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Making a difference for our protected habitat

World Habitat Day is celebrated on Monday 4 October. It is a time to think about improved living conditions and habitats for all, including our threatened species.

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Ecologist Craig Gillespie said this is a perfect time to think about our habits and the difference we can make to living things and their habitats.

"Together with a project consortium called the *Living Landscapes Group*, we are implementing practical restoration activities to restore the unique and sensitive landscape of the vast Mallee woodlands north of the South Australian Riverland, which are some of our region's largest protected natural areas," he said.

This project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the landscape levies.

"There's a combination of private and publicly owned reserves side-by-side, which amounts to a continuous natural woodland about twice the size of Kangaroo Island.

"For many threatened Mallee bird species, this landscape is home because it is the best remaining habitat. So it was lucky for them when these properties were retired from pastoral grazing.

Birds such as the critically endangered black-eared miner, the red-lored whistler, regent parrot and striated grasswren and the iconic Malleefowl all have their own unique connections with this land.

Livestock was removed from most of this landscape many years ago, and parts of the ecosystem are recovering well. But, these bird populations continue to decline because of previous pastoral land use.

The ecosystem in this region has evolved over millions of years. In this naturally dry landscape, pools of water are rare.

The pastoral dams originally built to water livestock now support rabbits, feral goats and many kangaroos. As tough as it looks, the habitat can't sustain that level of constant grazing.

The largest dams are fed by artificial drains and channels that twist for kilometres through the bush draining the surrounding catchments and diverting scarce water



away from native vegetation that needs it.

Healthy, growing vegetation also supports insect populations that form much of the diet of the birds. But much of the water that is diverted into the dams just slowly evaporates in the scorching heat.

By disrupting the drains and closing the dams, we're not drying this landscape out. We're helping it recapture that precious water through the soil and vegetation to support the ecosystem.

Our critical work to restore a self-sufficient, resilient, functioning, culturally rich ecosystem will support the unique Mallee birdlife so that it can continue to be heard now and for our future generations.

Take a look at our [short video](#) to view the vast Mallee woodlands north of the South Australian Riverland and some of its unique creatures.

The *Living Landscapes Group* is made up of organisations and groups which include;

- Australian Landscape Trust–Calperum and Taylorville stations
- Australian Wildlife Conservancy–Scotia Sanctuary
- BirdLife Australia–Gluepot
- Federation University–Nanya station
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service–Tarawi Nature Reserve
- Local community members
- local Landcare groups
- Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board
- National Parks and Wildlife services, Riverland and Murraylands–Danggali, Chowilla, Pooginook and Cooltong
- Traditional owner–First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee
- Trees for Life
- Zoos SA

The *Living Landscapes Group* is a team of like-minded organisations and groups who manage for conservation more than 850,000 hectares of land north of Berri in South Australia, where the River Murray meets the outback-called the South Olary Plains Landscape.

Photo caption: World Habitat Day celebrated on Monday 4 October is a perfect time to think about our habits and the difference we can make to living things and their habitats, including our threatened species.

NEWS RELEASE

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