

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Spring 07 Issue 41

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



Victorian Landcare Awards

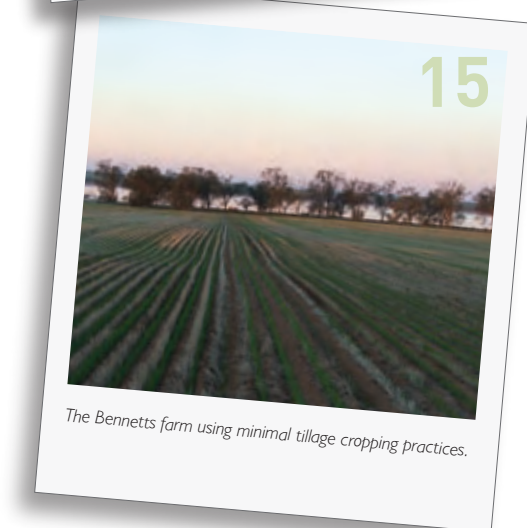
FEATURE ISSUE



The Murrayville Women's Topcrop group get together for a machinery safety day in 2004.



Jennie Carruthers, a DPI scientist, explains biological control to local students working on bridal creeper.



The Bennetts farm using minimal tillage cropping practices.

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From the editor

Victorian Landcare Awards

We hope you enjoy our special Victorian Landcare Awards issue. It is full of the remarkable stories of our award winners and provides a fascinating snapshot of best practice Landcare across the State.

The car park at Government House was full of utes on August the 28th when the country came to the city to celebrate grass-roots Landcare.

Environment Minister Gavin Jennings joined the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, A.C., in recognising the extraordinary efforts of Victorian Landcare volunteers at the special awards ceremony in the ballroom of Government House. Professor de Kretser is also the Patron-in-chief of Landcare in Victoria.

Mr Jennings commended the range of individuals, groups and businesses that contribute to the Landcare movement in Victoria.

"From humble beginnings in Victoria more than two decades ago, Landcare has grown into an international, community-based movement with thousands of groups carrying out valuable environmental repair projects around the world," Mr Jennings said.

Mr Jennings said he was proud of the Victorian Government's long history of direct support for Landcare projects.

"Over the past five years the Victorian Government has contributed more than \$27 million to Landcare programs in Victoria. In 2007-08 alone, the Victorian Government is providing close to \$10 million for Landcare."

Mr Jennings said the Victorian Government's financial support is more than matched by the



(L-R, back) Rohan Elliott of Westpac, Peter Harris, Secretary of DSE, and the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, A.C., with Thomas Brian, Lauren McGarvie, Alex Gordon and Emma Drake (front), representing Camperdown College Environment Group, winner of the Westpac Landcare Education Award.

efforts of committed volunteers supporting the Landcare movement for more than 20 years.

"Without these volunteers, there would be no Landcare," he said.

This year's winners include educational institutions, local government, nature and conservation groups, CMAs, indigenous groups, as well as individual landcarers and community groups.

DSE funded and co-ordinated the 2007 event in conjunction with Landcare Australia Limited. The Victorian winners will represent the State in the national categories to be announced in Canberra in August 2008.

Erratum

Katrin Prager would like to make a correction to her article in the last issue comparing German and Australian Landcare. On page 17 the third paragraph should read: "There is less of an emphasis on local networking



Waiting with bated breath: guests at the Victorian Landcare Awards.



(L-R) Stefano Bertolli of Alcan, Peter Harris, Secretary of DSE, and the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, A.C., with Gratten Mullett and Robert Andy, de Kretser, A.C., with Gratten Mullett and Robert Andy, representing the Gippsland-East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative, winner of the Alcan Landcare Indigenous Award.

of groups in Tasmania," rather than saying that there are no strong networks.

TreeProject

TreeProject will have seedlings available for collection in October. The work of many volunteers allows TreeProject to subsidise the cost of seedling propagation and pass these savings on to landholders. The seedlings cost \$125 for a minimum order of 500.

Contact TreeProject on 9650 9477 or by email to info@treeproject.asn.au for further information.

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on soil health. Contributions should be sent to the editor by Friday 14 December 2007.

Victorian Landcare by email?

Would you like to read the Victorian Landcare magazine online?

To be added to the email list for future issues of the magazine send an email to landcare.magazine@dse.vic.gov.au.

Carrie Tiffany



(L-R) Pam Robinson, representing the Australian Government, Peter Harris, Secretary of DSE, and the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, A.C., with Lyn Coulston, winner of the National Landcare Programme Individual Landcarer Award.



Lyn Coulston helps her grandson Harry Mouat on National Tree Day 2007.

“
Lyn doesn't shy away from leadership roles, but she is very much a hands-on person. She understands that if people see and feel the outcomes of what they are doing they are more likely to be committed.”



Local fauna collected during a pitfall trapping program were brought to the Murrayville Community College to show local students.

“
While planning is important, the group is also intensely practical and has made some real inroads in changing local farming practices.”

Individual Landcare Award

Winner: Lyn Coulston

Lyn Coulston dates her interest in natural resource management to her daughter's time in primary school. Since then she's been one of the mainstays of Landcare in the Upper Murray, docking up over 23 years of involvement in projects for the benefit of the environment and the community.

Lyn credits her strong connection to the natural environment to growing up on the coast of NSW and spending a lot of time in the bush.

“I have a passionate interest in understanding and living in harmony with nature as there is an interdependency which we can't ignore. My hobby and then my business came from an interest in Australian plants, seed collection and propagation to see what I could grow. I have been involved with Landcare since its inception and with a Farm Tree Group prior to that.”

Lyn was a founding member of the Upper Murray Catchment Farm Tree Group in the days before Landcare. Since Landcare she has been involved with the Tintalra, Cudgewa, Nariel-Thougla and Koetong groups.

Locals say it is difficult to identify a project or initiative that Lyn isn't involved with. Her interests extend to Chemical User Training, GPS training, the CMA, drought recovery, local government, sustainable forestry, junior Landcare, pest plants and animals, corridors of green and nature conservation.

Lyn is deeply interested in helping land managers confront the day-to-day challenges that meet them in trying to manage their properties with the future in mind. She is a trusted source of local advice and information.

Lyn doesn't shy away from leadership roles, but she is very much a hands-on person. She understands that if people see and feel the outcomes of what they are doing they are more likely to be committed.

When students at Tallangatta Primary School were studying trees in their ecosystems they were donated plants from Lyn Coulston's native nursery at Shelley that they took home to their parents to plant and nurture. But Lyn says Landcare isn't just about planting trees.

“Trees are just one aspect. Landcare is about the people who are in charge of the environmental assets which contribute to the quality of life for everyone.

“Many of the local projects I have been involved with over the years have focused on finding out what works locally, capacity building, managing change, trials and demonstrations. These are the things, along with financial incentive schemes, that enable people to make better decisions which ultimately lead to environmental benefits.”



Australian Government

Lyn has taken on many leadership roles in Landcare. She always fulfils her duties with enthusiasm and generosity. She's great at getting media attention for local causes with her many contacts at local newspapers and radio stations.

In 2005 Lynn was appointed chairperson of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce. This came out of her work with the North East Blackberry Action Group – Upper Murray which was so innovative in its community weed action approach it was used as a model for the rest of the State.



Lyn Coulston has clocked up over 23 years of involvement in projects for the benefit of the environment and the community in the Upper Murray.

Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award



Winner: Murrayville Landcare Group

The Murrayville Landcare Group spans around 220,000 hectares of land in the central west of the Mallee region and shares its western boundary with the South Australian border. The group was formed in 1993 due to the declining numbers of local advisory staff and the attitude of 'doing it for ourselves' has held the 160 members in good stead.

The major land use in the area is dryland agriculture made up of cereals, legumes, oilseeds, prime lambs, wool, cattle, goats and pigs. Some irrigated horticulture produces potatoes, carrots, onions and olives.

The group has had a strong focus on pest plant and animal control. Many ongoing programs and incentives date back to 1994. They have run poison oat/carrot and ripping campaigns for rabbits, rabbit calici virus monitoring, chemical rebates for private control, funding for contract sprayers and the release of biological control agents for bridal creeper.

More recently all of the group's activities have been documented and recorded in a local area action plan. The plan's aim is to identify the key concerns within the group and come up with the best ways of tackling them. The plan identified pest plants on roadsides, native vegetation protection and enhancement, flora and fauna protection, pest animal control and group co-ordination as the priority issues. At a recent

plan up-date session biodiversity, land and water salinisation and wind erosion came to the fore.

While planning is important, the group is also intensely practical and has made some real inroads in changing local farming practices. The group's numerous field days, information sessions and support programs have led to a shift from conventional farming to minimum or no-till farming. This change has produced good results in reducing soil erosion and improving soil health.

The group's work on roadside revegetation shows its commitment to the region. In 2002 the group planted 62,500 trees and direct seeded an area of 167 hectares along roadsides linking the Murray Sunset and Big Desert National Parks. Many of these large-scale projects come out of partnerships with other groups and agencies. The group works actively with the local CMA, DPI, DSE, the Murrayville Lions Club, Friends of the Environment, Parks Victoria and other local Landcare groups.

A recent project involves working with the Murrayville Community College on the construction of an artificial wetland to utilise stormwater runoff and as a demonstration site for environmental education programs.

Water and the drought are huge issues for the group. The Landcare group has been pivotal in the formation of the Murrayville Groundwater Supply Protection Area and was the driving



The group is committed to recreating wildlife links with roadside vegetation. This Danyo North Road corridor is one of many.

force behind the declaration of the area for exceptional circumstances.

The group acknowledges that in these difficult times it has an important social function. A quarterly newsletter keeps members up to date with all of the local news and advertises the myriad of group events on topics as wide ranging as computer skills, grain marketing, farm safety, men's health, whole farm planning, farm chemical users' courses, boomspray workshops and ecology information sessions.

Australian Government Landcare Regional Award

**Winner: West Gippsland
Catchment Management
Authority**



Landcare has a long and proud tradition across the West Gippsland region and the West Gippsland CMA is quick to recognise that it began well before the CMAs were created. But since that time the CMA has been groundbreaking in its approach to local Landcare. The relationship is, at heart, a partnership.

The CMA is committed to giving community Landcare a voice and ownership of local projects while delivering on large-scale natural resource management outcomes.

There are four Landcare networks in the region and 74 Landcare groups.

The foundation of the CMA's relationship to Landcare is by recognising it in the Regional Catchment Strategy. The strategy acknowledges that Landcare is the key driver for natural resource management in the region.

This quote from the Regional Catchment Strategy shows the central role of Landcare

in the region: "Landcare in West Gippsland is about the land and the people who are its custodians. Landcare support is how community, government and industry work together to achieve a sustainable and healthy landscape for future generations."

The CMA employs eight Landcare co-ordinators and facilitators. They have stability of employment through the CMA but are attached to groups under an innovative memorandum of understanding.

The co-ordinators and facilitators play a key role in capacity building. Their work is guided by the following principles:

- People need to be able to participate in the process
- Communities need to learn about the issues
- Communities need to be able to understand how processes deliver outcomes

- Communities need to recognise how to influence desirable outcomes.

The co-ordinators and facilitators provide individuals and communities with information, access to technical advice, the ability to resolve conflict, access to resources, the ability to plan and prioritise and the motivation and confidence to achieve goals.

Communication is also crucial. The annual Landcare review gives grass-roots Landcare an opportunity to say how they think things are going in the region and the Landcare Report Card provides a succinct visual indication of progress.

The West Gippsland CMA is an organisation with a truly integrated approach to Landcare. Support and advocacy for Landcare is built into every facet of its operation.



The Yarram Yarram Landcare Network Board. From left, Virginia Koetsveld, Ross Lampre, Ken Tattersson, Paul Martin, Leon Trembath, Cathy Trembath and Bob Wenger.



Landcare co-ordinators and facilitators share stories in Yarram. From left, Mark Jago, Carol Bradshaw, Tony Gardner, Jenny Wolswinkel, Louise McCallum, Anthony Stevens, Wendy Hayne, Paul Martin, Bridgette McCallum and Jackie Waring

Westpac Landcare Education Award

Winner: Camperdown College Environment Group



Camperdown College is a small school in south-west Victoria with 450 students from preparatory to year 12. The College Environment Group was established in 2002 and has around 20 volunteer secondary student members every year.

The group had its beginnings through the school's nursery where students have propagated 24,000 indigenous plants for restoration projects on the local Mount Leura and Mount Sugarloaf Reserves.

In 2005, a small group of students at the school hosted Australia's first student wetlands conference. Over 150 students from 26 schools learnt about the importance of wetlands through workshops and hands-on activities, and used this new knowledge to make recommendations for the future health of Australia's wetlands.

It was through the great success of this conference and the growing success of the nursery that the environment group was born.

The group addresses environmental issues locally, nationally and internationally. The school-based reduce, reuse and recycle program demonstrates waste minimisation and encourages wide adoption of this practice in the community.

On a national scale the group has worked with the Australian Koala Foundation to revegetate Framlingham Forest and control weeds and protect koala habitat near Brisbane in Queensland. In Western Australia they have worked on weeding, upgrading facilities and surveying mallee fowl at Charles Darwin Reserve. And on an international scale they have worked with environmental organisations around Wellington in New Zealand.

The group works to help others to learn about Landcare. They organised an Environment Expo where various NRM organisations, including Landcare groups, Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Corangamite Shire set up environmental displays and activities for community members to learn about the environment.

They provide indigenous trees and certificates to the parents of local newborn babies to encourage people to protect the environment for future generations. And an international aid project provides clothes and pens for Nepalese children who cleaned up litter in their local villages.

Strong partnerships have been established with local government, Landcare, committees of management, other local community groups, CMAs, State Government, non-government



A clean-up day at Lake Bullen.



By stencilling stormwater drains students can alert the community to water quality issues.

organisations, industry and various other organisations that use the Landcare ethic.

By organising activities and events within a team environment and with limited timeframes, budgets and resources, the Environment Group provides students with many personal development opportunities. The projects help to develop confidence, leadership, teamwork and project management skills. Many students have used these skills and Landcare principles to become actively involved in other community ventures.

Through such activities students not only learn new skills and obtain new ideas and knowledge, but they also get the opportunity to apply these

skills, ideas, and knowledge through practical on-ground activities that contribute valuably to community environmental projects. Teachers and students alike say the work of the group is challenging and a whole lot of fun.

Camperdown College Environment Group students worked with Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Co-operative and Parks Victoria to plan and develop a Koori-bush tucker garden at the school to educate students and the community about the local plants used by the indigenous people as food sources.

Student views

"I joined the environment group because I cared about the environment and I wanted to see what the group did and how I could make a difference. I enjoy working in the field and organising activities. I love travel and meeting new people and being a member of the group allows me to do this. I have learnt so many different things from my activities in the group and learnt about many different aspects of the world that I might not have if I wasn't involved."

Emma Drake – Year 10

I love my work in the environment group. I love travelling, learning new things and meeting amazing people. I've learnt so much through my environment work, and it is very rewarding to see that the work that we do really does

help the environment. The people we meet are an inspiration and it is great fun."

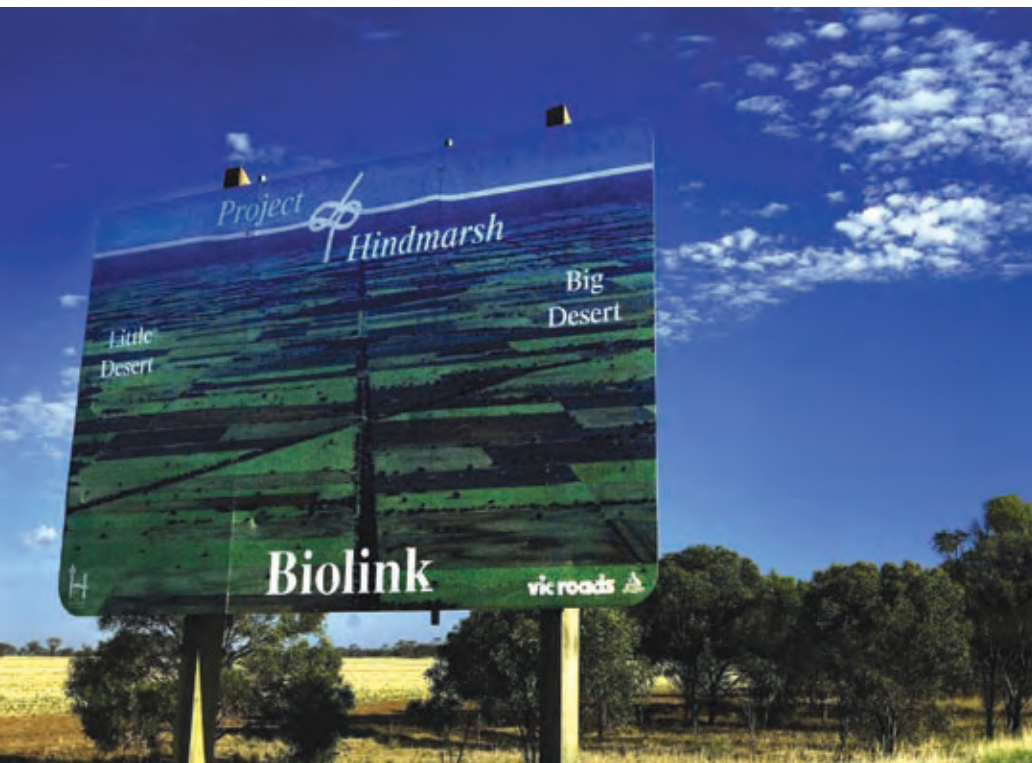
Alex Gordon – Year 10

"The environment group...has broadened my view on the native animals, environment, and the issues with global warming. It has been a thoroughly enriching experience."

Tegan McKenzie – Year 10

"I love to help plant trees and help injured animals. I also like meeting and getting to know new people. Also being in the environment group I have found a great fascination in the environment. The environment group is so cool."

Kirsty Delwig – Year 7



The Hindmarsh Biolink, 2000 kilometres of vegetation between the Big and Little Deserts, is commemorated on this roadside sign.

“We have Melbourne lawyers and doctors and accountants out working alongside farmers. The feeling on the ground is just great. This project isn’t just about creating links in the landscape. It is also about creating links between people.”



The scale of works along the creek is impressive.

“The group recognises the importance of the creek being visible to the community. They feel that if people enjoy being in the creek environment they are more likely to feel protective of it in the long-term.”

Landcare Australia Nature Conservation Award



Winner: Hindmarsh Landcare Network

Project Hindmarsh is a grand scale biodiversity project. The project was established by the Hindmarsh Landcare Network in 1997 and has achieved outstanding results.

Extensive mapping in the area in the early 1990s identified that roadside vegetation on the main linking roads between the Big and Little Deserts and from the Wimmera River to the South Australian border had so many gaps they were practically ineffective for providing habitat and migration.

The West Wimmera Tree Group developed a plan that with their volunteers they could plant four kilometres of trees a year and complete the links within 25 years. Fortunately at this time the Hindmarsh Landcare Network was formed. With federal funding and private sponsorship the main links were completed in four years and a bigger, more ambitious plan was put into place.

Due to extensive land clearing only 3% of native vegetation between the Big and Little Deserts remains. This makes all of the remnant vegetation very precious and highlights the importance of linking it together.

Project Hindmarsh has now linked the Big and Little Deserts with over 200 kilometres of high quality roadside vegetation. The Deserts

are now also linked with other larger areas of vegetation such as the Glenelg Flora and Fauna Reserve and the Lake Hindmarsh Reserve.

As well as creating a link of new vegetation the project has also protected and enhanced over 2000 hectares of crucial remnant vegetation. Over 500 hectares of this vegetation has been established from locally collected seed sourced from the network’s high quality seed bank.

The project has protected two endangered acacia species and provided habitat for the endangered bush stone-curlew.

It is difficult to imagine how the scale of these works could be achieved in such a sparsely populated area. The key for Project Hindmarsh has been the Annual Hindmarsh Landcare Planting Weekend where over 3000 volunteers have donated their time to plant trees and to gain an understanding of how farmers work with the environment. Many of the volunteers are recruited from Melbourne and this is often the first contact they have had with farmers.

Mayor of Hindmarsh Darryl Argall has been involved with the project from its inception. He remembers the very first meeting where seven farmers put up their hands and agreed to get involved.



The final tree in the Hindmarsh Biolink. It took Project Hindmarsh four years to fill 100 kilometres of vegetation gaps and create an uninterrupted corridor of green from the Wimmera River to the South Australian border and from the Little Desert National Park to the Big Desert.

“Now we have 190 farmers involved and many more are looking over their fences at what we’ve done.”

Darryl says the annual planting weekend is the highlight of his year.

“It’s a sensational weekend. We have Melbourne lawyers and doctors and accountants out working alongside farmers. The feeling on the ground is just great. This project isn’t just about creating links in the landscape. It is also about creating links between people.”

Project Hindmarsh is now managed by a committee which includes representatives from the Hindmarsh Landcare Network, the local community, the Wimmera CMA and the project managers, Greening Australia.

Despite having the driest ten years on record Project Hindmarsh is an outstanding achievement in nature conservation.

Murray Darling Basin Commission Rivercare Award

Winner: Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek



Kororoit Creek rises near Gisborne and empties into Hobsons Bay between Altona and Williamstown. It was once a picnic spot favoured by early settlers, but over many years of industrial activity and neglect it has degraded into a sludgy polluted drain.

In 2001 a group of people in Hobsons Bay dedicated themselves to bringing the creek back to its former glory – no small task – and to protect the habitat of the endangered swift parrot. They formed the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek (FOLKC) and instantly decided

that to be successful the project would need the backing of the area’s diverse communities.

Individual FOLKC members actively worked at branching out and forming networks with other community groups. Multicultural groups were an obvious place to start. The Greek community was attracted to planting events by local musician Edvardo playing Zorba the Greek on his piano accordion on the banks of the creek.

The Sudanese community, the Baha’i community, scouts, rambles, Lions Club members, industry employees, conservation groups and ten local primary schools have all participated in clean-up activities along the creek.

More than 1000 people have now been involved in the many planting activities along the creek with over 30,000 indigenous trees, shrubs and ground cover species established. Because it is a long-term project schoolchildren were an important target group. Over 300 children from throughout Hobsons Bay have been brought to the creek for excursions to learn how the waterway works and to plant trees. This is an active way of giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility for the place.

The creek meanders, in parts, through a very industrial landscape and the group has been

instrumental in getting business and industry to take responsibility for their creek frontage. They have developed partnerships with Toyota Australia, Toll Group, CRT Group, Mobil Altona Refinery and the Altona Memorial Park. Other local businesses have also been encouraged to chip in and sponsorship from Millers Inn has helped the group to buy its own 4WD vehicle for work along the creek corridor.

The group recognises the importance of the creek being visible to the community. They feel that if people enjoy being in the creek environment they are more likely to feel protective of it in the long-term. They lobbied the State Government to complete the Federation Trail along the creek and are now working with local councils to develop links from the Hobsons Bay Shared Trail to the Federation Trail to Werribee and the metropolitan shared walking and cycle trail.

The group’s activities are accurately planned and recorded in the Kororoit Creek Strategy 2005-2030. The group has created a significant momentum in the community. They see the strategy as an important vehicle for making sure that the good works continue.



Students from Hobsons Bay learn about the local environment with Waterwatch.

Australian Government Coastcare Award

**Winner: Swan Bay Integrated
Catchment Management Committee**



North of Queenscliff, Swan Bay is one of the most intact areas of wetland and marine ecosystems in Port Phillip Bay. It has a rich diversity of habitats: marine, seagrass meadows, mudflats, saltmarsh, foreshore dunes and remnant woodlands which makes it an important area for juvenile fish, migratory waders and the orange-bellied parrot.

The bay has State, national and international significance. It is part of Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park, is listed on the register of the National Estate and is a RAMSAR wetland.

In 1997 the Swan Bay Integrated Catchment Management Committee was formed from interested local groups and individuals who wanted to see a holistic plan for Swan Bay. There were concerns that poor land management due to lack of community knowledge about catchment and coastal ecosystems was a threat to this important environment.

The group came up with a detailed plan to protect waterways and improve in-stream water quality and urban stormwater quality, protect, enhance and link remnant native vegetation and promote the adoption of pest plant and animal control and sustainable agricultural practices.

The key to achieving the plan outcomes has been increasing community awareness and participation and developing local and regional partnerships.

The approach to the control of bridal creeper is a good example of how the program works. The committee identified that bridal creeper is a serious weed in the coastal dunes and a huge threat to biodiversity. They approached a research group for information about community based-bio-control of the weed and formed a partnership to trial the program on the Bellarine Peninsula.

The next step was to facilitate collaboration across the region between land managers, community groups and local schools. The project has seen bio-control agents released at 46 sites along the Bellarine coast with good success. An innovative aerial spraying program has also been trialled for the first time in Victoria in dense coastal vegetation difficult to access from the ground.

The committee sees its way of working as being a 'whole catchment care approach'.

Sue Longmore has been involved on the committee from day one as a volunteer and now works as a coastal co-ordinator. Sue says it is crucial in this environment to look at the big picture and consider causes rather than just symptoms.

"Seagrass is a good example. We are seeing extensive seagrass loss in Swan Bay. But the cause of this is excess nutrients and sediment run-off. We need to take action along creeks and stormwater channels running into the bay from rural and urban areas. Restoring wetlands on farms and reserves is important too as they are a way of filtering nutrients and sediments before they reach the bay. You can see that seagrass loss is linked to the whole catchment and the whole community – both urban and rural."

Sue says the changes to the local landscape are becoming more and more visible.

"It's a joy to go out to some of our rural areas and look at the creeks and rivers. The revegetation work has made an enormous difference. These corridors of green are snaking all over what was once a bare landscape. It makes it all worthwhile."



Local primary school students help with the bridal creeper program.



Greencorp team members revegetate the Narrows dune system with local coastal flora.

“

Outreach to schools is a priority for the council. A two-day annual Festival of Learning sees all schools in the Hume area getting a hands-on local environmental education program.

”



The whole community gets behind a multicultural planting day.

Leighton Holdings Local Government Landcare Partnerships Award

Winner: Hume City Council



Hume City is on the northern fringe of Melbourne within the catchments of the Maribyrnong, Yarra and Werribee Rivers. It is an area of very diverse land use with growing residential areas, industry and a vast rural green wedge. Over 30% of Hume's population speak a language other than English in the home.

Hume City Council is meeting the challenges of this complex mix through the Hume Environmental Sustainability Framework 2002 which provides a clear analysis of the state of play in the area and what needs to be done to meet targets and outcomes.

Communication has been identified as a key issue and the council produces an Eco Tracks land management newsletter, *Hume Weed News*, and *Hume Pride*, a newsletter for rural landholders, schools, community groups, elderly citizens and culturally and linguistically diverse groups. A detailed environment page on the council's website is also well used, particularly by students.

In urban areas the council supports a host of community environment and friends groups often working as a collaborator to organise events and seek funding. The Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committees are good examples of this model. The committees

are working to restore waterways and support communities along their catchments with council organising plantings and promoting their activities.

Outreach to schools is a priority for the council. A two-day annual Festival of Learning sees all schools in the Hume area getting a hands-on local environmental education program.

The council invites locals to guide its activities on local advisory committees. The Weed Advisory Committee works on sustainable land management and weed control issues and the Evans Street Wildflower Grassland Committee brings the local community in to direct works on this special conservation reserve.

The council offers a farm rate rebate to 430 primary producers with a focus on weed control. There is an 80% uptake of this rebate. A rural areas plant donation scheme provides 18,000 indigenous plants to rural landholders undertaking revegetation works. The focus is on works that complement remnant vegetation protection and riparian restoration.

Information nights, field days and tours are tailored to provide landholders with practical skills on using chemicals on the farm, healthy horses and healthy pastures.



Surveying for the golden sun moth – a threatened grassland species.

Perhaps the one day a year that best represents the flavour of Hume City Council is the multicultural planting day. For the past ten years this special day sees 28 different cultural groups coming together to learn about the local environment, plant trees and celebrate what it is to live in the beautiful environment of Hume.



The site after the works were completed. Tea-tree has been placed on the shore to stabilise the soil and encourage regrowth.

Alcan Landcare Indigenous Award

Winner: Gippsland-East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative

The Boole Boole Peninsula is a significant place to the Tatungoloong Gurnai/Kurnai people of East Gippsland. The land near the peninsula was a place of traditional burials adjacent to the Gippsland Lakes. The site was privately owned, but because of its significance it was bought by the Gippsland-East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC) to be protected and restored.

The project is an excellent example of Indigenous community groups and natural resource management agencies working together to deliver environmental and cultural outcomes.

Long-term salinity had caused the loss of fringing vegetation at the site. Erosion had scored the lake banks away exposing human bones from an Aboriginal burial ground.

In 2004 GEGAC successfully applied for Natural Heritage Trust funding to protect the site from further damage. In a partnership arrangement between GEGAC, DSE and the East Gippsland CMA, the project aimed to restore fringing vegetation on the shores of the lake to reduce the impact of erosion and protect the burial ground.

Funding was also provided from the State Government through Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and the Gippsland Coastal Board.



The Tatungoloong site before works. Erosion was severe.

Completed in 2006, the project used a sand-bagging technique utilising five large material bags securely anchored into the bed of the lake and then filled and covered with sand pumped from offshore.

These bags form a flexible, secure barrier covered with more sand pumped from the

same site. Once this process was completed the sand was covered with brush coast tea-tree allowing for natural regeneration.

The sand-bagging technique has protected the burial ground from further damage and reduced the levels of sediment entering the Gippsland Lakes.



The project is an excellent example of Indigenous community groups and natural resource management agencies working together to deliver environmental and cultural outcomes.

Rural Press Primary Producer Award

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award North East

Winner: Lindsay and Ian Humphry

Sustainable farming practices are clearly evident at Avondale, the Springhurst farm run by Lindsay and Ian Humphry. Their keen involvement in conservation and wildlife programs and organisations filters through into their biodynamic farming methods.

Since 1980, Lindsay and Ian have planted 50,000 trees on the property including 30,000 since 2000. They are planted in blocks, drainage lines and along fencelines.

Water systems on the farm include a gravitational irrigation system and a wetland system that is 75% fenced and full of healthy invertebrates. The property's remnant bush is also fenced to provide wildlife habitat.

Revegetation has not only boosted the number and species of wildlife on the property but also extended the growing season on adjacent land by four weeks as the extra shelter provides protection from the wind.

Revegetation has also contributed to a drop in salinity. Lindsay and Ian combine this with the use of soil aeration and deep-rooted perennials and have seen watertables drop significantly.

Avondale's soil health has been boosted with a move away from high artificial fertiliser inputs in favour of slow release forms such as lime and reactive rock phosphate, to the extent that no chemicals are now used in the process. Stock is carefully rotated to prevent soil erosion.



An aerial photograph of Avondale shows the extensive revegetation and shelterbelts.

An innovative treatment of effluent solids with worms is used to create vermicast that is spread on the paddocks as fertiliser. Beneficial micro-organisms have also been applied to the soil.

The Humphrys ensure sound monitoring systems are in place to ensure these developments are measured to provide continual improvement in water quality and in plant and soil health.

Pest plants on the property have been significantly reduced while animal pests are controlled with boundary fencing and the ripping of rabbit warrens. Foxes and hawks also do their bit to control the rabbit population.

Lindsay is a keen Landcare practitioner. Biodiversity corridors and wetland areas continue to be developed at Avondale, while the addition of herbaceous plants is planned as the next step in the revegetation program.

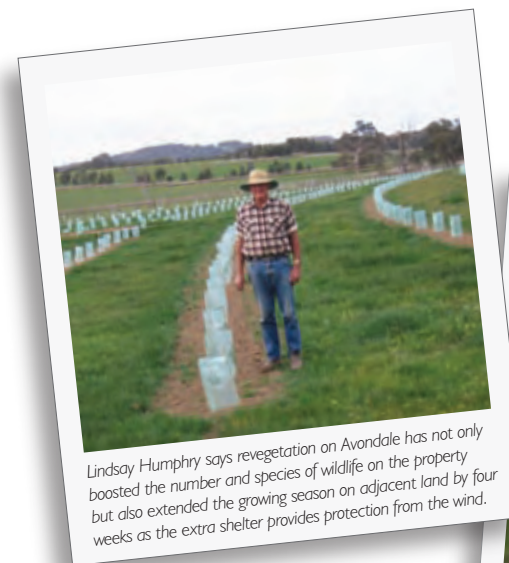
What the judges said:

One of the judges of this year's Rural Press Primary Producer Award, Tony Plowman, said the quality of entries for the award was outstanding.

"It was difficult to compare the different properties. In the end Ian and Lindsay's property came to the fore.

"We were impressed by their real motivation to make Landcare work commercially. This is a well-run, sustainable property. Ian and Lindsay are not just out making the country look pretty. When they use trees on the property they are doing it to benefit productivity and they have real evidence of how it is working.

"Ian and Lindsay have shown a long-term commitment to Landcare. It is a tribute to them that they both still have so much energy and are still out influencing others."



Lindsay Humphry says revegetation on Avondale has not only boosted the number and species of wildlife on the property but also extended the growing season on adjacent land by four weeks as the extra shelter provides protection from the wind.



Lindsay Humphry with a newly planted shelterbelt.

Heather Mitchell Fellowship

Winner: Rae Talbot

Rae Talbot has worked for Greening Australia in the Yarriambiack Shire since 1998.

Rae has secured over 1500 hectares of land to be managed for biodiversity conservation, established 500 hectares of local indigenous vegetation, co-ordinated over 1000 volunteers and advised seven local Landcare groups. These cold hard facts are impressive, but they don't convey Rae's passion for the environment and her profound empathy with the struggles of local landholders.

Rae's commitment is to changing lives as well as landscapes. She never forgets the landholder or the community behind the ecological work. She is continually asking herself how a farmer will benefit from a native vegetation project and how natural resource management can play a role in making rural communities sustainable.

Her work goes well beyond the borders of the shire. Rae co-ordinates the Yarriambiack planting weekend and has developed strong links with refugee families and other migrants.

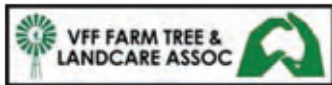
She mixes these people together with Landcare groups, local government, State agencies, and philanthropic and corporate partners to create an inspiring interaction and get a great deal of revegetation work done.

Families from China, Bosnia, France, Yugoslavia and Sudan have participated in the planting weekend. Many of them have returned again and again to visit their new friends in the country.

Steffen Shultz from Longerenong says Rae is held in very high regard by the landholders she works with. Steffen was encouraging a Yarriambiack farmer to undertake a farm forestry plantation on his property, but he declined.

"Not until Rae Talbot comes back from her holidays. She's the tree lady around here and if I don't get her advice I might do something wrong," he said.

When Rae returned he happily went ahead with a 10-hectare plot.



Rae intends to use her fellowship to attend a holistic property planning course to improve her understanding of how to balance the interaction between agriculture, native vegetation and social issues at a property level.



Rae Talbot is the tree woman of Yarriambiack.

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award

Winner: Julianne Sargant



Julianne Sargant talks tunnel erosion at a field day.

Julianne Sargant manages a tunnel erosion rehabilitation project in East Gippsland. She has spent the last four years establishing on-farm trials of different tunnel erosion rehabilitation techniques and managing an incentive program to encourage farmers to tackle this complex problem on their land.

Tunnel erosion is a form of water erosion that produces large underground tunnels in dispersive sub-surface soils. Tunnel erosion poses a severe threat in East Gippsland where high rates of algal feeding nutrients and sediments are entering the Gippsland Lakes and high turbidity levels in the catchment streams of the Lower Mitchell River have caused interruption to Bairnsdale's water supply.

Julianne's project started with a mail-out to 3000 landholders in the catchment, followed up by 120 farm inspections.

A trial site was then developed to test cost-effective methods of treating tunnel erosion using heavy machinery, soil ameliorants and perennial pastures. The final phase is the implementation of a tunnel erosion rehabilitation incentive program that has now been running for three years.

Julianne has been involved in many field days and surveys to fine-tune the project and communicate results with landholders.

She estimates the community benefits of the project are considerable, with improved water quality being the most obvious. The benefits to landholders include improved productivity, reduction of soil and nutrient loss from farms, reduced injury to people and livestock, reduced damage to farm machinery and better farm dam water quality. Erosion tunnels also provide ready harbour for rabbits.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Mallee

Winner: Ross Bennett

Ross Bennett's goal is to improve local Landcare practices, and the Waitchie and District Landcare Group president leads by example.

Ross runs a 4000-hectare farm producing wheat and barley at Waitchie near Swan Hill with wife Helen and in partnership with his parents. His effort reveals a passion for the environment in which he lives and works.

Over the years, Ross and Helen have planted thousands of native trees and shrubs on their property, encouraging wildlife and local biodiversity. Their success is highlighted in the diverse birdlife attracted to the farm.

Ross has also created a wildlife corridor between two local lakes, Lake Timboram and Lake Wahpool, and has also completed protective fencing of three patches of remnant vegetation adjacent to the wildlife corridor.

Ross operates a minimal tillage farming system, where very limited cultivation is undertaken in the production of grain and chemical methods are used to control weeds. The benefits of this system include a reduction in both wind erosion and dust storms. Ross has co-ordinated field days to promote the system to other farmers in the region.

Following the completion of a course in environmental mapping and property planning in 2005, Ross had his entire farm mapped for salinity and moisture using computerised soil testing mapping equipment. This showed where to apply inputs such as fertiliser during crop sowing for maximum returns.

A program of saltbush planting around salt pans has also reduced a severe salinity problem and improved the look of the property.

Rabbits in the Waitchie district have



Philip Bennett checks out the healthy soil on the family farm at Waitchie.

traditionally been a major problem both for the environment and agricultural production and Ross maintains an extensive rabbit warren ripping program to control the rabbit population on the property.

An active member of the local community, Ross fits in photography, fishing and golf with his duties as a member of the Waitchie Fire Brigade. He is reputed to cook excellent breakfast barbecues for local Landcare group meetings!

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Goulburn Broken

Winner: Tom Dumaresq



Tom Dumaresq, president of the North West Mooropna Land Management Group, has served Landcare for 20 years. The group was formed after a run of wet years highlighted the area's poor drainage.

Tom was instrumental in developing an arterial drain and six feeders, transforming farm productivity in the area by reducing waterlogging and improving soil health. This work illustrates Tom's history of service to Landcare in the region.

In 1986 he joined the fledgling Goulburn Valley Tree Group, sharing its simple vision: have more trees in the ground to improve the local landscape and help lower watertables in the area. As current president of the organisation, Tom has overseen the sale of over one million trees to the community.

Tom's dedication to agroforestry and sustainable farming has taken him to southern India where he has been associated with the Assisi Aid project for 20 years and earned him recognition this year with an Order of Australia medal.

The Dumaresq property at Tatura features

50,000 trees planted over 20 years, which have changed the landscape dramatically. A whole farm plan drafted in 1990 provided the framework for more sustainable farming practices aimed at improving both production and the environment.

Trees now make up 30% of ground cover,



Tom Dumaresq has been instrumental in improving the local landscape and helping lower watertables in the Goulburn Valley.

including a 10-hectare fenced off block to enhance biodiversity and to provide a habitat for wildlife. The trees offer a marketable and sustainable timber product and are planted to maximise runoff water.

In an area prone to high watertables, Tom also understands the importance of bore monitoring. His work has demonstrated that it is possible to lower watertables and reduce salinity with careful property planning and management.

Deep bore tests on his own property in early 2007 indicated the watertable to be between five and six metres, against a general district average of 1.3 metres.

Tom attributes this drop in watertable levels to deep-rooted perennial lucerne stands, farm forestry plantings, a groundwater pump and a bit of help from the drought.

He and his wife are happy to share their experience, having hosted many field days on their property. Tom has also held numerous positions within community groups, including captain of the local fire brigade.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award West Gippsland

Winner: David and Ruth Read, Jen Ribolli

A holistic approach toward productive, profitable, restorative agriculture underpins the management of the Woodcote Pty Ltd properties. The 985-hectare farm is located on dry land on the Red Gum Plains east of Stratford and on irrigation in the Macalister Irrigation District south of Maffra, in Central Gippsland, Victoria.

Woodcote is the trading name of the Laurence Hamlyn Family Trust. Laurie Hamlyn is the retired landowner and appointer of the trust while David Read and Laurie's daughters Ruth Read and Jen Ribolli run the business.

The properties run self-replacing medium fine merino flock and Angus flocks as well as crops. The business aims to promote a diverse habitat for indigenous flora and fauna and balance the needs of agriculture with the preservation of indigenous species.

Since 2002, pasture management methods have seen average paddock size reduced from 33 hectares to six hectares as part of

work to promote the regeneration of soils and vegetation.

The managers aim to border every paddock at least on one side with native vegetation and to increase the proportion of indigenous flora and fauna on the property from 9% to between 10% and 15%.

Native shelter belts have been in place for over 30 years. All creeks on the properties have been revegetated and fenced off.

Following a low annual rainfall in the year to October 2006, a 259-hectare block was purchased for crops and to improve economies of scale and soil and plant conservation.

Remnant blocks of bush, wetlands and road reserve have since been fenced off and approved for future Trust for Nature conservation covenants.

Woodland has been accredited through the Gippsland Environmental Management System



David and Ruth Read and Jen Ribolli use a holistic and restorative approach in the management of the Woodcote properties.

Program with Gippsland Beef and Lamb. Its operating procedures cover biodiversity, water quality, grazing, soil and fertiliser, weed pest and chemical management and it adheres to a holistic property management plan.

Lately, David, Ruth and Jen have been investigating how soil health and productivity can be improved, focusing on biological inputs rather than chemical applications. The business participates in the Soil Food Web Institute Grower Program and hosts schools and field days to promote wider understanding and education within the community.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Glenelg Hopkins

Winner: Barry and Judy Veale,
Mark and Julie Veale



Situated between Lake Bolac and Woorndoo, the property of Glen Eynord has been in the Veale family for 70 years. Since 1994, owners Barry and Judy Veale together with son Mark and his wife, Julie have undertaken major improvements to its sustainability.



Barry Veale checks on his buffalo. Stock are run on a cell grazing system with pastures planted to appropriate soil type.

The 1100-hectare property is a mixed sheep and cropping property with a further 480 hectares under lease. The Veales also run deer and buffalo in addition to extensive agroforestry plantings.

Twenty years ago, sparse tree cover provided little stock protection and salinity and soil erosion problems caused a decline in the quality of water running into stock dams and a natural swamp on the property.

In 1994 an investigation into soil properties and land classes was carried out on the property's salt swamp saline discharge area, with research conducted to identify areas most at risk.

Barry and Judy refenced the site for land classification, and planted a variety of pasture species appropriate to the soil type. They instigated a cell grazing program and planted a selection of agroforestry species.

The Veales began an annual tree planting program to combat salinity and soil erosion problems and to provide better stock cover. Some 45 hectares of trees now cover the property including 20 hectares planted for commercial production

Species include spotted gum and pine timber belts, red gums and blackwoods leading to an improved wildlife habitat that provides a pleasant landscape while their harvest is an added source of income.

An area of indigenous red gums has been encouraged to regenerate, and surrounds of dams and other wetlands are revegetated to encourage biodiversity.

As a result, there has been a massive increase in birdlife and a recorded lowering of the watertable.

The Veale family have now incorporated biological farming methods and produce their own compost tea. They have reduced artificial fertiliser and chemical use for both crops and pastures and are working to build up soil carbon levels.

Barry and Judy are long-standing members of the Woorndoo Landcare Group and have been generous in sharing their knowledge and experience with their many visitors.

Their actions are paving the way for a sustainable farming future.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Port Phillip and Westernport

Winner: Graham Simpson



In 1953 Graham Simpson bought a 175-hectare farm at Bacchus Marsh that he describes as cheap and nasty, but at the time it was the only way he could get into farming.

Since then he's purchased more land in the area – all of it with the full cocktail of problems – rabbits, thistle and erosion. Throughout the 1960s he worked on fixing the soil erosion and became an active member of the Rowsley Landcare Group, getting involved in rabbit and serrated tussock control.

Graham was a founding member of the Grow West Steering Committee. This group came about as local landholders wanted to tackle the degraded landscapes of the area in an integrated large-scale way.

Graham's farm, now a successful enterprise combining wool growing and cropping, is used as a demonstration site for Grow West. He is regarded as a leader in the community for his work on water saving, erosion, revegetation, soil protection and rabbit and serrated tussock control.

Graham's property has an area of box ironbark forest that borders the Werribee Gorge State Park. He noticed the area would start to regenerate every spring when he shut the sheep out but would soon be grazed flat when he let them back in. Concerned that the bush was simply going to die he rounded up three local groups who put in an Envirofund bid to fence out the 68-hectare area and plant 2200 key understorey species.

The area now boasts some rare species including the fragrant saltbush and has contributed to the conservation of habitat for the powerful owl and brush-tailed phascogale.

Graham has placed a Trust for Nature conservation covenant on the site to ensure its long-term protection. This year he opened the area up to a combined schools project so that students could appreciate the benefits that flow from the protection of remnant bushland.

For over fifty years Graham Simpson has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to sustainable farming in his local area. He



Graham Simpson shows the steep terrain on his property at Bacchus Marsh.

has improved productivity on his farm and demonstrated a real sense of community leadership throughout the catchment.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Corangamite

Winner: Brian Wilson

Brian Wilson has been farming sheep and crops in the Mingay district of the Corangamite Shire since 1985. Most of Brian's land is catchment for the Browns Water Holes Creek which runs through the property.

Improvements in soil health, wool production and crop yields on the property over the past 20 years reflect the success of Brian's efforts to improve the sustainability of his property.

Back in 1984, the property ran 4000 sheep, cut 30 micron wool, and produced 80 hectares of crops. Today, 6500 sheep graze the property, which cuts a higher quality and quantity of wool. Brian now raises 600 hectares of crops with a much greater average yield.

Brian realised waterlogging would be one of his biggest challenges. He has installed over 40 hectares of underground drainage allowing growth of high yield crops, and trialled raised bed cropping with great success.

A strict crop rotation system was put in place ensuring an interval of at least four years between the growth of different crop species.

During winter, Brian operates a rotational grazing system, and pastures are carefully managed to maintain the soil surface.

Brian has also revegetated along waterways to promote biodiversity, as well as putting in shelterbelts and woodlots. Wetland areas have been restored and fenced and suitable tree, shrub and grass species planted. As a result, the growling grass frog and brogas have made an appearance on the property.

Brian is also a leading figure in local Landcare. He is the current president of the Lismore Land Protection Group and has worked with academic and government bodies including the University of Melbourne and DPI to investigate best practice in soil management.



Brian Wilson's management of waterlogged soils has greatly improved the productivity of his farm and assisted other farmers across the district.

A founding member of the Southern Farming Systems cropping project, Brian is also a regular field day host, showcasing the effective management of waterlogged soils.

He is currently experimenting with microbes and other biological methods to improve soil health and is working with other Landcare members on a trial of summer active perennial pastures.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award Wimmera

Winner: Daryl and Brent Barber

Daryl Barber loves being a primary producer and claims there is nothing better than growing a beautiful crop. While that aim has not changed since the Barber family purchased their 1000-hectare farm at Laen, near Minyip in 1967, over the years conventional farming methods have given way to the sustainable practices evident today.

Daryl and Brent Barber are working toward their aim of leaving the land in a better state for the next generation. The Barber property was run conventionally as a crop and sheep enterprise until the drought in 1982 convinced the family to begin to reduce stock numbers and to introduce a no till operation.

Prior to this, reliance on machinery saw paddocks cultivated up to 16 times, leaving them bare and unprotected in the summer months. Topsoil was badly eroded during the two droughts of 1967 and 1982 which led the Barbers to retain stubble and ground cover and exclude stock from ground used for crops.



Daryl Barber (at left) helps pour the tea at a Yarrilinks planting weekend.

Chemical use has since been cut back and a natural fertiliser is made from duck manure so the soil relies on nature rather than chemicals for good health. Thanks to improvements made, the soil structure has since improved dramatically, with improved carbon levels and water efficiency.



There has been progressive planting adjacent to cropping paddocks to encourage the biodiversity required to naturally protect crops. Indigenous species attract birds, beetles and hoverflies among others.

Today, 820 hectares of the property is cropped, containing vetch and oats and ryegrass for hay production as well as barley and chickpeas. Sheep are run on 80 hectares of native pasture and lucerne.

The tough times caused by last season's drought highlighted the success of the Barber operation which had a comparatively good wheat and hay output in extremely tough conditions. There was no repeat of the soil erosion that plagued them in the past.

Off the farm, Daryl is the current chairman of the Minyip Landcare Group and has taken a leading role in the local Yarrilinks Biolink planting project.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award East Gippsland

Winner: Rick and Jenny Robertson

Rick and Jenny Robertson's commitment to native vegetation ensures natural biodiversity is appreciated and protected as an important component of their thriving property.

For more than a decade Rick and Jenny have been planting native vegetation on their property alongside the Gippsland Lakes.

Though this has helped boost the viability and profitability of fine merino wool, fat lamb and wheat, results have not come easy. Recent years of drought, for example, have worked against efforts to plant by direct seeding.

Rick has to be willing to start over if weather conditions are unfavourable, and the dry last few years mean "it has been more miss than hit".

Despite the challenge, trial plantings of a number of Australian saltbushes, introduced to complement the property's grazing regime, have proven very successful. An 11-hectare plantation of old man saltbush provides 20 times the amount of grazing

compared to neighbouring paddocks.

"The animals love it. It is high in protein and energy and low in worms. It is quick, easy and cheap to establish and sheep thrive on it," Rick says.

These extremely tough and drought-resistant plants are expected to pay dividends for years.

A Trust for Nature conservation covenant protects 27 hectares of the property. Both the Swamp Scrub/Estuarine Wetland Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) and Gippsland Plains Grassy Woodland EVC included in the covenant area are classified as endangered in Victoria.

Rick and Jenny aim to eventually produce logs for the saw mill from a 25-hectare farm forestry plantation. Southern mahogany and rose gums are two of the main species.

The increase in trees has seen a greater number and diversity of birds on the property. Blue wrens, finches and white-breasted sea eagles are common and the



Rick Robertson's commitment to revegetation on his Gippsland Lakes property has greatly increased biodiversity.

occasional wedge-tailed eagle makes an appearance.

There are future plans to add to the farm's impressive stands of native vegetation such as eucalypts, sheoaks and wattles. Rick hopes to increase diversity on the farm by planting understorey species under the established trees. He says this should support native fauna that can in turn help to control pasture pests.

Victorian Sustainable Farming Award North Central

Winner: Ken, Helen and Alistair Calder



Ken Calder, his son Alistair and wife Helen run Woodlands, a 1200-hectare sheep and cropping property at Wareek west of Maryborough.

Ken has been committed to sustainable farming practices since he took over the property in 1976.

A farmer discussion group initiated by Ken eventually became the Natte Yallock Landcare Group which Ken was excluded from as his farm fell outside of the group's boundary. Not easily discouraged Ken set up the Timor West Landcare Group which has now been operating for 17 years with Ken often at the helm as president.

Direct drilling practices, perennial pasture establishment and improved soil fertility, establishing windbreaks and plantation, stock containment during droughts, not burning stubbles, increasing fodder reserves, liming and applying gypsum to farm land, improving pastures and stock genetic production, increasing biodiversity, lowering watertables, feral animal control and monitoring salt indicators have improved the viability of the farm enterprise.

Ken says an added benefit of these works has been a better farming environment both for the farmer and for the livestock, along with the reduction of wind and water erosion through better farming practices.

Ken and Alistair have been involved in the development of EMS and are working towards a full Environmental Management System for



Ken Calder at a plantation established as a windbreak and wildlife corridor in 1989.

their farm activities. Conservation is one of the cornerstones of their operation. Woodlands was included in the trial Bush Tender Scheme and a reserve on the property protects important habitat for the endangered bush stone-curlew.

Ken puts some of his innovative ideas down to his agricultural education at Glenormiston College where he was encouraged to think laterally.

He sees Woodlands as part of the bigger picture in the landscape and believes that whether farmers own or lease their land is irrelevant.

"Landholders are just custodians of the land along the way. The important thing is to accept responsibility for improving the land for future generations."



Alistair Calder working a herd of registered Highland cattle at the Woodlands stock yards.

Highly commended

The following entrants in the Victorian Landcare Awards were highly commended by the judges:

Murray Darling Basin Rivercare Award:
Tanjil Valley Landcare Group

Australian Government Coastcare Award:
Friends of the Bluff Inc.

Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award:
Heytesbury and District Landcare Network
Rainbow and Elmhurst Landcare Groups

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

Australian Government Landcare NRM Region Award:
Port Phillip and Westernport CMA

Leighton Holdings Local Government Landcare Partnerships Award:
Melton Shire Council

Landcare Australia Nature Conservation Award:
Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater

National Landcare Programme Individual Landcarer Award:
Craig Tuhan
Kevin Knight

Rural Press Primary Producer Award:
Tom Dumaresq

Sustainable Farming Awards:
Tony Briody
Scott and Suzanne Wightman

Dr Sidney Plowman Award:
Peter Ockenden

Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship:
Jennifer Clarke

Strathbogie group works from bridge to bridge

By Bill Wells

The creek reserve between Strathbogie township and Sevens/Spring Creeks is usually so wet it is difficult to carry out any weed control work. Access is a major problem. In 2003 staff from the Goulburn Broken CMA and volunteers worked hard to remove a jungle-like growth of blackberries and ivy, but members of the Strathbogie Tableland Landcare Group were worried the area would slip back.

In 2005 the group applied for an Envirofund grant to restore the area. The project became known as the Bridge to Bridge Natural Environment Restoration Project. The grant came through and work started almost immediately on weed spraying, planting native grasses and trees and erosion mats.

More working bees followed with a removal of old stumps and a clean-out of secondary floodways. A small excavator and several tractors provided by group members formed and gravelled an access trail from bridge to bridge so now, regardless of wet weather, replanting of native trees, understorey and grasses can take place.

The project has had a strong response from



The waters of the creek are finally clear and free from weeds.

local communities, visitors and schools. Peranbin Campus at Strathbogie had 35 enthusiastic students planting several hundred understorey plants on National Tree Day. St Albans High School visited the area while on camp and were impressed – especially after sighting a koala.

There is still a lot to be done at the site, but with much of the work done during a severe drought the group is sure it can maintain its positive attitude. They are hoping a local committee of management will form to handle further improvements and maintenance.

Miners Rest – from wasteland to wetland

By Bernadette Cincotta

The Miners Rest Landcare Group has achieved one of the more challenging elements of Landcare – changing community perceptions. They have transformed a mosquito-ridden swamp into a highly valued ephemeral wetland.

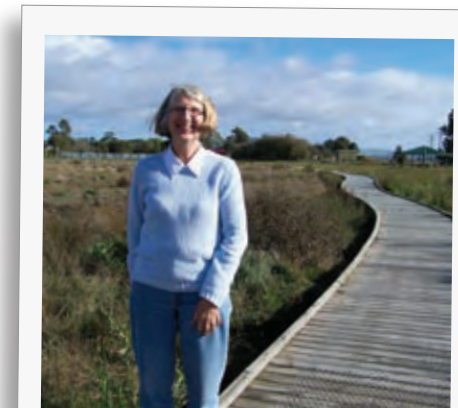
The swamp was a public watering site in the 1860s. By the 1960s it was labelled a wasteland.

Margaret Adams from the Miners Rest Landcare Project has spent five years working on the project. In 2002, with the help of the City of Ballarat and Field & Game Australia, the group received funding from the Glenelg Hopkins CMA to protect and enhance the wetland.

The City of Ballarat worked on weed control, fencing, revegetation and the construction of tracks, boardwalks, benches and shelters to enable the community to enjoy the surrounds of the wetland comfortably. Concerns were still high, though. The threat of snakes and mosquitoes was raised at public meetings.

Community perceptions began to change when local field naturalists recorded sightings of the near-threatened Latham's snipe – a bird that migrates yearly between Australia and Japan. The Latham's snipe population at the wetland is one of the most significant in Australia.

In 2004 local environmentalist Roger Thomas discovered a rare and threatened indigenous



Margaret Adams walks the new Miners Rest boardwalk.

plant, the stiff groundsel, at the wetland. This is one of only four known wild populations in Victoria.

Margaret Adams has organised community walks around the wetland. The group hopes to make them an annual event.

"People simply did not realise what wonderful flora was growing there," Margaret said.

"It is very rewarding to see how frequently the walking track is now used by residents. I often see women with prams and the local adult disability support group enjoying the site."

For further information contact Bernadette Cincotta at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA on 5355 0541.

Changes to agriculture and veterinary chemical use

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2007 came into force on 24 July 2007. The new regulations seek to minimise the risks and maximise the benefits associated with the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Victoria.

The most significant change affecting agricultural chemical users is the change to record-keeping requirements. Records must now be made and kept for all chemical products used, not just 'restricted use' chemicals.

There are new requirements for landholders intending to conduct agricultural chemical spraying within 200m of schools or hospitals. There are also changes affecting spray contractors, who must now provide landholders with specific information before carrying out any spray application, and use equipment such as a smoke generating device or windsock when carrying out aerial spraying.

To obtain more information on the revised regulations, including fact sheets that contain details of the new requirements and a free record-keeping template, contact DPI Customer Service on 136 186 or visit the DPI website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/chemicalstandards.

Copies of the regulations can be downloaded from the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents website at www.legislation.vic.gov.au.

News from the VFF

By Susi Johnson

At the recent VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) annual general meeting John Anderson of the Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group joined the current committee of Andrew Stewart, Sue Campbell, Richard Jamieson, Bill Wells and Alex Arbuthnot.

The association also participated in the VFF Conference where Landcare was a major focus. Joan Kirner was the keynote speaker and encouragingly around 80% of the audience identified themselves as Landcarers.

After several months of negotiation we have succeeded in securing coverage for all members from 0-90 years, a very pleasing outcome as Landcare has always been a family activity. We have organised access to governance training for our members and continued to undertake our review of internal procedures.

There has also been a chance for reflection and some time to consider the future needs of our members. The committee is finding interested individuals with experience in business or financial areas to join the committee in developing policies and procedures as we seek to aid members.

Darren Williams is the new State National Landcare Programme Co-ordinator replacing Ian Linley who is spending a year in the Northern Territory. We welcome Darren and wish him all the best in his new role.

Congratulations are due to the 48 VFF and FTLA members who entered the 2007 Victorian Landcare Awards. This issue is full of their inspiring stories.

Susi Johnson is the executive officer of the VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association. For further information contact Susi on 9207 5527.



VFF President Simon Ramsay with Penny Mitchell, Heather Mitchell's grand-daughter and Joan Kirner cutting a cake to celebrate 21 years of Landcare at the recent VFF Conference.



In the 1940s the wetland was drained and used as a sporting ground.

Around the State – News from the Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

Wimmera

The Mountains to Mallee – a community river walk documentary – will be screened at a regional premiere in Horsham on October 26. The public screening hosted by Wimmera Landcare will highlight the natural and social value of the Wimmera River and tell the story of those involved in walking the 350 kilometres from Mount Cole to Lake Albacutya.

Project Platypus attracted 150 volunteers and planted 30,000 native trees and shrubs around the Grampians and Pomonal area in July.

The Yarrilinks project again had a strong cultural exchange focus which included people from different countries, backgrounds and cultures experiencing the rural and Landcare flavour around Minyip. Project Hindmarsh held their 10th anniversary Landcare weekend in August which attracted over 300 volunteers.

The West Wimmera Landcare Network welcomes new Landcare Co-ordinator Lisa Heenan.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

Corangamite

The Corangamite CMA will be undertaking a formal mid-term review of the region's

Landcare support strategy. The review will take place over the coming months through a series of workshops across the region. All Landcare networks, groups, co-ordinators and stakeholders will be invited to contribute their ideas and provide feedback into the effectiveness and delivery of the strategy.

Landcare network and group boundaries in the region have now been clarified. This will greatly assist in all areas of Landcare delivery, especially project planning. All Landcare networks will be supplied with a printed map and access to electronic versions for Landcare groups and other interested parties to access.

The Corangamite Landcare Celebrations and Reflections brochure, illustrating the status and achievements of Landcare in the region for 2005-06, has been produced and distributed to all Landcare groups and relevant stakeholders. Copies are available from the Corangamite CMA.

For further information contact Polly Hall on 5232 9100.

Goulburn Broken

Landcare in the Goulburn Broken is going along well with the advancement of a project through to the second round of New Generation Landcare Grant funding sparking at least one network.

We are on the brink of a new group forming in the western part of the catchment around Greytown. A Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment Landcare Network has formed in response to the need for an umbrella group supervising several co-ordinators and to position itself in the event of further New Generation Landcare grant style funding.

We are getting ready to launch into the collection phase of the annual Landcare Report Card and Landcare group/network boundary mapping projects. This will be combined with the review of the regional Landcare support strategy.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5820 1123.

North Central

Landcare groups and co-ordinators have been abuzz with the opportunities of the New Generation Landcare Grants – two projects have moved on to the final stage.

The Corangamite and Glenelg Hopkins CMAs hosted a successful bus trip for our regional Landcare team. It was very inspiring.

We saw some great projects and caught up with co-ordinators for some useful networking.

Exciting projects coming to fruition soon are the 2006/2007 Landcare Annual Performance Story, boundary mapping, 20th year Landcare DVD and updating our Landcare Support Strategy with mid-term findings.

For further information contact Allison Long on 5440 1814.

West Gippsland

First it was fire then it was floods, 2006/07 has been a tough time for people on the land in West Gippsland. Landcare has been a constant and strong support for many people during these tough times.

In spite of all these difficulties grass-roots Landcare in the region continues to grow and deliver successful outcomes. At present we have 74 active Landcare groups that are all part of four Landcare networks. This represents 2200 families who own or manage over 320,000 hectares of private land in the region.

In 2006-07 Gippslandcare delivered over 550 hectares of onground works related to remnant protection, vegetation rehabilitation, riparian protection, biodiversity enhancement and erosion control. This occurred through 323 projects across the region involving 418,000 plants, 173 kilometres of fencing and 50 hectares of direct seeding work.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 5662 4555.



Keith and Mary Bremner were the winners of the 2007 Glenelg Hopkins Environmental Achievement Award in the Rivercare category.

“

Drought issues have continued to be significant for landholders and groups, with many groups turning more to production/recovery and social events to engage their community.

”



Good Landcare practices in miniature were part of a display at the Glenelg Hopkins Environmental Achievement Awards held in Hamilton recently.

Glenelg Hopkins

The draft Glenelg Hopkins Regional Landcare Support Strategy is now out for community comment. Copies of the full strategy are available at www.glenelg-hopkins.vic.gov.au.

The Landcare Open Day on October 26 will be hosted by Mark Wootton and Eve Kantor of Jigsaw Farms and includes workshops, displays and a range of activities, tours and keynote speakers. Community members can register their interest to attend by contacting their local Community Landcare Facilitator.

The 2007 Glenelg Hopkins Environmental Achievement Awards were held in Hamilton on June 21. The awards recognise the individuals, groups and businesses that have made a significant contribution to the environment in the region.

Winners were: Individual Achievement, Don McTaggart from Warrnambool; Rivercare, Keith Bremner, Balmoral; Local Government & Business Partnerships, City of Ballarat; Primary Producer, Barry and Judy Veale, Lake Bolac; Coastcare, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group; Education, Hawkesdale P12 College; Landcare and Community Group, Panyabyr Landcare Group; and Media, Brian O'Brien from the *Hamilton Spectator*.

A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Bill Golding, co-founder of the Great South West Walk.

For further information contact Shelley Lipscombe on 5571 2526.

North East

The Mid Term Review of the North East Landcare Support Strategy has been completed. The review identified that the CMA Landcare support program is assisting Landcare groups to

address their priorities. An implementation plan for the next two years has identified ongoing work and some improvements.

Drought issues have continued to be significant for landholders and groups, with many groups turning more to production/recovery and social events to engage their community. Groups have held field days on livestock health, dung beetles and soil health management over the winter.

Continued interest in climate change has also been evident. Local community screenings of *An Inconvenient Truth* by Landcare groups have been very well attended.

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

East Gippsland

The 3rd Annual Regional Landcare Performance Story outlining the activities of East Gippsland's 31 Landcare groups and their overall achievements for the 2006/2007 year has recently been released.

The report indicates that the average health of Landcare groups in the region has increased by 14.18% from 2004 to 2007.

To view the Performance Story in electronic format go to www.landcarevic.net.au.

This is my last report as I will be moving on to a new role as the State Industry Landcare Co-ordinator. My thanks to all those associated with Landcare in East Gippsland. I wish you all a prosperous Landcare future.

For further information contact Darren Williams on 5150 3575.

Mallee

The Mallee Regional Landcare Network has received funding for four very important

regional projects: 21-year celebration, boundary mapping, support strategy review and the development of an annual report card.

The 21-year celebrations are expected to take place over the coming months while dryland farmers are enjoying the recent rains. The annual review of the Mallee Regional Landcare Support Strategy and development of the annual report card will highlight the successes of the Landcare and wider community's commitment to ensuring a healthy and productive region.

Boundary mapping will take place over the next few weeks. With the assistance of GIS and community support, the project is expected to be completed by December this year.

For further information contact Brendon Thomas on 5051 4385.

Port Phillip and Westernport

The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Grants Calendar has been updated and is available for download at www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au.

Representatives from agencies who support community groups at a regional level including the CMA, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Museum Victoria and DSE met recently to form the Regional Agencies Group Support Network to provide a more co-ordinated and collaborative approach to promotion and delivery of capacity building, grants, funding opportunities and recognition events.

The CMA is also working with Melbourne Water to explore collaborative opportunities to improve the way community groups in the region are supported.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

“
First it was fire then it was floods, 2006/07 has been a tough time for people on the land in West Gippsland. Landcare has been a constant and strong support for many people during these tough times.
”



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Set Includes

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Guards

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