

Incredible community support secures Mt Burr Swamp for restoration

Mark Bachmann, Nature Glenelg Trust

Every once in a while, an opportunity to investigate a site with standout wetland restoration potential comes along. This was the case way back in February 2012, only a few weeks after Nature Glenelg Trust began, when we were alerted to a drained wetland called Mt Burr Swamp, situated only half an hour from Mt Gambier in the lower south east of South Australia.

The concept immediately looked like a great idea. After all, the property was located next door to one of the region's premier wetland reserves, The Marshes (a nationally recognised wetland complex), and would enable the overall conservation area to be expanded by 50 per cent.

The property contains dozens of drained wetlands with excellent restoration potential. The largest wetland, Mt Burr Swamp, is a large, former deep freshwater marsh that forms something of a natural centrepiece for the site. Plus, fortunately for us, and unlike a lot of the South East where water resources are under pressure, water security in this area has not been compromised—meaning that the ingredients for a successful restoration project were in place.



The restoration of Mt Burr Swamp—September 2016 (Lachlan Farrington)

There was just one problem. Because the property has been developed as a farm, a significant amount of funding would be required to get the purchase off the ground.

And so began a long and arduous four year journey, working behind the scenes in an attempt to find partners interested in helping us make this vision a reality.

Fast forward to today and what seemed unlikely, if not impossible, has actually eventuated, with Nature Glenelg Trust settling the purchase of the 300 hectare Mt Burr Swamp property on the 30th of September 2016.

We did so by successfully establishing a unique blend of partnerships with government (the South Australian Native Vegetation Council), private business (OneFortyOne Plantations) and the wider community (individuals, groups and businesses who donated to our fundraising appeal) to reach this significant milestone.

The purchase was celebrated with an art exhibition and on-site open day in early October, while the ecological restoration of Mt Burr Swamp is also already underway. A trial structure installed in August to lift water levels has resulted in the immediate reinstatement of over 50 hectares of wetland habitat, which early surveys have now confirmed already support recovering populations of two nationally threatened aquatic species—the growling grass frog and little galaxias. More significant species are expected to return to the site over the years ahead.

While the full restoration of the property is a long term work in progress, thanks to fantastic broad-based community support, this project is clearly off to a flying start.

Nature Glenelg Trust will keep you up to date on the progress of its wetland restoration projects through the NGT website: natureglenelg.org.au and future editions of *Wetlands Australia* magazine.



*The restoration trial structure at Mt Burr Swamp—
from August to September 2016 (Mark Bachmann)*