

# Western Australian Threatened Species and Communities Unit

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To: Stephen White, Environmental Protection

## WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECT 2000 FINAL REPORT

Please find enclosed final report and attachments for the Wetlands Conservation Project (2000) funded project 'Conserving organic mound springs in the Kimberley Region'.

*sgBlack*

Sally Black

Project Officer, Conserving Threatened Ecological Communities Outside the Southwest  
13 November 2001

*Adrian is this the  
report you were after?  
Jill 3.. 28/11/05*

**Department of Conservation and Land Management**  
**Wetlands Conservation Project 2000 Final Report:**  
*Conserving organic mound springs of the Kimberley Region.*

1. Where the project as described in the funding application has been completed:-
  - have all of the objectives stated in the project proposal been met? - **Yes**
  - if not, which objectives have not been met and why? - **NA**
  - have you achieved more than intended? Give details. - **No**
  - did you meet the timelines indicated in the application? If no, give details.  
**Yes, all subcontracted flora and fauna taxonomic work completed by 30 June 2001**
  
2. If the project as described in the funding application has not been completed:- **NA**
  - why has the project not met the timeline your proposal put forward?
  - what changes to the proposal, if any, have occurred or will occur?
  - will all of the stated objectives be met, if not, which will not be met and why?
  - do you intend to carry any project funds over to next financial year, give details of how and how much?
  - when do you expect the project to be completed? Provide a revised timeline showing both works complete and planned.
  
3. Has there been any media coverage of the project (including in CALM News)? Give details and copies of articles. Where there has been no media coverage, what is planned and when?

**As requested an article was written and forwarded to Nigel Higgs for publication in media of his choice. It is anticipated that an article on conserving the States' organic mound springs as threatened ecological communities will be drafted for publication in Landscape in early 2002.**

4. Please provide a description of the work that has been carried out. Where possible, please include quantitative information such as metres of fencing completed, area of weeds treated, samples taken and identified, reports written etc. Where appropriate provide photographs of the work, diagrams, maps and/or reports produced.

**The goal of the project was to identify the organic mound springs of the Kimberley Region as threatened ecological communities in order to conserve them. This necessitated obtaining sufficient biological data to clarify the taxonomy and distribution of poorly known groups of flora and fauna considered to be ecologically important (eg rushes and sedges, crustaceans, aquatic insect larvae, diatoms, rotifers). Specific actions were the sorting and identification of sedge plants and invertebrate fauna collected by the Project Officer during field survey. Contracts were let to sort and identify 8 invertebrate samples, and plant collections from eleven sites. Annotated species lists (Attachments 1 and 2) and a report 'Comments on Kimberley Springs sampled by Sally Black' (Attachment 3) are attached.**

**This data has been used to classify, define and describe the organic mound springs of the Kimberley Region as community types, so they could be added to the Threatened Ecological Communities Database and formally assessed by the WA Threatened Ecological**

Communities Scientific Committee. As a result of the work the following communities have been databased and formally assessed:

- Black Spring organic mound spring community (Endangered) (Attachment 4)
- Organic mound spring communities of Big Springs (Vulnerable) (Attachment 5)
- Organic mound spring communities of Bunda Bunda (Vulnerable) (Attachment 6)
- Organic mound spring community of the southern North Kimberley Bioregion (Mt Elizabeth and Drysdale River Stations) (Vulnerable –near Endangered, to be reassessed within 5 years) (Attachment 7)
- Lolly Well Springs organic mound spring wetland complex (Priority 1) (Attachment 8)
- Closed canopy rainforest on freshwater swamps on alluvial floodplain soils in the east Kimberley (Point Spring and Long Swamp) (Priority 1 – to be reassessed subsequent to further analysis of floristic survey data) (Attachment 9)

Listing as threatened ecological communities gives these wetlands priority conservation status and the implementation of management actions has commenced with the Project Officer conducting onsite liaison with pastoral managers, lessees and LCDC members. The results of this WCP Project also provide baseline data required for monitoring purposes.

5. An itemized account of the total expenditure of the project funds provided by CALM is required. Please state the flexfields that have been used with a description and the amount spent against each flexfield. See below for an example.

Example of expenditure details required. (Please only include the relevant items, add or remove items as required).

Flexfield	Description	Amount
145-01-24-017-1621-0000-113	Contracts for invertebrate fauna identification	\$7780
145-01-24-017-1621-0000-113	Contract for flora identification	\$720
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$8500</b>

6. Where another organisation has contributed to the project:

- what has their contribution been?

CALM WATSCU is a major contributor to this WCP project which has been conducted as part of the project 'Conserving threatened ecological communities throughout the State, especially outside the southwest' (jointly funded by CALM WTSCU and an NHT grant). The WATSCU contribution is as follows:

- (1) Salary and oncosts for Project Officer for 2000/2001 to coordinate project, to conduct field survey and sampling, to identify, describe, classify and database threatened ecological communities, and to nominate and present the communities for formal assessment by the WA Threatened Ecological Communities Scientific Committee)
- (2) Cost of travel, field surveys and sampling.

- please provide details of funding (how much and used for what) and resourcing (what resources and used for what).

(1) Salary and oncosts: \$9743 (equivalent of 2 months)

**(2)Field survey: \$ 5000**

**Total: \$14743**

7. Have volunteers, community groups or CALM Bushrangers etc. been used in the project?  
Please provide details of the number of volunteer hours/days, number of volunteers involved, name of groups involved, tasks completed etc. Please provide any photographs of these groups carrying out the work.

**Yes – the Broome Botanical Society provided assistance during field survey and sampling.**

## Comments on Kimberley Springs sampled by Sally Black

Stuart Halse (2 October 2001)

Seven springs were sampled in 2000 for aquatic invertebrates by Sally Black using a pondnet with 250µm mesh. This biased sampling against micro-invertebrates, which usually comprise about half the invertebrate species in a wetland. Nevertheless, a total of 122 species were collected, of which 96 were macro-invertebrates and 26 micro-invertebrates.

A table listing the species collected at each site is attached. Species richness varied from 40 at Big Spring to 12 at Moon Spring. This compares quite favourably with the richness of springs of Mandora Marsh, northern wheatbelt and eastern Gngangara Mound (36-22, 35-9 and 23-19 species, respectively), given that a fuller range of micro-invertebrates was collected from these sites (Jasinska 1998; Pinder and Penniford 2001; Storey *et al* 2001).

The richness of the springs sampled by Black compares less favourably with Edge swamp, Rainforest swamp and Brolga Spring sampled by Halse *et al* (1996) on the Victoria-Bonaparte mudflat but the differences are entirely attributable to the large micro-invertebrate lists compiled by Halse *et al*. Detailed comparisons of the Victoria-Bonaparte springs and those sampled by Black are not made in this report but the Victoria-Bonaparte work has been used to provide additional context for interpreting the significance of springs sampled by Black (referred to as Kimberley springs in the remainder of the report).

Two differences were observed between the fauna of the Kimberley springs and those elsewhere in Western Australia. Firstly, there is a strong Indo-Pacific or Asian element in the Kimberley spring fauna, especially in the micro-invertebrates despite under-collecting. The three *Mesocyclops* species collected all have an Indo-Pacific distribution, as do the ostracods *Stenocypris malcolmsi* and *Cyprinotus kimberleyensis* and the hydrophilid beetle *Regimbarta attenuata* (see attached table). A similar pattern was found in the swamps of the Victoria-Bonaparte mudflat (Halse *et al*. 1996).

Secondly, almost one-fifth of the fauna collected in both the Kimberley and Mandora springs were beetles, compared with <10% at Gngangara and in the wheatbelt. The hemipteran fauna exhibited a similar, comprising approx. 10% of the Kimberley and Mandora faunas and being absent from the southern springs. This was repeated for most other insect groups and probably reflects the greater availability of free water at the Kimberley and Mandora sites.

Several of the described species collected in the Kimberley springs were first records for Western Australia, although this probably reflects the fact that many of the species are restricted to northern parts of the State where there has been little previous northern collecting, rather than implying rarity of the fauna and high conservation significance of the Kimberley springs. Among the first records were the ostracod *Stenocypris malcolmsi*, the cyclopoid copepods *Mesocyclops papuensis* and *M. woutersi*, the hemipteran *Naucoris australicus*, the dragonflies *Hemicordulia australiae* and *Orthetrum villsovittatum*, and the worm *Pristina probiscidae*.

Many of the species found in the Kimberley springs are restricted to northern Australia (see attached table). This trend is not as pronounced at the Mandora springs, where a greater proportion of species occur across the continent or have southern affinities (see Storey *et al*. 2001). Together with the Indo-Pacific faunal element, however, it suggests that the Kimberley springs do contain a different community from that at Mandora.

In terms of biogeography and conservation significance, the following can be hypothesised:

- Despite unevenness in collecting effort and taxonomic treatment, there appears to be a gradation in species composition of springs from south to north, with distinct Kimberley (including Victoria-Bonaparte), Mandora and southern communities.
- The amount of free water at a site affects species richness and faunal composition (free water increases richness and the proportion of surface water macro-invertebrates, especially larger

flying insects) and this may be largely responsible for the different types of animals (as opposed to species) in the northern and southern springs.

- Kimberley springs appear to be relatively rich aquatic habitats. Big Spring and Black Spring stand out as important because of their richness and the high proportion of northern species they contain and warrant conservation. Based on the particular taxa present and their importance, Mt Elizabeth Spring is probably the next most worthy of protection.

The above comments are preliminary because of the lack of work on springs in Western Australia, the different sampling methods employed in different studies and the fact that no site has a complete list. Further work may change our perceptions of the importance of sites. In particular, it will be interesting to see how collections recently made by Halse, Scanlon and Cocking, at flowing spring sites in the Pilbara, fit into the picture above. It would also be rewarding to undertake micro-invertebrate sampling with finer mesh nets at the Kimberley Springs.

#### References

- Halse, S.A., Shiel, R.J. and Pearson, G.B. 1996. Waterbirds and aquatic invertebrates of swamps on the Victoria Bonaparte mudflat, northern Western Australia. *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* 79, 31-38.
- Jasinska, E.J. 1996. Monitoring of tumulus spring invertebrates. Unpublished report to WATSCU and WRC.
- Pinder, A.M. & Penniford, M.G. 2001. A survey of the aquatic invertebrates of some organic mound springs in the Shire of Three Springs, Western Australia. Unpublished report to WATSCU.
- Storey, A.W., Halse, S.A. & Shiel, R.J. 2001. Aquatic fauna and water chemistry in A land assessment of Mandora Marsh and its immediate surrounds - October 1999. Unpublished report, department of Conservation and Land Management.



Insecta	Diptera	Chironomidae*	Polypedium nubifer	28	37	32	11	28	40	27	204
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Polypedium nubifer</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Polypedium sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Zavettia marmorata</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Dicrotentipes lobatus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Parakleptis sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Diptera	Chironominae*	<i>Chironomus sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Diptera	Ceratopogonidae	<i>Ceratopogon sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Ceratopogonidae	<i>Bezzia sp.</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Insecta	Diptera	Ceratopogonidae	<i>Micrazia sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Insecta	Diptera	Ceratopogonidae	<i>Culicoides sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Ceratopogonidae	<i>Fontomyia sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Stratiomyidae	<i>Stratiomya sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Diptera	Tabanidae	<i>Tabanus sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Diptera	Dolichopodidae	<i>Dolichopoda sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Trichoptera	Leptoceridae	<i>Triplicoides curvica zaeuctia</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Trichoptera	Leptoceridae	<i>Triplicoides helveticus</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
Insecta	Trichoptera	Leptoceridae	<i>Triplicoides sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Trichoptera	Nolidae	<i>Nolana sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Mesochorus subfasciatus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Hydrophilus ovalis</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Copelatus clarki</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Locheus inornatus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Mesoporus ruficeps</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Laccophilus clarki</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Laccophilus sharpi</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Hydrophilus godeffroyi</i> (Sharp)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Hydrophilus laei</i> (Gulgnol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Dytiscidae	<i>Hydrophilus aratus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Hydrophilus thersites</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Hydrophilus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Enochrus aserius</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Enochrus obscurus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Regimbarta alternata</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Paranascens homi</i> (Blackburn)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Berosus sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Hydrocus sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Hydrophilidae sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Schizus</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Insecta	Coleoptera	Hydrophilidae	<i>Nannohys sp.</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL TAXA @ EACH SITE											

Widespread Australian species  
 Previous records from the NT & NSW  
 Previously recorded from NT & Nth Kimberley but extends into wheatbe

No key available

No key available

No key available  
 Found in northern WA and Northern Territory  
 Found in northern WA, northern Queensland and Northern Territory

No case for ID to species level

Confirmed by C Watt  
 No key available

Confirmed by C Watt  
 Old NT and Northern WA distribution. Confirmed by C Watt

Common

Northern Australian species

Northern Australian species

Confirmed by C Watt

Confirmed by C Watt

Still water tropical species

Common

Widespread Australian species

Wide Australian species

Distribution from northern NSW to the Kimberley, South East Asia to Sri Lanka

Confirmed by C Watt

No key available

No key available

No key available

KMS001 Big Spring 7/09/1999  
 KMS002 Mt. Elizabeth 14/2/99  
 KMS003 Moor Spring 4 14/2/99  
 KMS004 Black Spring 18/2/1999

KMS005 Native wells/brysdale 19/9/1999  
 KMS006 Lollywell Spring 18/7/99  
 KMS007 Erigina Spring 1/10/2000  
 KMS008 Bunda Bunda 27/7/2001  
 KMS009 Kachana Mand Spring 5/9/2003