



Media Release

Tuesday 6th July 2010

Yongergnow Australian Malleefowl Centre NOT closing, more active than ever!

Contrary to rumours in the wider community, Yongergnow Australian Malleefowl Centre is NOT closing.

The centre's Acting Chair Cr Janet Savage said that Yongergnow would like to rectify this regrettable misunderstanding and assure the community that Yongergnow is currently more active than ever and nothing could be further from the Board's thoughts than closing down.

"In a recent meeting with a senior Department for Environment and Conservation (DEC) officer, Yongergnow was encouraged to follow its current environment-focussed path to become a centre of excellence for Malleefowl conservation. To this end, Yongergnow is currently seeking funding to extend its captive raising/breeding/management facilities." she said.

Yongergnow's current captive raising programme has had very good results. The chicks are now six to seven months old, i.e. half grown. They have been colour banded for easy identification and can currently be viewed in Yongergnow's 1200 square meter natural bush aviary.

"Before Malleefowl reach sexual maturity, they are quite happy to live in small peer groups. When they reach puberty, males will start to become territorial. By then we will have upgraded our facilities in a suitable manner to enable us to keep two pairs of Malleefowl in separate territories" centre administrator and biologist Vicky Bilney says." The remaining chicks will be released in a local predator-controlled Nature Reserve in spring once natural food supply is at its optimum.

Yongergnow will host a Midwinter Dinner on 16th July to celebrate these achievements. An Environmental Arts and Culture Day for schools is planned for August, and an astronomy night will be hosted in September. Yongergnow will again be a venue for the Great Southern Art and Craft Trail in September and October. Spring's wealth of wildflowers and orchids along the centre's bush walks will again attract numerous naturalists to the centre during the wildflower season.

The centre is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9am to 4pm and Saturday & Sunday 10am to 4pm. The centre is closed on Tuesday, Friday, Christmas and New Year's Day.

For more information, please contact:

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Photo caption: Malleefowl “teenager” Happy admiring his new home: Yongergnow’s 1200 square metre natural bush aviary.

Background:

Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) are large ground dwelling birds somewhat larger than a domestic hen. Once common, their numbers have seriously declined over the last 100 years.

Malleefowl are classified as fauna “that is rare or likely to become extinct” under the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950-91* and nationally, the Malleefowl is listed as a threatened species.

Malleefowl chicks are independent from hatching. The eggs are laid in the mound (every 5-7 days), and begin incubating immediately. The egg chamber is dug up to 1 metre deep into a leaf litter core that produces heat early in the season. The chick hatches 60 days later and digs its way out of the mound. Following this exhausting arrival, it has a quick rest near the mound and then heads off to search for food - alone with no siblings or parents to care for it.

Chicks are known to fly up to 2 metres from the first night in order to roost, and are capable of regulating their own temperature. A major cause of mortality is starvation, as well as death from predators like foxes, cats, goannas, raptors and currawongs.

Information sourced from <http://www.malleefowl.com.au/> and PHD researcher Jessica Van der Waag.