

Conservation fencing for feral pigs

By Fiona Murdoch



"Raakajlim" is a 490-hectare conservation property in the Mallee of northwest Victoria. The landholders are currently building a 13-kilometre electric fence around their boundary. The fence will manage grazing pressure from overabundant kangaroos and goats. It will also exclude feral pigs.

"We have irrigated horticulture to our north, and the national park to the south so it's perfect for pigs. Whenever it rains, pigs move through our property: trampling, wallowing and eating as they go. We won't see them for months, then overnight there'll be a smash-and-grab incursion. The damage they can do is one night is extraordinary; we had to fence them out." says Phillip Murdoch.

Phillip adds: "As well as Mallee and Pine Woodlands, we have some floodplain and gilgai country. Pigs love to wallow in the rain-filled depressions. So, an area that should be native herbs like Nardoo, becomes a stinking, muddy slush. They also root about under the wattles, eating the native seeds we want for revegetation. Feral pigs and conservation don't mix."

Raakajlim is home to many threatened plants and animals, including the endangered Regent Parrot. The

property also protects the largest known population of a rare butterfly, the Arid Bronze Azure (*Ogyris subterrestris subterrestris*). The larvae of this unusual butterfly develop underground, inside the nest of sugar ants (*Camponotus terebrans*). Soil disturbance is a known threat to the butterfly's survival. Rare plants on the property are also sensitive to disturbance from pig activity.

The conservation fence design is a Gallagher Westonfence. It is a 1.4 metre-high, eight-wire fence with three electrified wires. The first section of Westonfence was erected on the property in 2014 and has proved effective against pigs.

This fencing project is supported by the Victorian Government through the Community Volunteer Action Grants, the Australian Government through the Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program, a Gallagher - Landcare Australia grant, and with help from the Jesse Chaplin-Burch Trust and Bio R.

For more information visit



Photo (left): Raakajlim fenceline 2020. The Westonfence uses standard steel posts at 10-metre spacings with plastic (HDPE) suspension droppers between and clipped to each steel post. The plastic droppers act as insulators. Inset - The threatened Regent Parrot (left); The threatened Arid Bronze Azure butterfly is at risk from soil disturbance from pigs; (right) The Murdoch family preparing the fenceline for the new Westonfence.