Biodiversity Blocks.

Remnant vegetation blocks can provide food, shelter and homes for many different types of fauna. In the Linton area there are some examples of remnant vegetation blocks managed in different ways.

In 1967 Gordon Clarke commenced his personal project of recreating bird habitat in the area now known as the Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary at Linton. He believed that the Bird Sanctuary was a place of great beauty with some beautiful trees of Candlebark, Box, Peppermint and Swamp Gum along the Springdallah Creek which winds through it.

It concerned Gordon that over the years he had noticed many birds had disappeared from the area so he sought to rectify this by enhancement planting. The species were chosen for their food or shelter values; nectar or seed producers were important as well as prickly bushes for safe nesting or sheltering sites.

As gorse was removed along the Springdallah Creek it was replaced with a thick planting of native (usually Western Australian) natives. The gorse control is ongoing with constant monitoring and removal as required.

A recent bird survey at the Bird Sanctuary [1], which included counts in areas of native forest, restoration areas and pine plantation is indicating some interesting results. Altogether seventy-nine bird species were recorded including fourteen waterbird species on a dam area.

From the draft of the preliminary analysis of data it is difficult to draw conclusions but it does illustrate how important it is to have different layers of vegetation and variety of habitats to support many different bird species and large numbers of birds. The pine plantation, compared with the native forest and restoration area, had the least numbers of birds or numbers of species present (this was statistically significant).

Another remnant block in the Linton area is that of Ken and Diane McBeath's at Francis Lane near Linton. The area owned by the McBeaths has had several different management methods.

One area was last grazed about twenty years ago. Another area of about 1.5 hectares has recently been fenced to allow for regeneration of the trees. The McBeaths use the remainder of the 450 acres to graze 400 600 wethers for nine or ten months of the year.

This area is divided into several paddocks. The sheep are usually taken out for shearing in September, returned to one of the paddocks in November or December and then into the remainder of the area in January or February.

This management option of not grazing for a few months of the year over the springtime allows for the ground growing plants, such as orchids, to flower and seed.

The small area which has been recently fenced is providing nesting sites in tree hollows for birds such as striated pardolotes, feeding areas for treecreepers and on the ground twigs, logs and leaves provide habitat for insects and skinks.

In the paddock area with managed grazing and an open grassy woodland vegetation, there is a range of habitat types present. This allows twenty different species of birds ranging from flycatchers, honeyeaters, pardolotes, choughs, kookaburras, (see attached list) to find food, shelter and nesting sites.

Recently Vegetation Quality Assessments (VQA's) were done for these and other blocks through the Corangamite Catchment

Management Authority and its Biodiversity Action Planning project. These VQA's provide a final figure out of 100 and rate the quality of the vegetation. These results show that the vegetation at McBeath's was rated "good" on all the sites. This included the grazed open grassy woodland with a grass cover of predominantly native grasses.

Another interesting result on two adjacent paddocks with different owners showed that a native grass grazed paddock was rated "good" while its neighbour with improved pasture rated "poor".

These results show that vegetation quality can be retained to a reasonable level when it is grazed with appropriate management.

Conclusion: Remnant vegetation which has been preserved or is enhanced provides important habitat for birds. A range of layers in the vegetation provides the most amount of habitat. Some areas can have managed grazing and retain their importance for habitat and biodiversity.

[1] Bird Surveys at Clarkesdale, 2000-2001, A preliminary analysis of data collected by the Bird Observers Club of Austrlia Draft (Very Incomplete) Prepared by Richard H. Loyn in collaboration with Trevor Faragher, David Coutts and Clarkesdale Committee of Management. October 2003.

Twigs on the ground provide habitat.

Birds recorded at Mcbeaths November 2003.

Striated Pardolote
Spotted Pardolote
Scarlet Robin
White Throated Treecreeper
Crimson Rosella
Little Raven
Australian Raven
Rufous Whistler
Kookaburra
Grey Shrike Thrush
Grey Currawong
Restless Flycatcher
Satin Flycatcher
Brown Headed Honeyeater
White Naped Honeyeater
White Ringed Choughs
Jacky Winter
Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo
Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike
Magpie

Native grass, logs, twigs & tree hollows provide habitat.

Some of the species used are not indigenous to the Woady Yaloak catchment and may be environmental weeds. It is recommended to follow the species guidelines in the Corangamite Native Vegetation Plan and use indigenous species of the ecological vegetation class occurring in that area.