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L *Victorian* **Landcare** & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



Landcare Awards Feature

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Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management is published for the Victorian Landcare community by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Catchment Management Council.



Sri Lanka – Australia Landcare Project



Long-term Landcare Co-ordinator Emma Bennet was volunteering in a remote coastal community in the deep south of Sri Lanka when the Boxing Day tsunami struck. Under Emma's direction the Victorian Landcare Network has launched an exciting grass roots international Landcare initiative in Sri Lanka scheduled for February/March 2006.

Expressions of interest are currently open to Landcare members and support staff wishing to travel to Sri Lanka for a two week volunteer works program supporting an NRM / Eco-tourism project in a tsunami affected community.

Participants will work with the local community constructing information

facilities to promote the protection of high quality wetland systems, encourage a fledgling community based sustainable eco-tourism project and develop participant's community development skills.

Applications for the initial program close on 30 November 2005, with expressions of interest accepted on an ongoing basis for future trips.

Successful applicants will be encouraged to seek local community support for airfares and in-country expenses of approximately \$2500 per person.

The Victorian Landcare Network is seeking financial support for the program – contributions from interested Landcare



Kalametiya Wetland coastal section one week after the tsunami.

groups, agencies and corporate organisations are most welcome.

Further details on supporting or participating can be obtained by contacting Victoria@Landcare.net or phone Emma Bennett on 0400 495 495 or Matt Stephenson on 0418 355 102.

From the editors

The ballroom at Government House was packed. The excitement was palpable. This was the scene for the 2005 Victorian Landcare Awards held in early September.

David Lucas, DSE Statewide Landcare Community Development Co-ordinator, said around 300 people attended the ceremony which paid tribute to our Landcare heroes.

"It was a great opportunity to celebrate some very impressive achievements, as well as a chance for Landcarers from across the State to meet and chat in the beautiful surrounds of Government House."

David said that the awards, which are held every two years, included several new categories. The Bangerang community won the Alcan Landcare Indigenous Community Award and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority won the Australian Government Landcare Regional Award.

The organisation of the awards was a massive task and congratulations are due to Jane Liefman, David Lucas, Probarti Milton and Teresa Oppy from DSE for doing a fantastic job.

In this issue we feature photographs from the ceremony and stories on all of the Victorian winners.

The Gateway is moving

Tom Croft, the Victorian Landcare Gateway Project Manager, reports that the gateway websites will be moving to a new address, www.landcarevic.net.au in the near future. Each regional site, and all group sites within these, will also change address to the format: regionname.landcarevic.net.au

"We are in the process of moving the Victorian Landcare Gateway websites to a new host, and upgrading the software running the sites. This will have some significant additional capabilities for users, including simplifying loading content, and fix some of the bugs that exist," Tom said.

The current web address for the Vic Landcare Gateway is expected to be transferred by the owners to the new National Landcare Online website being developed by Landcare Australia.

According to Tom this means that new addresses for the Victorian Landcare Gateway and regional sites had to be accessed.

"We are negotiating to be able to also use the vic.landcare.net.au addresses in the long term," he said.

This will be our last issue for 2005 and we wish the Landcare community a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

International Landcare Conference 2006

Landscapes, Lifestyles and Livelihoods, the International Landcare Conference, will be held in Melbourne from 8 to 11 October 2006.

Don't miss this opportunity to share your success stories in Landcare with conference participants from around the world.

For more information contact Kate Smith at Waldron Smith Management on 9645 6322 or e-mail info@wsm.com.au

David Lucas, Jane Liefman and Carrie Tiffany

Letters

We are always interested in hearing from our readers. If you have a story, a letter, a comment or a suggestion please don't hesitate to get in touch. A book prize is presented to the best letter published in each issue of the magazine.

The prize for the next issue will be a copy of Carrie Tiffany's novel, *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*. Please send your letters to Carrie Tiffany (address on page 2). Letters must include a name, address and telephone number and be less than 300 words. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



David Lucas, Probarti Milton and Teresa Oppy from the DSE Landcare and Sustainable Landscapes Branch at the 2005 Victorian Landcare Awards.



Victoria's top Landcarers celebrate



Alan Sheridan, Sir Gustav Nossal and Helen Sheridan. The Sheridans won the DPI Sustainable Farming Award for the East Gippsland Catchment.

The Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, joined John Landy AC, MBE, Governor of Victoria, and Mrs Lynne Landy to host the 2005 Victorian Landcare Awards at Government House in early September.

The Governor and Mr Thwaites congratulated the winners and presented the prizes to the successful award recipients.

Mr Thwaites said all Landcarers should be congratulated for their work in shaping a sustainable future for all Victorians, and attributed the success of the Landcare ethos to their volunteer efforts over 19 years.

"These Awards recognise the extraordinary efforts of Victorians who are inspiring others to take a greater role in caring for our environment. Every nominee is a winner because your actions are helping create a landscape that we can proudly pass on to future generations.

"Nearly 20 years since it was launched in Victoria the Landcare ethos is recognised worldwide. This is a credit to each Victorian Landcarer because it is your work that has helped create a Landcare ethic, culture and model that is transferable across the world."

The Award winners represent the wide cross-section of the community involved in Landcare: education, local government, catchment management authorities, indigenous communities, primary production and nature conservation, as well as individual Landcarers and Landcare groups.



Stuart Boucher (centre), winner of the Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award, with his proud parents William and Rita Boucher.

Victorian Landcare Awards



Susan McNair from Rural Press, Minister Thwaites, Bob Davie, Governor John Landy and Anne Davie. Bob and Anne Davie received the Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award.

"In Victoria alone there are more than 1300 volunteer Landcare community groups. Their efforts stretch across 12,000 properties, and account for over 50 per cent of regional Victoria's agricultural land," Mr Thwaites said.

Mr Thwaites also commended a range of groups and businesses which support Landcare in Victoria, including those who provided sponsorship for these awards.

Governor Landy said it gave him great pleasure to welcome the Landcare community to Government House for the awards.

"These awards provide an opportunity for all of us to recognise the outstanding environmental work undertaken by thousands of Landcare volunteers across local communities, all of which has been enormously beneficial to the natural and rural environment of Victoria," Governor Landy said.

The winners of the Victorian Landcare Awards will become the State's representatives in the National Landcare Awards, in October 2006.



Landcarers from across the State gathered in the ballroom at Government House.



Governor John Landy welcomes the Landcare community to Government House watched by Christine Forster, Chair of the Victorian Catchment Management Council, and Minister Thwaites.

Stories on all of the winners follow. The award judges felt the following groups and individuals should be highly commended for their efforts.

Highly Commended

National Landcare Program Individual Landcarer Award: Kevin Heggen

Westpac Landcare Education Award: St Francis of the Fields Primary School

Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award: Alan and Shelley Green
Bill, Faye, Brett and Jodie Loughridge

Natural Heritage Trust Coastcare Community Award



Winner: Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group

The Flume at Warrnambool Beach was once a wasteland. The reVeg the Flume project has changed that – the entire coastal strip has now been revegetated with indigenous flora and dune erosion has been arrested. This success demonstrates the power of efficient and well-organised community action. The Warrnambool Coastcare/Landcare Group (WCLG) researched, planned, and implemented the project in co-operation with the Warrnambool Surfrider Foundation.

The project was a community initiative that gave the WCLG an opportunity to build a strong network with the local council and all levels of government, members of the local indigenous community, and businesses. The project demonstrates what the WCLG has been doing in the region: building networks, promoting community spirit, and enthusiastically co-operating with groups who share similar goals.

The WCLG has identified areas where biodiversity is threatened, increased community awareness of local environmental issues, held education workshops for members, and used indigenous plants in revegetation programs. It has protected penguin habitat on Middle Island, built nesting boxes, and been involved in fox control activities. It has assisted with Orange Bellied Parrot and Hooded Plover surveys, and set up orientation and interpretation signage in partnership with the Warrnambool City Council.

The WCLG promotes its activities to the public through displays at community markets and festivals, and during Orientation Week at Deakin University and the South West College of TAFE. The group maintains a high degree of community visibility, which pays off on planting days when there is a far greater proportion of volunteers to group members present.



The Flume at Warrnambool Beach before revegetation works.



The Flume at Warrnambool Beach after revegetation works.

Malcolm Forbes, Assistant First Secretary Australian Government and Minister Thwaites, with Ian Fitzgibbon from the Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group and Governor John Landy.



Two years ago the WCLG group was inactive. Now there are 60 financial members. Members have the opportunity to develop skills and are encouraged to participate in management planning.

The WCLG has created partnerships with various authorities and groups to develop management plans. The group has a working relationship with the Warrnambool City Council, the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust. As the WCLG's profile grows it is receiving more approaches from other groups requesting assistance on environmental projects.

National Landcare Program Individual Landcarer Award



Winner: Andrew McArthur

Andrew (Stretch) McArthur, his wife Lou and their three children operate Coonmoor, a 1500-hectare sheep, beef and cropping property west of Bairnsdale. Coonmoor has been in the McArthur family since 1890, but Stretch's influence can be felt much further than the farm gate.

Stretch's involvement in Landcare dates back to the Bairnsdale Farm Tree Group which was formed in 1981. He is also a founding member and inaugural chair of the Tom's Creek Landcare Group. When

the East Gippsland Landcare Network formed in 1996 Stretch took the position of chair and still holds that position today.

Stretch practises what he preaches. He has been busy on his own property with developing a whole farm plan, establishing habitat corridors, pasture trials, revegetation, rotational grazing, protecting waterways, farm forestry and rabbit and fox control. The property hosts many local field days from best wools through to pasture demonstration trials, sheep management and farm safety.

As chair of the East Gippsland Landcare Network Stretch has been involved in co-ordinating some large-scale projects across the region. The Red Gum Plains Recovery Project and the African Lovegrass Control Program have attracted significant grant money and the responsibility for implementing and reporting on the management of these funds.

Stretch says when you live in the country you have to stand up and be counted.

"I got involved in Landcare because it is what I believe in. I believe, as a farmer, that sustainable agriculture is possible. I want to make a profit as a farmer, but I also want to improve my landscape."

Stretch thinks farmers learn best from other farmers.

"When people see me doing these things they know they can do them too. It is much more effective for us to be doing Landcare work locally because we have the practical experience."

Stretch says Landcare is what you want to make it. In his case this involves lobbying and leadership. His long-term involvement in Landcare and his simple and practical approach provides leadership that many aspire to follow.

He credits his family for supporting and encouraging him in his various Landcare roles.



Stretch McArthur with East Gippsland Landcare Network staff at the 2005 Annual Report Bus Tour Luncheon.

Rural Press Landcare Primary Producer Award Port Phillip & Westernport Sustainable Farming Award

Winner: Bob and Anne Davie

Bob and Anne Davie started out as dairyfarmers in 1954 with an original plot of 120 acres at Ventnor on Phillip Island. After demand for milk fluctuated during the 1967-68 drought, they decided to move into beef farming and purchased three more 80-acre lots.

It was during the 1970s that the Davies first noticed the effects of salinity on the lower lying areas of the farm. The trend at the time was to treat it as a drainage problem and to mound the paddocks into

raised beds. Anne says the turning point came when they realised that salinity was a challenge not a problem.

"We decided that we had to learn to work with it, instead of against it," Anne said.

Working with it has meant organic fertiliser application, extensive pasture selection, treeplanting, reduced paddock sizes and controlled grazing.

When the Phillip Island Landcare Group was formed in 1988 Bob and Anne were

keen to get involved. Group incentives for fencing and tree planting have helped them to accelerate their revegetation program on the farm. Each year they aim to plant 2000 plants on the property with the aim of reducing salinity and helping to lower the watertable. In total more than 26,000 indigenous plants have been established on the property.

The Davies have worked to establish important wildlife corridors on the property and a section of the Saltwater Creek has been fenced and revegetated.

Anne Davie inspects the healthy clover.





Bob and Anne Davie on their property at Phillip Island.

In 1987 the Davies purchased another property called McHaffies on which they have fenced and protected a large section of remnant coastal scrub. A lagoon on McHaffies is home to a number of species of rare and endangered migratory birds.

As well as a great deal of action on the ground Bob and Anne work hard on the planning and strategic aspects of their farming business. After many years spent on property planning and herd improvement through a Brangus Group Breed plan they have been accepted as enviromeat suppliers. This involves them in meeting rigorous standards for the quality, operating procedures and sustainability of their produce.

Bob and Anne also work tirelessly for sustainability within the catchment. They have both been heavily involved

in the local Landcare group. Anne sits on the steering committee of the Bass Coast Landcare Network and Gippslandcare and is on the implementation committee of the West Gippsland CMA. Her most recent project is helping to organise a

national indigenous land manager's conference.

Bob and Anne Davie are recognised throughout the district as being truly inspirational farmers.

Break of slope treeplanting helps to control salinity.



Bushcare Nature Conservation Award



Winner: Yarriambiack Vegetation Enhancement Project

The Yarriambiack Vegetation Enhancement Project (Yarri VEP) is revegetating gaps between islands of native vegetation and linking local bush land remnants into a web that stretches across the Wimmera Plains.

Started in 1998 by the Yarriambiack Landcare Network, the project will ultimately connect with other major statewide projects such as Project Hindmarsh, Project Platypus and the Buloke Biolink.

Lyle, Sienna and Caleb Hajek planting and watering at the Yarrilinks Community Planting Weekend.



Important areas of native vegetation are also being managed to encourage growth of rare and threatened species. These areas are fenced off from stock to allow regeneration at ground level. In only a couple of years, locals have seen amazing increases in both the number and variety of plants.

Areas planted in the past six years are now providing seed stocks for new sites and the network has found direct seeding to be the most efficient way to revegetate.

Landowners are getting a real sense of satisfaction from watching their future windbreaks and soil stabilisers grow.

All the seeds used in planting are collected locally, either by contractors or the farmer on whose land the planting is taking place. This means that all the plants are endemic to the district and harvesting is not always from the same trees. A wattle seed inoculant, 'WattleGrow', has also been tested and will be assessed over the next couple of years.

Apat Akol from the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program in Melbourne works with Lizzie Bickmore from Greening Australia at the Yarrilinks Planting Weekend.



Akol Akol helps to plant and guard the seedlings.

If successful, it will reduce the amount of seed needed to plant out any one area.

Sites are identified through local advertising and contact between network members. So far, work has been done on more than 100 properties and the VEP has protected, enhanced, or revegetated more than 700 hectares (80% on private property).

Yarri VEP planting days are well known and draw volunteers from far and wide. The project has reached the stage where it is able to provide education and training opportunities, and volunteers include recently arrived immigrants who are completing adult education courses.

The local community has embraced the Yarriambiack Vegetation Enhancement Project, and this support has ensured its success. The Landcare Network has worked with Greening Australia and the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority on the project.

Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award



Winner: East Gippsland Landcare Network

This innovative network of Landcare Groups in East Gippsland was formed in 1996 to provide support for groups tackling important land and water management issues from the Perry River near Stratford in the west, to the New South Wales border in the east.

The network has grown from its initial membership of 14 groups with one co-ordinator, to supporting 20 groups and employing four full-time staff. Over 500 Landcare families are now involved in the activities of the network which covers nearly 180,000 hectares of East Gippsland.

The network's major role has been to develop and co-ordinate Landcare programs and to get them taken up by as many groups and families as possible. Two programs where the network has achieved considerable success are the Red Gum Plains Recovery Project and the African Lovegrass Control Program.

The Red Gum Plains landscape has seen major environmental change after the network secured NHT funding and went on to plant 457,000 seedlings, install in

excess of 200 kilometres of protective fencing, and protect 1287 hectares of vegetation.

The network took the lead with the African Lovegrass Control Program by commissioning a control strategy for this threatening Regionally Prohibited Weed. The strategy set high targets – a 75% reduction of the weed in the first five years and eradication by 2009. A recent independent evaluation of the network's activities shows that an 80% reduction of the weed has already occurred.

The network also co-ordinates a Beyond 2000 Plan for the next decade of Landcare, Landcare Group Action Plans for each of the 20 groups, a Landcare group aerial photography project, a Biodiversity Action Plan, a tunnel erosion project, a Bridal Creeper Management Plan and a Serrated Tussock Control Program.

The network communicates its activities with reports and newsletters and holds regular meetings, field days and workshops to seek advice from stakeholders and to encourage those not involved to participate in this very successful project.

Local primary schoolchildren work on a Bridal Creeper control project.



Top: Kylie Cirack representing Alcoa with Tracey McRae and Natalie Wells from the East Gippsland Landcare Network, Minister Thwaites, Governor John Landy and Irene Medley from the East Gippsland Landcare Network.

Middle: Landholders exchange information at a revegetation field day.

Bottom: Irene Meadley with Rosalie and Dennis Stringer promoting the dung beetle project, 'Retaining Nutrients Naturally.'

The network's secretary, Geraldine Atkins, says it has been inspiring to see local people become passionate about caring for the land.

"This area, especially on the Gippsland Plains, was terribly bare and denuded. Now thanks to the groups involved in the network, we can really see some bush again. Such an obvious visual change inspires people to get active and do more."

Geraldine also credited the fantastic staff that has been employed by the network.

"Coral Love started off here and gave us a tremendous boost. We have been very fortunate with our hardworking and dedicated staff," Geraldine said.

Westpac Landcare Education Award



Winner: *Whitfield District Primary School*

Rehabilitating Jessie's Creek, which runs through the town of Whitfield, is the goal of Whitfield District Primary School students.

After many years of neglect the creek that abounds the school grounds had become seriously degraded and infested with weeds.

The restoration initiative, started in 2002, has already achieved remarkable improvements. The project has become a vehicle for developing curriculum programs that fully integrate eight key learning areas for students.

The first step taken by the school was to analyse the environmental values and the damage to the ecosystem. Students identified the native plants and the weeds and then started on the hard work. However, it soon became apparent that the task was enormous. They realised that the whole community needed to get onboard and extra assistance was needed.

The North East Catchment Management Authority made a comprehensive assessment of the problems and the work required and offered support. Australian Geographic provided a grant. The Rural City of Wangaratta got involved and the King Basin Landcare Group applied for an NHT grant for the restoration work. (Others involved include VicRoads, Green Corps and the Typo Station Youth Opportunity Program.)

Whitfield Primary School continues to be actively involved in the project in partnership with the other supporting organisations. The Governor of Victoria, John Landy, visited in 2003 and was

impressed by an informative presentation given by the students.

The project has generated very strong community interest and participation and students have benefited in many ways from hands-on environmental work through to improved public speaking and written communication skills.

Jessie's Creek is now in much better condition and Whitfield Primary School



The children of Whitfield District Primary School join with community members on the first planting day.

has been the driving force behind its improvement. Students have an enormous sense of pride and ownership of the project and the environment of their backyard.

Whitfield District Primary School students Colin Griffin and Cecelia Tyler (kneeling) planting out at Jessie's Creek.



Landcare Australia Local Government Landcare Community Partnerships Award



Winner: Melton Shire Council

The chief executive of Melton Shire Council starts each day with a walk through remnant native grassland. This is a clue to the genuine interest and practical action that is the foundation of the council's environmental programs. This dedication flows from the council out into the community and into its links with other government agencies and environmental organisations.

The council hires skilled staff with postgraduate degrees in ecology, conservation planning and land rehabilitation, as well as skilled contractors. Environmental education, land management, stormwater awareness and conservation planning officers work with the council's communication officer to get Landcare messages out to the community.

Melton Shire is a growing municipality of more than 76,000 people. Lying just 35 minutes to the west of Melbourne it has an urban/rural mix and a wide range of environmental issues to deal with.

The council actively encourages community involvement in its environmental projects. It helps with the creation of community groups and organises education days, tree-planting, water quality testing, tours, workshops and information displays. Melton Shire Council, in co-operation with Hume City Council, is running three land management training courses free of charge during 2005. The first one was booked out.

Launched in 2002, the Melton Landcare and Environment Group network was set up to improve the flow of information



Rene Clark and Tony Herwerth amongst ancient river red gums along Ryans Creek at Melton.

between council and other groups with similar environmental goals. A land management officer visits each of the 1250 rural properties in the shire at least once a year, and information is provided on bulletin boards in general stores and through direct mailing.

Melton Shire Council's willingness to enter into partnerships with a myriad of organisations has increased the effectiveness of its own efforts.

The council has developed a special relationship with the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management

Authority through its involvement in the Grow West project and the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Program. It has co-operated with neighbouring councils to lobby for a national park for the Pyrete Forest. It has worked with the EPA to develop a stormwater management plan and works to educate businesses, industries and residents in the municipality about stormwater issues.

Through its inclusive and co-operative program, the council has made the shire's natural environment a whole-of-community concern.

Alcan Landcare Indigenous Community Award

Winner: *Bangerang Community*

The Bangerang Community is actively involved in implementing the Warby Range Landcare program, working alongside the Landcare group.

The Bangerang Community is the traditional custodian of areas that include the Lower Fifteen Mile Creek, Lower Ovens River, Upper Boosey, and Mokoan catchments – all part of the Warby Range Landcare program and membership area.

Members of the Bangerang Community work with non-indigenous members of the Warby Range Landcare Group and serve on management and advisory committees.

Elders from the Bangerang Community have worked closely with Landcare members to assess the value of proposed land and water improvement programs prior to project design and implementation. These programs include soil erosion reversal, revegetation, remnant protection, rabbit eradication, and weed control.

The Warby Range Landcare Group has benefited enormously from this support; helping to identify heritage assets, respect cultural values, and better understand biodiversity processes.

Children get ready to dance at a training day.



Members of the Bangerang Community share their knowledge with local schoolchildren.

Moreover, the group has seen how these things benefit human habitation and complement the technical expertise available to the Landcare group.

The Landcare group has turned its focus to the importance of the relationship between humans and their environment, and the huge store of knowledge accumulated by the indigenous community over tens of thousands of years.

Bangerang Community elders have volunteered to share their knowledge with not only Landcare group members but also with local schoolchildren. They have explained and demonstrated how a wide variety of local fauna and flora has been used as food, shelter and medicine for millennia, and how closely observing flora and fauna can indicate impending weather and climate change.

The relationship developed between the Landcare group and the Bangerang Community has made a huge contribution to the wider community's understanding of the importance of respecting and protecting water, the land, and flora and fauna, as well as the need to provide local children with a legacy of skills and knowledge to inherit.

The Bangerang Community's efforts have also greatly contributed to social harmony in the area. The dialogue created has increased awareness of indigenous history and culture, and helped to develop mutual respect for the needs of both current landholders, particularly farmers, and the Bangerang people.

It is a true community collaboration.

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award

Winner: *Dr Stuart Boucher*

Tunnel erosion is an insidious form of erosion that remains invisible until huge damage has already been done. In the past, the tunnels have made areas unsafe for farm machinery and stock have been killed when the soil surface has collapsed. The ultimate result of these collapses is gullying, which often leaves areas unusable for agriculture.

Stuart Boucher, a geomorphologist with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, has studied the relationship between soil types and water movements, and developed a program for restoring land showing signs of tunnel erosion.

Previously, methods used to recover land susceptible to tunnel erosion have been expensive and therefore often not carried

out thoroughly, allowing problems to recur. Stuart's aim was for land to be recovered and productive again much more quickly and at significantly less cost.

Stuart chose the area around Costerfield in central Victoria, which was extensively cleared in the 1880s and where tunnel erosion is common, for the field study.

To make the process financially viable, vegetation had to grow back quickly to make sheep grazing feasible as soon as possible. Trees were planted at the crest of the hill and the soil was treated extensively to get rid of tunnelling and to restore fertility.

The land was returned to production in the second year of the program and



Stuart Boucher in a collapsed tunnel near Costerfield.

showed much greater fertility levels than before the program started. It was anticipated that it would take about ten years for the cost of rehabilitation to be returned by increased productivity so the field trial succeeded well beyond expectation. Simultaneously, water and topsoil losses on the land have been reduced to a bare minimum.

It is hoped that the new techniques Stuart Boucher has developed will prove to be very successful in repairing what has been a very serious land degradation problem.

Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship

Winner: *Don McKenzie*

It was a photograph of Don McKenzie and his daughter on the farm that changed Don's attitudes and his farming practices. He looked at the photo and realised that there was not a tree to be seen in the background.

"With the bare, sandy soil we could have been standing in the desert it was that barren," Don says.

In just seven years Don has planted 100,000 trees on his farm at Jeparit in the northern Wimmera (covering 15% of the total property). Every paddock is surrounded by 20-metre wide shelterbelts and hillsides have been protected with saltbush and wattles. In an area where

wide treeless paddocks have been the norm, his farm is a green oasis.

Don's energy and generosity are not reserved for his own patch of land. He is more than happy to share his experiences and views with others. He is a member of numerous community groups from the Biological Farmers Association to the Cemetery Trust.

Don was a founding member of the Eastern Hindmarsh Landcare Group. He helped to establish the Hindmarsh Landcare Network in 1997 and has served on the executive committee ever since.

His passion for sustainable agriculture and salinity control saw him assist with the



Don McKenzie (third from left) receives the Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship from (left to right) Minister Thwaites, Sandra Mitchell, Governor John Landy and VFF President Simon Ramsay.

development of the Hindmarsh Salinity Control Program. This program is now considered one of the most successful partnerships within the Landcare Network.

Don wants to use his Fellowship to travel to Western Australia to network with Landcare groups there, to study the Western Australian experience of advanced salinity, and to investigate broadacre organic farming systems.

Murray Darling Basin Commission Rivercare Award



Winner: Peter Ebner

An irrigator of some 20 years in Irymple, near Mildura, Peter Ebner and his wife Luise grow Shiraz grapes for the production of wine under drip irrigation.

Peter works in the Sunraysia water industry and currently manages Lower Murray Water's wastewater treatment and reuse activities. But it was his innovative idea to encourage Mallee Catchment

Region irrigators to donate water to stressed and dying river redgums that really caught the eye of the judges for this category.

Typically, any unused water can be transferred into the trade pool at the end of the financial year. But under Peter Ebner's direction this year irrigators were able to donate water to be used

locally to help save river red gums dying from a lack of flooding caused by recent drought conditions.

The scheme began in June and the change in the trees has already been dramatic.

Peter is passionate about the health of the Murray River. He is a member of the Mallee Catchment Management Authority's community-based Irrigation and Environment Implementation Committee and had a key role in developing the Mallee Salinity and Water Quality Plan.

Peter has a 30-megalitre water entitlement for his own property. By converting from furrow to drip irrigation he has reduced his long-term usage by 45% allowing him to trade with other irrigators. This season he has also been able to use some of these savings to benefit a 20-acre bushland reserve adjoining the farm. Along with neighbours and Parks Victoria, Peter and Luise cleaned up their property boundaries, fenced off the area and planted 1500 native plants.

Peter is delighted that the water donation project got off the ground.

"I am very concerned at the potential effects of the river salt loads on my own property and I think all irrigators appreciate how vital it is to maintain riverine ecosystems so they can provide the high water quality we need to grow our crops.

"Irrigators have really jumped at the chance to do something that not only helps the environment, but supports their communities that depend on a healthy river," he said.

Peter Ebner at Johnston's Bend, on the Murray River, near Mildura, one of the sites that received red gum watering as part of the irrigation water donation pilot project.



Australian Government Landcare Regional Award



Winner: Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority

How do you manage an area that contains 3 million people, \$1 billion worth of agricultural production, seven bioregions, two bays, and more than 500 community groups caring for their patch of land? The Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) has one of the most complex statutory agency jobs in Victoria and it has shown how a holistic, inclusive strategy can work.

With only 16 staff and limited funding, the PPWCMA has focused its energy on engaging with community groups to set strategies for catchment management. It has built partnerships with active organisations such as local government, Landcare groups, and State government departments, and helped to co-ordinate their efforts. The PPWCMA has also done its best to advocate on behalf of the catchment and to report on its condition.

At least 196 organisations helped create the 2004-2009 Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). This practical consultation process has brought the government, water authorities,

The launch of the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Catchment Strategy at Federation Square came at the end of a comprehensive consultation process.



Greg Milne, Yarra Landcare Co-ordinator with the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, facilitates strategic planning for members of the Nillumbik Landcare Network.

environmental organisations and industry groups of the area together. The RCS supports groups caring for the land, initiates large-scale landscape change projects, organises forums for interested groups, and involves indigenous groups in environmental projects in the region.

The keystone of the RCS is the Landcare Support Strategy (LSS), which was built from a survey of the needs of all known Landcare groups in the area. The LSS is designed to help all of the 'community Landcare' groups in the region, whether they are proper Landcare or one of hundreds of other local organisations.

The LSS is designed to develop support networks between Landcare and

community and environment groups in the region. It provides information, links to resources, and promotes their achievements. The intention is for groups to be able to access more finances for their work, to increase the number of people involved and the effectiveness of their involvement, and to help the groups get better results for the environment.

Through these strategies, the PPWCMA has successfully increased the capacity for community environment groups to do the work they were created to do. There are now more Landcare groups, more members, and groups consider themselves to be 'healthier' than they did four years ago.

North Central Sustainable Farming Award



Winner: David and Jacinta Jolly

David and Jacinta Jolly have farmed Clover Park since 1977 when they purchased the property from David's uncle. They've since added to the original 134 hectares and now farm 795 hectares in the Lexton district.

For nearly 30 years, David and Jacinta have worked to stabilise the landscape, improve productivity and protect the natural assets of the property. Soil conservation and water quality have been their main focus.

They have successfully increased productivity with 70% of the property's mid slopes and alluvial flats now in perennial pasture as well as 20% of the hill country. The stocking rate and wool cut per hectare have both been significantly increased.

David is committed to rabbit control work and is a champion in the Lexton Landcare

Group for ridding the district of rabbits.

In their hill country, 81 hectares have been fenced out and allowed to regenerate naturally. Of the remaining 243 hectares, 174 hectares are still in native pasture and are managed accordingly. Elsewhere on the farm, two kilometres of stream sides, tree corridors and saline areas have been fenced and regenerated.

The Jollys run about 4000 sheep (2000 merino ewes and 2000 wethers for wool) on the farm and Charolais cattle, which although not a typical breed for the Lexton district, have proved to be successful for them.

David and Jacinta are members of the Lexton Best Wools Group and Clover Park is part of the south-west farm monitor project and has achieved excellent results in relation to other farms.



David Jolly in a paddock sown down with phalaris and clover in 2002.

There is little doubt that Clover Park is a model farm in the Lexton district.

East Gippsland Sustainable Farming Award



Winner: Allan, Helen and Andrew Sheridan

Allan, Helen and Andrew Sheridan bought Garoogong, a 650-hectare fine wool property at Bengworden, south-west of Bairnsdale in mid 2003 and immediately embarked on a large-scale farm planning and farm rehabilitation program.

Already they have made remarkable improvements. They have sown 30 kilometres of indigenous vegetation via direct seeding and hand-planted approximately 3000 seedlings.

Allan, Helen and Andrew Sheridan of Bengworden in front of a creek that they have fenced, revegetated and permanently protected through a Trust for Nature conservation covenant.

They have protected 24 hectares of remnant vegetation and 25 hectares of waterways by constructing more than 14 kilometres of fencing. Green Corps volunteers have been involved with many of these Landcare activities. Approximately 50 hectares of the farm has been permanently retired for conservation benefits and more land is planned.

The ultimate achievement has been the Sheridans' keen desire to place a farm covenant over the works they have done to ensure permanent protection.

Goulburn Broken Sustainable Farming Award

Winner: Allan and Sheila Stute

Neighbours recognise Allan and Sheila Stute's property as a stand-out farm in the Sunday Creek district.

The 140-hectare property in the hill country near Broadford is known for its



Allan and Sheila Stute have used cell grazing to increase the stocking rate on their property.

meticulous management and successful combining of environmental and progressive farming practices.

After completing a whole farm planning course in 1996, Allan and Sheila have over the past nine years taken 15% of the property out of long-term grazing and increased carrying capacity by 190%.

In 1999 they joined the Profit Grazing Program and started cell grazing by establishing 42 paddocks of approximately three hectares each, which has contributed to their dramatically improved stocking rate.

Allan and Sheila have fenced off 14 hectares of creek frontage and planted 5000 native trees and as a result have noticed a marked increase in bird numbers. Having fenced off the creek,

water for stock is supplied to troughs via a piped system fed by gravity and run on a solar pump. Electric fencing is used throughout the property which seems to keep fox problems to a minimum.

Ten years ago there were serious salt patches and salinity recharge areas appearing and spreading outwards. These have been rehabilitated through strategic tree plantings and planting of salt-tolerant tall wheat grass. A bare hillside has also been replanted with bushland and is now starting to thicken well.

Many of these activities and improvements are in accordance with local catchment plans and the Stute property is held up as a sound model from both an economic and a Landcare perspective.

Wimmera Sustainable Farming Award

Winner: Alan and Shelley Green

Alan and Shelley Green purchased their 480-hectare property at Great Western in 1984. The property was in very poor condition with vermin, salinity, erosion and no paddocks. With a stocking rate of 2.3 DSE per hectare it wasn't producing any income and both Alan and Shelley had to work off-farm.

The Greens got a taste for knowledge after completing a whole farm planning course and went on to complete the whole series of FarmSmart courses. They realised the need to diversify and by undertaking a business plan identified a niche market for free-range egg production.

They have worked hard to constantly

question, keep good records and learn from their mistakes. Owing to good management and a commitment to quality animal husbandry the business is now expanding.

Alan Green has been heavily involved in his Landcare group at Great Western. He is currently president of the group and co-ordinates local projects on salinity, rabbits and weeds as well as working with Project Platypus on revegetation issues in the Upper Wimmera Catchment.

Shelley also has many local community commitments. She is on the North West FarmSmart steering committee and is keenly involved in Farming Women Mean Business and Women on Farms.



Shelley Green keeps an eye on the soil.

West Gippsland Sustainable Farming Award

Winner: Rosemary and Fergus Irving

Fergus and Rosemary Irving operate a 1464-hectare merino wool farm at Woodside. The farm consists of 52 hectares of remnant vegetation, eight hectares of pine plantation, 91 hectares of wetlands and around 30 hectares of fenced out creek frontage and revegetation works.

The Irvings have been farming in the district all of their lives. They joined the Stradbroke/Woodside Farm Trees Group back in 1983 and are still active members of the Woodside Landcare Group. They enjoy the sense of community that involvement with Landcare creates and always take the opportunity to share their knowledge and learn from what others are doing.

The main environmental issues that have been addressed on the farm are exposure to gale force winds at certain times of the year, unstable sandy ridges, degraded watercourses, pest animals and the loss of vegetation.

The Irvings are local pioneers in the area of direct seeding. They started back in 1982 and have now completed 32 hectares, totalling 20 kilometres of fencing. Their other Landcare projects include shelterbelts, fencing out of unstable sand hills, fencing and revegetation of two creeks, rabbit harbour reduction and fox and rabbit baiting programs.

Rosemary and Fergus believe that the shelterbelts they have created have huge benefits for lambing ewes, protecting both mother and newborn. They say the environmental works they have done also create benefits for the farm. Streamside protection has improved water quality and reduced both dead and injured stock. Fencing out of remnant vegetation in swampy areas has improved stock



Fergus and Rosemary Irving enjoy some wind protection in one of their shelterbelts.

management as they no longer have problems with stock caught in boggy areas or in the creeks.

Rosemary said the environmental benefits are also clear.

“Fencing off the remnant vegetation and revegetating has improved the look of the property and seen a return of wildlife. We even have koalas on a regular basis now,” she said.



Some healthy revegetation on the Irving property at Woodside.

Glenelg-Hopkins Sustainable Farming Award

Winner: Gerard and Colleen Briody

Gerard and Colleen Briody's property, adjoining the Mount Emu Creek in the Lexton district, is low lying and subject to waterlogging and dryland salinity, but that hasn't stopped them from making progressive improvements to their farm every year.

The Briodys run a self-replacing flock of 2000 merinos which they join to Dorsets and Border Leisters for prime lambs. The property was originally 462 hectares but it is now 154 hectares as Gerard works full-time off-farm and Colleen cares for the couple's five children.

The Briody's work has focused on minimising and mitigating the effects of salinity, protecting water quality, and growing productive, sustainable grazing pastures.

For more than 30 years, Gerard has been tackling salinity control work on the farm and in 2005 the final one-third of the saline area will be reclaimed. Wheat grass has been the main control method after trialling numerous other options – redgum

clone trees, saltbush, South African pampas grass and salt tolerant couch grass. Despite various setbacks, Gerard has persevered and is now making good headway in reducing the scale of salinity on the farm.

All the main creek lines on the property are saline which, combined with dispersive clay soils, makes gully erosion an issue. Gerard and Colleen undertook their first major creek project in 1989, fencing out and regenerating an area as well as constructing a sandbag weir to contain water and reduce erosion. In 2001, the final section of the creek, a total of 1.8 kilometres, was fenced and regenerated.

Following a property management plan, many fences were replaced and are better sited according to the land class on the farm.

Gerard is diligent about rabbit control work by removing burrows, maintaining fencing and spotlight shooting – all paying off as there are now very few rabbits on the farm.

Gerard and Colleen are dedicated Landcare members and the Lexton Landcare Group has progressed significantly thanks to their participation.

Right: Erosion along a creek bed on the Briody property in 1990.

Below: The same creek bed ten years later.



Around the State

News from the Regional Landcare

Port Phillip and Westernport

Regional-scale Landcare support for 2005/06 will include updating and expanding the group development related note sheets of the Landcare Notes series, preparing for the 2006 PPW Regional Landcare Awards, and community Landcare celebration function, following on from the successful inaugural event in 2004.

The production of 'Environment Condition Reports' for Landcare groups will be accelerated. These reports are sets of A3 maps depicting a variety of state-held datasets (for example, aerial photography, satellite and relief imagery, native vegetation, threatened species, salinity priority areas, land use, pest plants and animals, and fire history).

Engagement of the Landcare community will be facilitated in the development and delivery of a small number of landscape-scale, integrated, place-based, multiple-outcome projects across the region

Work has also commenced on building stronger relationships with local indigenous communities. This will initially focus on clarifying the circumstances of local indigenous communities, to facilitate improved

liaison between funding applicants required to seek indigenous advice or approval for projects, and their local indigenous representatives.

For more information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

North East

The North East CMA has now employed six Landcare Co-ordinators across the region, as part of the restructure of Landcare Support. These co-ordinators are Stafford Crews and Felicity Collins in the Upper Murray, Geoff McKernan in the Mitta/Murray, Simon Feillafe in the Kiewa/Indigo, Jennie Hermiston and Klaus Boelke in the Ovens/King.

This has meant limited change for most areas with the same co-ordinators moving from network-based employment to CMA employment with community steering committees. Felicity has come from Goulburn Murray Landcare Network, and Klaus has come over from East Gippsland.

The Resource Guide for new landholders has been launched in the North East and is being distributed via CMA and Council offices. The kit, including website and printed kit, was developed by DPI Small

Farms and the CMA, and is aimed at the growing population of small and lifestyle landholders with little or no land management expertise. Regular updates are available at www.necma.vic.gov.au/resources/guide

The growing interest in Soil Health training and field days has seen many events held across the region, co-ordinated through the Ovens Landcare Network with NLP funding support.

For further information contact Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7600.

Corangamite

The vital role Landcare plays in protecting and restoring the Corangamite landscape was again evident in 2004/2005. More than 130 groups comprising 3000 active members were involved in protection and restoration works on public and private land as well as skills development programs and action plans.

The Corangamite Landcare Co-ordinators and Facilitators team continues to change with the resignation of Lisa Deppler and Mike Edwards at Southern Otways Landcare Network, Apollo Bay. Thanks to both Lisa and Mike for their tireless work over the years. We welcome Greg John and Lucas Oram as their replacements. Karen O'Keefe has also joined the Landcare fold with the Lismore Landcare Group due to a successful National Landcare Program funding application.

For more information contact Polly Hall on 5232 9100.

East Gippsland

The East Gippsland region has recently compiled a performance story illustrating the achievements of the East Gippsland Landcare program for the 2004-2005 term. The report card will be distributed to all

Up to 80 landholders from the North East braved wet conditions to learn about their soils.



Co-ordinators

Landcare members within the CMA region, additional by request.

A call for Expression of Interest for Landcare projects is currently underway across the region. Landcare groups and members are encouraged to participate to help inform the next round of funding submissions.

Landcare groups across the region are also advised that projects are being sought for the 2005-2006 round of Victorian Government's Second Generation Landcare Grants.

Significant events planned in the next few months include the East Gippsland Landcare Network end-of-year boat cruise on 9 December 2005.

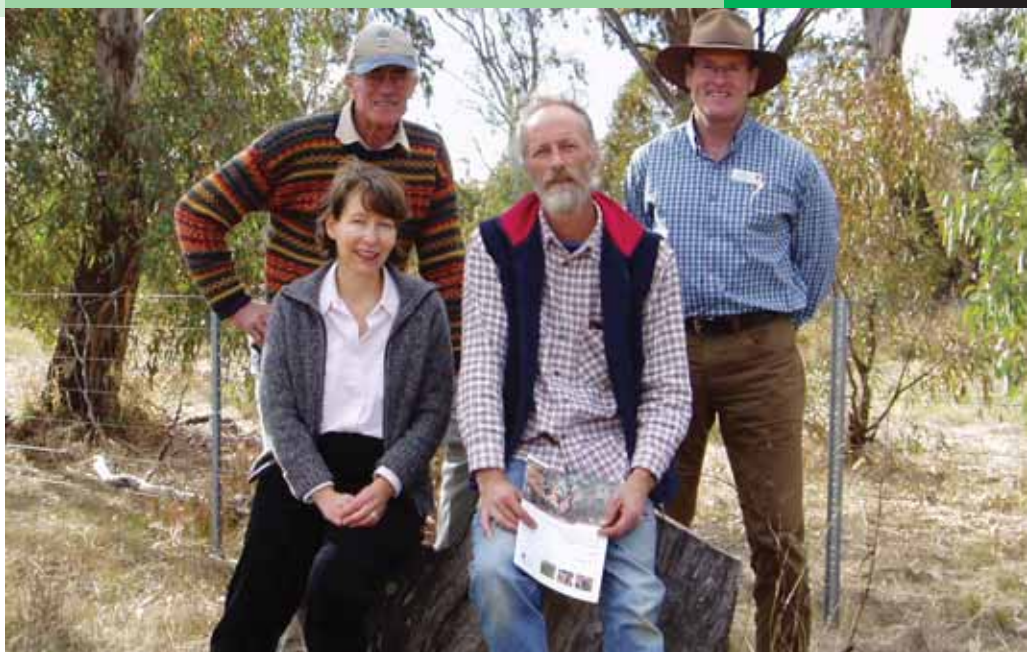
For further information contact Darren Williams on 5152 0600.

Wimmera

The Landcare team recently co-ordinated a three-day Landcare tour to Northern Victoria for Wimmera Landcare members. The tour looked at Landcare projects and activities undertaken by farmers and agencies around the Charlton, Pyramid Hill, Kerang, Swan Hill and Sea Lake area and was well received by the 42 now well travelled and informed Landcare members.

Our Landcare Support Strategy is almost complete with the draft for public comment available by the end of October. Landcare members and partner organisations are invited to provide constructive comment and suggestions for improvement.

The 2006 Wimmera Landcare week will be held from April 3-7. The week-long celebration will include tours, site visits, project and people achievements, Landcare group presentations and a dinner celebrating 20 years of Landcare.



(From back left) Collier MacCracken, Phil Stevenson, Ann Roberts and John Laing at the launch of the Goulburn Broken Community Landcare Support Strategy.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

North Central

The Victorian Landcare Network Forum was held in Hepburn Springs in October bringing together the Statewide Landcare community.

A project titled 'Entering the Hearts and Minds of Absentee Landholders in the Mt Alexander / Macedon Ranges Shires' recently commenced. The project is a partnership between local government and the North Central CMA. It aims to improve understanding of the changing demographics in this part of the region.

A local Land Management Guide will be launched in early 2006. This publication aims to improve the way small rural properties are managed by providing information about sustainable land management techniques.

Ben Kroker commenced in September as the Bendigo and District Landcare Co-ordinator at the City of Greater Bendigo, overseeing the North Central CMA local Landcare co-ordination project.

For more information contact Sandra Volk on 5448 7124.

Goulburn Broken

The Goulburn Broken Community Landcare Support Strategy was launched

in May 2005, at the covenanted bush block of local Landcare identities Collier and Jackie MacCracken, of Arcadia.

As part of its implementation, the 4th Biennial Goulburn Broken Regional Landcare Forum was held in July.

The Landcare Forum was also the swansong for Regional Landcare Co-ordinator Heather Holder. Katie Brown has now taken over the role.

For more information contact Katie Brown on 5797 2001.

Mallee

We are currently implementing the Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy with the intention to review it in early 2006.

The Landcare Network completed a three-day training session in August on Project Evaluation and Most Significant Change Techniques with new staff in the region. In the process we reviewed the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan from 2004 and are now in the process of updating the document.

For more information contact Brendon Thomas on 5051 4377.

Victoria's 10 Regional Landcare Co-ordinators are funded through Victoria's Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare, administered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

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Option 8: 3,000 + sets	27¢	29.7¢

Guards: 300mm height, 95mm x 95mm square, with stake perforations. Pack of 500 Milk Carton Tree Guards, approx 20kg per box.

Stakes: 600mm long x 8-10mm diameter. Bales of 1000 stakes, approx 24kg per bale

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