

Bangham property bought for

HABITAT RESTORATION

By CATHERINE MILLER

A SOUTH East property only lightly grazed with sheep in the past few decades is being restored to its natural state.

The 684-hectare Eaglehawk Waterhole was bought late last year through an environmental grant from the state government's Native Vegetation Council and Adelaide-based environmental charity Nature Foundation SA Inc.

It is now owned and managed by Nature Glenelg Trust, a not-for-profit organisation established two years ago by a group of interested environmentalists from South East SA and western Vic.

The property was chosen because of its close proximity to the Little Desert National Park to the east and Bangham Conservation Park to the north, providing a connecting corridor for threatened and common animal and bird species, and as a result of its excellent restoration potential.

Nature Glenelg Trust manager Mark Bachmann is excited it will be one of SA's largest restoration projects and the Trust's first Habitat Restoration Reserve.

"To purchase a parcel this size for what we are trying to do is a rare opportunity. There are a lot of good restoration projects out there, but they are usually

KeyPoints

- Survey to map vegetation
- Not productive farmland
- Evidence of bird, animal life



Ninety per cent of the SE has been cleared for farming but this property is largely in its natural state, with significant regeneration already occurring.

— MARK BACHMANN

on a smaller scale, whereas here we are working on a whole-of-property scale," he said.

"Ninety per cent of the SE has been cleared for farming but this offered a rare opportunity to purchase a property that is largely in its natural state with significant regeneration already occurring.

"What also made it feasible when we were looking to purchase was that it was not the most productive farming land and did not have a lot of

infrastructure on it.

"Ironically, what made it appealing for us as a restoration case study would have made it more difficult to sell as farming land."

At Eaglehawk Waterhole there is already 170ha of bushland fenced off under existing management agreements, showing the property's potential.

Driving around there is a large variation in terrain and soil types, each with its own habitat including brown stringybark and SA blue gum woodlands, and seasonal herbaceous wetlands.

The front paddocks closest to the road contain more cleared areas but pink gum and SA blue gum saplings of varying heights and ages are present despite sheep not being long gone.

There are also areas of buloke which, along with the stringybark, provide a food source for a flock of endangered south eastern red tailed black cockatoos that now frequent the property.

A few remnants of the farming days also remain, including fences and old yards, but there is plenty of evidence of bird and animal life.

Mr Bachmann said farmers had nothing to fear by the land buy because the group was not looking to convert vast tracts of SE farming land back to woodland.



HEADY DAYS: Nature Glenelg Trust manager Mark Bachmann is excited about the purchase of Bangham grazing property Eaglehawk Waterhole as its first Habitat Restoration Reserve.

"A lot of farmers also have a strong environmental interest being on the land, so we want to get the message across that we are not activists or radical greenies, but like them we are interested in getting on with practical action," he said.

Asked why it was important to do restoration projects such as this and protect environmental biodiversity, Mr Bachmann's response was quick: "from an ecologist's point of view there is lots of good scientific justification for the species that occur here,

but as a person living in the South East I also think people have an appreciation of natural places being an important part of the rural setting. They don't want to live in a treeless landscape."

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has made some funds available for Nature Glenelg Trust to map areas of native vegetation and their condition, leading to the development of a property restoration plan in the first half of the year.

• Details: www.natureglenelg.org.au



HUGE POTENTIAL: About 170ha of the property have already been fenced off by the previous owner under existing environmental management schemes and provide a snapshot of the potential for the rest of Eaglehawk Waterhole.

INSET: There is a large variation in terrain across the property, from seasonal herbaceous wetlands to stringybark and SA blue gum woodland.

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