September 2006, at the Albury Convention & Performing Arts Centre (ACPAC).

[www.asl.org.au/congress/2006/index.htm](http://www.asl.org.au/congress/2006/index.htm)

Creating a Better Earth



Conservation Volunteers Australia

PO Box 423

Ballarat VIC 3353

For further information contact [www.reviveourwetlands.net](http://www.reviveourwetlands.net)  
or [revive@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:revive@conservationvolunteers.com.au)  
or call Libby McIntyre on 02 6882 5986

POSTAGE

PAID

AUSTRALIA