

# Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre *Island Refuges at Wirraminna*

Establishing island refuges in farm dams provides a safe habitat for a wide variety of birds.

Water birds, particularly ducks, look for safe sites to rest and preen.

Islands with a sufficient cover of vegetation may also provide food, shelter and nesting sites safe from foxes and cats. Islands can be constructed from any material, logs, tyres, rocks or earth.

## **Earth Islands**

Such as the ones at Wirraminna, are easiest to construct when extending or building a new dam. Choose the site carefully—if the area is too shallow, it will not remain isolated when the water level falls

## **Floating Islands**

These can be used to advantage on existing dams. They can be designed with a very low profile and rise and fall with the water level if anchored correctly.

Wirraminna has used a design which is low cost, easy to construct and has a long life. The island on the big dam was launched in 1999. There is scope for a range of inventive modifications.

## **Material List– for a floating Island, 2.9 metres x 2.9 metres**

- ▶ 100mm diameter sewer pipe - 4 lengths each 6.0 metres
- ▶ 16 end caps to suit
- ▶ PVC pipe glue and primer
- ▶ Galvanised weld mesh 100mm x 100mm x 4 mm-3 sheets. Each 2400mm x 1200mm
- ▶ Shade cloth 70% - 12 square metres
- ▶ Heavy duty baling twine-100 metres approximate
- ▶ 3 old straw bales
- ▶ Top soil/leaf litter-3 barrow loads
- ▶ Quantity of lightweight dead wood/hollow limbs
- ▶ Sedges and rushes to transplant onto island
- ▶ 2 bags quickset concrete for anchor, or something else heavy
- ▶ Cost \$360 approximately



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## **Construction Method**

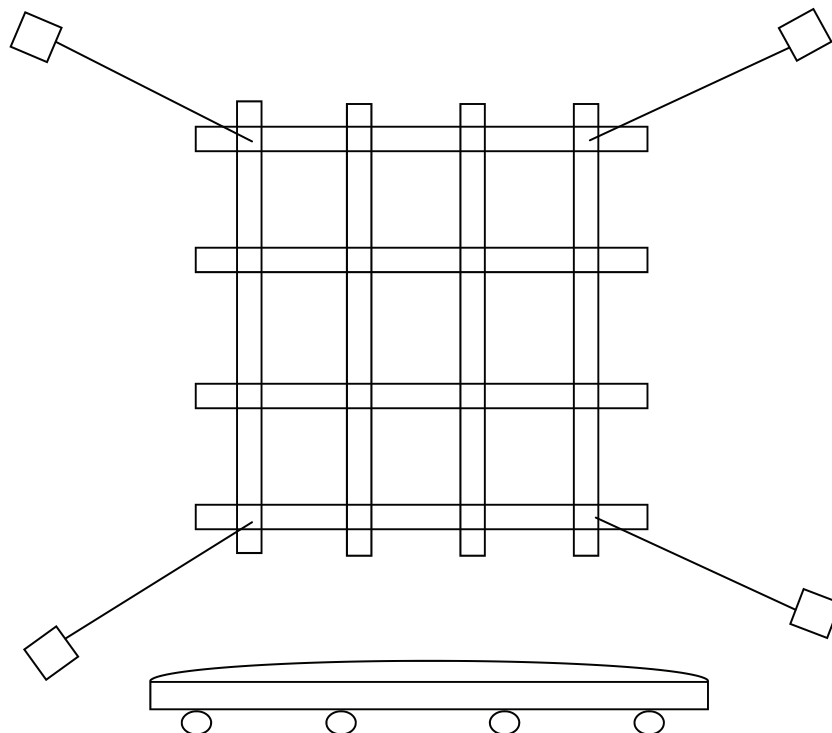
- ▶ Cut female ends off all sewer pipes. Cut remaining pipe in half, gives 8 lengths each approximately 2.9 metres long
- ▶ Glue caps on all ends—make sure they are watertight
- ▶ Lash pipes together with twine to make square raft as in illustration
- ▶ Cover raft with weldmesh-cut to suit and tie to pipes (wire or twine)
- ▶ Lay shade cloth over all—extend over edges to hide pipes
- ▶ Launch raft on dam near bank
- ▶ Cover evenly with old straw bale biscuits and topsoil/leaf litter mix—provide a wood perch for birds—NB don't over load
- ▶ Attach anchors, one to each corner of raft—with about 10 metres of twine for each
- ▶ If you have any aquatic plants put them into the soil mix. They don't have to be watered!

## **The Hard Bit**

Tow raft into position and arrange anchors evenly to four points.

## **Anchors**

Anchors may be anything solid and heavy—simple ones may be made by using 4 litre ice cream containers filled with concrete with heavy gauge wire loops set in place.



## **Would you like to know more?**

Breckwoldt Roland - Wildlife in the home paddock—1983