

Community Participation

NSWLP-011-023

The Magic of Mistletoe

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



Mistletoe is an ecological keystone for biodiversity

The issue

Mistletoe is a very misunderstood plant. For this reason, people often chop it out of trees or even worse they remove the whole tree. Some land managers burn the trees without realising its value or the fact there is mistletoe in the tree. There is a lack of knowledge of the key role mistletoe plays in providing food, a home, biodiversity, a cool place to rest and nutrients for the soil below. There are many birds, mammals and insects that rely heavily on this mysterious and wonderful plant. Some people wrongly believe it is a weed, it kills trees and is poisonous.

The solution

Invite the local community, the Mayor, members of Landcare and Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists; employees from Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Council, LLS, National Parks, DPIE and the farming community to a Field Day with the world expert Professor Dave Watson.

The field day was broken into a morning session at a TSR in Yanco and an afternoon session at Crown Land in Griffith. Both sites are considered of high biodiversity value and have been used in an unsuitable manner by members of the public. It was therefore important to have a field day to explain to a variety of people the importance of this magical plant.

The impact

32 people attended two workshops. Professor Dave in his easy going and knowledgeable manner walked around both of the sites explaining the ancient marriage between birds (Mistletoe and Painted Honeyeaters) and the Mistletoe plant. How the seed is distributed and passed through the bird in 14 minutes. How the sticky seed attaches itself to a branch and forms a Mistletoe. The importance of this hemiparasite (a plant that obtains its food or part of its food by parasitism) in providing food, shelter, reduced temperature, biodiversity and improved soil nutrient. In experiments where Mistletoe has been removed bird numbers have reduced by one third



Key facts

- Mistletoe is considered an ecological keystone for biodiversity and has been eaten by Aboriginal people for thousands of years.
- Removal of Mistletoe reduces the number of birds by one third with the greatest impact being on the insect eaters.

Project Partners



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