

## The Menangina Station Malleefowl Survey Owners perspective



**Heron Resources owns and manages the Menangina Pastoral Station north-east of Kalgoorlie. This is typical mulga country and suspected as being prime habitat for Malleefowl. There has always been anecdotal sightings and historical information at the station and Heron decided it was important to follow-up these suspicions and do a survey using the MPG.**

As an employee of Heron Resources and a keen environmental preserver, I worked with Susanne Dennings to make sure this survey would meet all its objectives and confirm one way or the other these suspicions that we (hopefully) currently had active Malleefowl populations at Menangina. We weren't disappointed.

I drove the two hour dirt road journey out from Kalgoorlie without seeing a soul and yet narrowly missed a Malleefowl casually strolling across the road mid-afternoon on a mild mid-Winters day. This was a good omen. Having owned Menangina Station for the last two years, I often travel out to the station and check how things are going with the caretaker over a quiet cup of tea and update him on what Heron Resources are up to. Not

Glenn Firth is the Approvals and HSEC Manager for Heron Resources Ltd. Following is his account of the malleefowl survey conducted in July this year at Menangina Station. This article was published by the Malleefowl Preservation Group Inc (MPG) in their newsletter "Malleefowl Matter".

having been involved in these MPG surveys before, you can imagine my amazement of descending on the station and being engulfed in a sea of tents, trailers and caravans more typical of a hippie commune than a quiet remote pastoral station. The MPG had arrived and was in full-swing preparations for the week long survey commencing the next day. Every last attention to detail was under control and I was grateful to Susanne and the volunteers for their efforts and ensuring all went smoothly, even down to the last creature comfort of hot showers at the end of the day.

The survey went like clock-work and broke at least three MPG survey records that I am aware of and provided some interesting results. The biggest MPG team ever to attempt a human chain surveying system covered the largest area surveyed to date and discovered more mounds and malleefowl tracks than in any previous survey. I would like to take credit for having all these mounds on our pastoral station, but it was more of a function that Susanne previously undertook reconnaissance trips to Menangina and expertly identified the prime habitat from the less likely habitat and pulled





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together a team of very experienced and/or keen volunteers to conduct the survey. An area of 1224 ha was surveyed by 25 volunteers who collectively walked 1044 km over four and half days. We found 61 mounds fairly evenly spread over the survey area, of which 12 indicated recent activity. Although only one malleefowl popped its head up to be counted by one of the

volunteers as the only live bird of the survey, 211 tracks were recorded. It was interesting to note that Susanne had given great thought to the methodology and decided to use the 'human chain' survey method as opposed to a transect search because of the arid nature of the environment. Previous surveys at Yeelirrie Station further to the north-west of Menangina used transect searches and so results of the Menangina survey can now be used to compare the amount of area that can be covered and the success of this approach in justifying its use.

We even found seven megamounds. Of course, I didn't know what a megamound was so it was explained as being formations measuring up to 15m in diameter, sometimes with an active mound in the centre. Susanne went on to describe megamounds as being a phenomenon observed at other MPG arid zone survey sites (near Kalgoorlie and Mt Jackson) but little is known about them. One theory is that the mounds have been formed by many generations of malleefowl.

Every night back at camp, we celebrated our findings and highlighted our experiences over a warm fire and glass of wine. This is one of those times when you really love the work you do and I can understand why the core group of volunteers conduct these surveys year after year and why new volunteers always ask when the next survey is planned. I am certainly a convert and can't wait to plan the follow-up surveys of the identified mounds as part of the National Malleefowl Recovery Plan. Thanks Susanne, and thanks to all the volunteers who participated in the survey of Menangina and I look forward to other opportunities working with the MPG to research this amazing and precious species.

