

Rice Reserve fauna survey

30 April-3 May 2015

GPS at car park on Horseshoe Bend Road 55 268099E, 5761137N, alt 21m

All trapping is carried out in accordance with the conditions in our DEPI permit 10006519 and our WSIAEC permit 27.12

Location

Rice Reserve is narrow area of Crown land managed by the Surf Coast Shire on the western side of Horseshoe Bend Road, a short distance south of McCanns Road, Mount Duneed. Its western boundary is Thompson's Creek. It has an area of 6.88 ha. The eastern side of the reserve has been cleared of most of its original vegetation and this area has been closely mowed. However the slopes down to the creek and the floor of the creek are well-vegetated in reeds and sedges, and the deeper sections of the creek appear to hold water throughout the year even in drought conditions.

The vegetation has been described by Moulton (see reference below). It contains three Ecological Vegetation Classes viz. Floodplain Riparian Woodland, Creekline Grassy Woodland and Plains Grassland.

There are various introduced plants in the reserve including 17 exotic grass species (with a similar number of natives), and at least five eucalypt species that have been planted – there are also two indigenous eucalypts. These are not mentioned in Moulton's plant list and so have been included below.

Weather

Fine, sunny and warm on 30/04/15 and 01/05/15, overcast and mild on 02/05/15 and 03/05/15

Elliott traps

Set 40 small Elliott traps mainly in the lowland adjacent to the creek where there seems to be extensive digging, creation of runways and other indications of small mammal occupation. The traps were baited with the standard herbivore mix of peanut butter, golden syrup and oatmeal. Each trap had a ball of Dacron bedding and was enclosed in a plastic sleeve.

Results

01/05/15: nothing caught.

02/05/15: E13 Swamp Rat *Rattus lutreolus*, wt 92g

E26 Swamp Rat, wt 69g

03/05/15: E15 Two Swamp Rats, wts 74g and 89g respectively.

E18 Swamp Rat wt 77g

E40 Swamp Rat wt 73g

Note: the rats were weighed but not sexed.

Moulton listed both House Mouse and Black Rat but we found neither.

Harp traps

One set across the dry creek on 01/05/15, left in place 02/05/15.

A second was set under River Red Gums along the creek on 02/05/15.

Results

02/05/15: nothing caught.

03/05/15: nothing caught in either trap.

It seems likely the weather was too cool for bats to be active; Moulton noted – “Three bat species were identified, with some calls from bat detectors not able to be distinguished between two *Nyctophilus* species Gould's Long-eared Bat and Lesser Long-eared Bat, and between Large Forest Bat and Southern Forest Bat.”

Cameras

Not used in this survey, however this should be done at a later time.

Funnels

The habitat seems suited to a number of reptile species, however the weather was too cool to undertake any funnel/drift-line trapping to be done. Both Garden Skink and Lowland Copperhead have been recorded in the reserve (Moulton). We did see a few very small Garden Skinks active in the afternoon in sunny sites.

Eucalypts in the reserve

Both River Red Gum *E. camaldulensis* and Swamp Gum *E. ovata* are indigenous at the reserve, but others have been planted, including Yate *E. cornuta*, Sugar Gum *E. cladocalyx*, Spotted Gum *C. maculata*, Manna Gum *E. viminalis* and Grey Ironbark *E. paniculata*.

Comments

As Geelong's suburban sprawl extends southward towards Torquay, Rice Reserve will come under increasing pressure from urban development. It is a very important remnant and needs careful management to adequately protect its flora and fauna.

Interpretive sign placed near the creek crossing suggests that the creek is important for native fishes. We noted three common species.

It would seem appropriate to undertake a camera, funnel and harp trapping exercise in the reserve in warmer weather.

The bird list included several species of note. Four Swift Parrots were seen on 02/05/15, apparently feeding on lerps in a River Red Gum; a Red-browed Finch nest from last breeding season was discovered in a Hedge Wattle. Good numbers of waterbirds were present on the creek including immature Dusky Moorhens.

References

Moulton, Peter. December 2003. *Rice Reserve, Connemara. Fire Management Plan*. Prepared for Surf Coast Shire. Revised 2010 by Donna Groves.

Thanks

SurfCoast Shire for permission to carry out the survey.

Helen, Lance and Graham for setting the Elliott traps; Alison, Chrissy, Deborah and Tracey for checking the traps and compiling the bird list.

Mammals	
Common Brushtail Possum Swamp Rat	A skull of this species found. Extensive runways and tunnels along the slope between the high ground and the creek bed.
Red Fox European Rabbit	Several scats noted. Scats and burrows seen, one found dead on the creek bed and another road-killed.

Birds	
Black Swan	Swift Parrot
Grey Teal	Red-rumped Parrot
Chestnut Teal	Superb Fairy-wren
Pacific Black Duck	White-browed Scrubwren
Hardhead	Spotted Pardalote
Australasian Grebe	White-plumed Honeyeater
Hoary-headed Grebe	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

Spotted Dove	Red Wattlebird
Little Pied Cormorant	New Holland Honeyeater
White-necked Heron	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
White-faced Heron	Golden Whistler
Australian White Ibis	Grey Shrike-thrush
Straw-necked Ibis	Dusky Woodswallow
Royal Spoonbill	Australian Magpie
Whistling Kite	Pied Currawong
Little Eagle	Grey Fantail
Purple Swamphen	Willie Wagtail
Dusky Moorhen	Little Raven
Eurasian Coot	Flame Robin
Black-fronted Dotterel	Welcome Swallow
Masked Lapwing	Common Blackbird
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Common Starling
Galah	Red-browed finch
Rainbow Lorikeet	European Goldfinch
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	House Sparrow
Crimson Rosella	

Herps, Fishes	
Garden Skink	Several small individuals seen.
Common Froglet	Heard calling.
Common Galaxias	One noted in the creek.
Southern Pygmy Perch	Several noted in the creek.
Eastern Gambusia	Extremely abundant in the creek

Other fauna	
Common Brown Butterfly	A few noted.
Common Grass Blue Butterfly	Extremely abundant along the creek, flying in the warm sunny weather.
Cabbage White Butterfly	A few seen.
European Wasp	A nest noted in the ground.
Common Yabby	Several burrows along the creek.
Freshwater Shrimp	Found in the creek.