

**HEART MORASS WETLAND**

THE WETLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL TASKFORCE TRUST

ABN 42 150 070 738

# HEART MORASS PROJECT



# WASTELAND TO WETLAND



## HEART MORASS

The Heart Morass Restoration Project was officially launched on March 16th, 2006 by the Hon. John Thwaites, Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change.

# HISTORY

## THE VISION

To develop the Heart Morass Wetland as an icon within Australia and internationally. Iconic status will be achieved through the enhancement of biodiversity, water quality, and recreational and social values within the Heart Morass; and through its contribution towards the health of the Gippsland Lakes. The partners recognise the importance of the Heart Morass and its association with the broader Gippsland Lakes wetland system.

The Heart Morass Restoration Project highlights the Wetlands Environmental Taskforce's (WET) long-term commitment to wetland conservation.

In the 1950s hunters under the leadership of the then 'Victorian Field and Game Association' lobbied the Victorian Government to levy duck hunters for the purchase of wetlands across the state.

The legacy of that far-sighted policy resulted in the establishment of 180 state game reserves throughout Victoria today. Not only did this initiative of hunters provide a network of wetlands across Victoria at a time when the drainage of farm land meant a huge reduction in wetland habitat, it also became the catalyst for the practice of public land being set aside for conservation purposes.

Government once drove the initiative on wetland conservation; however, 60 years later this is no longer the case. Thus Field & Game Australia took the initiative to form the WET Trust to provide a vehicle for funding the acquisition, rehabilitation and maintenance of Australian wetlands.

The Heart Morass project is the first such project.

## HEART MORASS BY THE NUMBERS

**1,349** HECTARES

**9 YEARS** OF RESTORATION BY FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA MEMBERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS

**50,000** INDIGENOUS TREES PLANTED

**20 TONNES** OF CARP REMOVED

SEEDS COLLECTED FROM OVER

**50 PLANT SPECIES** FOR REVEGETATION

**“There wasn’t a national parks system until 1966 in Victoria. There was no land reserved for wildlife. It was the duck shooters who imposed a levy on themselves that really preserved the first land in Victoria for wildlife”**

- Tim Flannery

Source: Interview with Paul Barclay, ABC Radio, December 3, 2012

# PROCUREMENT

The Heart Morass is located at the mouth of the Latrobe River, near Sale. It was settled in about 1841 but like many wetlands it had been drained, cleared and managed for beef and dairy production.

The rehabilitation of the morass is a joint initiative of a stakeholder group consisting of Field & Game Australia, Bug Blitz, Watermark Inc. and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Funding for the land purchase has come from the members and branches of Field & Game Australia, and the Hugh Williamson Foundation. The property purchase was undertaken by the WET Trust’s Public Fund.

The purchase and rehabilitation is restoring the wetland to a place of national significance for waterbirds and other wetland-dependent flora and fauna.

The partners are committed to achieving a balance between enhanced environmental, cultural, social and economic values within the Heart Morass.

Management decisions will be made within the context of contributing towards improving the health of the broader Gippsland Lakes wetland system and achievement of icon status for the Heart Morass wetland.



**Wasteland**

**2007**



**Wetland**

**2012**

# STAGES

**STAGE 1 2006**

**819 ha** \$1.2 m

**STAGE 2 2010**

**302 ha** \$570 k

**STAGE 3 2013**

**233 ha** \$440 k

# HEART MORASS - THEN AND NOW

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# WET'S ROLE

WET's purpose is to purchase and conserve wetlands for the benefit of all wildlife. It is also there to showcase hunters as conservationists and environmentalists to the broader community.

One of the greatest ever opportunities for wetland conservation arose in 2004 – a major portion of the Heart Morass was up for sale.

This initial parcel of land consisted of wetland and surrounding river and redgum plain, worn down by 100 years of stock grazing and damaged by saltwater intrusion. Restored, the Heart Morass has become a jewel in the crown of Victoria's wetlands.

## SUPPORTERS RALLY

As a Trustee of the WET Trust, Field & Game Australia called on its members across the country to raise funds for the purchase of the Heart Morass.

In 2006, after long negotiations, WET purchased the first parcel of 819 hectares of the Heart Morass. Field & Game Australia members invested over \$450,000 and the Hugh Williamson Foundation invested an even higher sum.

Now, nearly 10 years after the first wetland changed hands, the work of WET supporters, hunters and conservationists is clear to see.

The Heart Morass is a significant project. It is one of Australia's largest and most demanding environmental activities involving the aggregation of 25 parcels of land and the input of six major stakeholders.







# THE PROJECT PARTNERS

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**BUG BLITZ**

**FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA**

**WATERMARK INC.**

**WEST GIPPSLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

Work to restore the project is managed under a Memorandum of Understanding between Bug Blitz, Field & Game Australia, Watermark Inc., and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

This unique partnership, which also includes the Hugh Williamson Foundation, brings together groups that are committed to the wetland being established for community education as a model of sustainable use, including recreational hunting during the prescribed seasons.

Extensive site restoration works have been undertaken, including establishment and repairs to water control structures, noxious weed removal, vermin eradication and tree planting. Other works have included fencing and extensive revegetation of native plants.

Years of incorrect watering regimes had resulted in a high salt level and acidic soil. This has now been lowered by several freshwater flushing events to a productive and manageable level where the revegetation of the area can be successful. Ongoing monitoring of flora, fauna and general biodiversity along with land management continues to be undertaken by Field & Game Australia volunteers and the project partners.

Combined with the effects of natural growth and regrowth, this has seen a spectacular transformation of the wetland.

Members of Field & Game Australia have banded together and have held many working bees to assist with the Heart Morass rehabilitation project. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority has supplied technical expertise, advice along with scientific support, research and monitoring.

# BECOME A HEART DONOR TODAY

***There are still areas of the Heart Morass complex to be purchased and there is still much work to be done. Extension projects, ongoing maintenance and management all cost money. Become a heart donor by filling out the donation form and help keep the Heart beating!***

Last Name: _____		Given Name(s): _____											
Postal Address: _____ _____													
Phone (H): _____		(B): _____											
Email: _____													
Donation Amount \$: _____													
"I have professional qualifications in _____ and am willing to assist in WET Trust projects."													
Payment Method:													
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque/Money Order	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard	<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<table border="1"><tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr></table>										
Card Holder Name: _____		<b>Please return this form along with your donation to:</b> <i>Wetlands Environmental Taskforce (Public Fund)</i> <i>PO Box 464, Seymour, Victoria 3660</i> <b>Thankyou for your generous support. A receipt will be forwarded to you by return mail.</b>											
Card Expiry: _____	Signature: _____												



The Hugh  
Williamson  
Foundation



# HEART MORASS

***An initiative of the Wetlands Environmental Taskforce Trust***  
***"Recognising the desperate need to preserve and maintain Australia's wetlands"***

STATUS - REGISTERED ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATION (REGISTERED 24/07/02, ABN 42 150 070 738)  
REGISTERED BY ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA - DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

ENTITLED TO RECEIVE TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS UNDER THE INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1997  
ITEM 6.1.1 OF SUBSECTION 30-55(1). (FROM 23/12/05)

THE WET TRUST IS EXEMPT FROM THE PAYMENT OF STAMP DUTY BY THE VICTORIAN STATE REVENUE OFFICE  
(REFERENCE NO: SX9377)

TRUSTEE - FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA INC

THE TRUST - FIELD & GAME AUSTRALIA INC WETLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL TASKFORCE TRUST

THE FUND - WETLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL TASKFORCE PUBLIC FUND

[www.wet.org.au](http://www.wet.org.au)