

# victorian Landcare

Issue 6 Summer 1997



**Burgoige, Hodgson & Horseshoe Creek Landcare Groups**



**When the skies are alive with cockies**



**Greg Rankin on grains**

*Wishing our readers a merry Christmas  
and prosperous NEW YEAR*

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# From the Editors

## Winners !

In its first full year of operation the Victorian Landcare Magazine has won the Ford Landcare Media Award. A very proud and happy team of editors accepted the award from Marie Tehan, Minister for Conservation and Land Management at a ceremony in Hawthorn recently.

It was wonderful to receive recognition for the work that has gone into producing the magazine and also to meet and mingle with the other Landcare and Farm Management Award winners- a very inspirational group of people.

In this issue of the magazine we have featured Merv and Jan Cupper, our top primary producers. Over coming issues we hope to bring you more of the winners stories.

As the winners of the Victorian Ford Landcare Media Award the magazine will now be judged against the other State winners for the prestigious National Ford Landcare Media Award. Some of us will be in Canberra in March for the announcement of the National Awards, we plan to bring home a host of 'big landcare stories' from across Australia.

## Contributions flowing in

Having established the magazine over the last five editions, it is great to see the contributions flowing in.

The whole aim of the magazine is to provide the community with a channel for communicating your efforts and achievements to show-case new ideas, and to promote best practice in landcare, be that from within Victoria or not.

If you would like one of the editorial team to help you with your story, please don't hesitate to call. If your group has something to contribute to the Autumn edition please fax, e-mail to paul.crock@vff.org.au or write to us.

We would also encourage groups to support the companies and organisations who support the magazine with advertising, as their support is needed to maintain and develop the circulation of the publication.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous new year.

Mal Brown  
Paul Crock  
Sally Gibson

# Passing of

## By Paul Crock

I was saddened to learn of the peaceful passing of Arthur Farvis on October 31 1997, the founding President of the Bass Valley Farm Trees Group, and architect of the Bass Valley Landcare Group.

Born in Heyfield, Arthur moved to Tarwin Lower where he and Pat sharefarmed before moving to Glen Forbes and settling on the banks of the Bass River in 1957.

His efforts in developing Bass Meadows to what it is today is a credit to Arthur's determination. The clearing of 6' tussocks, developing his whole farm plan, his strategic revegetation were spurred on by



Victorian Landcare Magazine editors accepting the Ford Landcare Media Award from Marie Tehan, Minister for Conservation and Land Management. ( L-R) Sally Gibson, Minister Tehan, Carri Tiffany, Mal Brown and Paul Crock.



# a quiet achiever

Michael Power, the current President of the Bass group said Arthur believed that God's gift to him was the land, and his responsibility in return was to nurture and care for the land for the future generations.

Following his retirement from full time dairy farming, Arthur and Pat stayed on the farm. He divided his days between the family, Landcare, the Bass Community Centre, the church and his land. He was a very determined focused man who gave nothing but his best in all aspects of his life.

His foresight and style saw it grow from 30 to over 180 enthusiastic members.

He was instrumental in establishing many of the programs which won the Bass Valley Group the 1996 Victorian Landcare Community Group Award, including the innovative Roadside Weed spraying campaign, LEAP and REEP programs, the formation of the Candowie Lance Creek Catchment Management Group, the 1994 State Landcare Conference, the production of the Westernport Landcare News and Junior Landcare activities.

Arthur's last effort with the landcare

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

*I know that this letter could rock the boat, but I'd like to challenge a couple of misconceptions on P.22, issue 4 1997.*

*'Hawksnest,' I think refers to Hawks Nest Rd, Pirron-Yallock, west of Colac.*

*The other misconception, popularly bandied about, is that ragwort should be the key target in local (stony rises) weed control. It is true that it is the most virulent, but it is only a secondary problem where it co-exists with and/or under bracken.*

*In my earlier days, I sprayed ragwort, blackberries and bracken each with separate sprays, one species at a time.*

*I now know better. If I spray bracken with a product like 'Brush Off' I'd inadvertently be hitting ragwort and blackberries at the same time, whilst automatically destroying rabbit and fox cover too. Fallen logs are also a liability in this regard, they harbour weeds.*

*I strongly feel that many out-paddock and other absentee land owners inadvertently work against their neighbours as active parasites.*

*One man keeps a clean property, his neighbour constantly undermines his income and efforts by re-infesting him with weeds and rabbits: One owners property is a distinct asset, his neighbour's property undermines its value by their ugly weedy condition.*

*Real estate is a responsibility, not a cheap source of income at community expense.*

*Also, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment needs to use a lot more muscle too in this regard.*

Yours sincerely  
George Read



# Highlights of the 1997 National Landcare Conference

**ACOSS and Landcare - shared philosophies**  
By Robert Fitzgerald AM, Australian Council of Social Services



**Bill Twigg from Bears Lagoon (second from left), was one of 900 delegates at the National Conference, Adelaide, September, 1997.**

"The community services and welfare sector was founded on the same three pillars which lead to the establishment of Landcare: community participation, volunteering and community development. It must be remembered that the first welfare and community services in Australia were provided not by government, but by charitable not-for-profit organisations. Right up until the 1970s, governments played a limited role in funding or providing services - but, since then, the situation has changed

public monies provided to them, and, to be less and less willing to listen to the views of community groups before they decree what the community needs.

Although there are some benefits in the new contracting culture if it is managed well, there are also risks to community organisations. They may find their autonomy eroded, their capacity to respond flexibly to local needs and circumstances undermined, and their original purpose distorted.

ACOSS is working hard to ensure that these risks are minimised and that a new definition of partnership between government and community organisations emerges, one which is respectful of the strengths and uniqueness of each. All of those involved in Landcare will face the same challenge.

## **The contribution of volunteers**

The history of volunteerism in the community services sector provides additional lessons for Landcare. Many organisations and services would cease to function without the time, effort, dedication and professionalism of volunteers.

Independent research undertaken by ACOSS highlights the importance of maintaining a voluntary element in Landcare. Volunteers think that volunteer work is only acceptable when:

- They freely choose to participate
- They personally believe that their work makes a contribution to their community
- Their labour is not used to displace paid jobs
- The organisation which benefits is a non-profit making venture

The ACOSS research on volunteering and

the experiences of the Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP) is telling us that compulsory work schemes (such as work for the dole program) will do the voluntary sector more harm than good; and labour market programs need to provide people with transferable and relevant skills if they are to be truly successful in assisting people in paid employment.

## **Policy issues**

Governments need to develop strategies which recognise the importance of citizenship by making our society more inclusive and giving primacy to social justice principles. Until scope for personal and social participation by all members of our society is maximised, people's personal and social rights are eroded, and ultimately the quality of life of the whole community diminishes.

We need to create a more equitable balance in the relationship between the state, the community and the market; and between social, economic and environmental goals. Our public policies must give greater weight to the maintenance and development of 'social capital' - the trust, good-will and cooperation within a community, an organisation, a company or a country which underpins sustainable social and economic development.

Landcare is a wonderful example of the value of social capital. I thank you for the work you have done to date and wish you well in the challenging times ahead.

*This is an edited abstract of Robert Fitzgerald's paper. A full copy of the paper is printed in the Conference proceedings available from Primary Industries, South Australia, GPO Box 1671, Adelaide SA 5001.*



**Marion Walton from Victoria (left), on one of the pre-conference tours.**

dramatically.

During the 1970s and 1980s the relationship between government and non-government community organisations was a highly interactive one. There was a sense of co-responsibility for the common good, and rough equality in the relationship.

In the 1990s, the situation has changed again from one of 'grant giving' to contract making, with governments having the lion's share of the power in determining the substance of the contracts they enter into with community groups.

It is now common for governments to seek to prescribe ever more precisely exactly what community groups may do with the

# Blockbuster weekend celebrates a year of Powlett activities

By Martin Fuller

Located in the heart of South Gippsland the Powlett River catchment rises within the township of Korumburra and discharges into Bass Strait, west of Wonthaggi.

Twelve months of Landcare activity within the catchment culminated with the planting of over 25,000 trees on the weekend of November 8 and 9 when city based and local volunteers converged on the area to help landholders with on-farm revegetation activities.

The Powlett Project has brought together all Landcare and Coast Action groups within the catchment to address the problems caused in the past from over clearing of timber, to supply the heavy demands from the mining and forestry industries in the region.

Planning commenced early in 1996, with on-ground activities starting in earnest last November when 300 urban based volunteers established over 30,000 trees and shrubs for soil erosion control and wildlife habitat creation.

*Gordon Youman demonstrates the capabilities of his mechanical planter at Park's field day.*



With individual farmers and Landcare groups continuing work throughout the year the total number of trees and shrubs established in the Powlett catchment during the last 12 months is now well over 85,000.

Establishing 85,000 trees and shrubs within 12 months sounds fantastic, however South Gippslanders attending a field day held on October 30 at the Park's property at Wonthaggi saw new technology demonstrated that could help make their revegetation programs more efficient in years to come.

As a regional launch of the Alcoa Greening Australia Revegetation Assistance Program, the Park's established 6,500 standard forestry style tube stock trees while demonstrating the new Youmans planter. The Youmans Mechanical Tree Planter is one of GAVs fleet of 12 direct seeding and mechanical planting machines available under the statewide Alcoa Revegetation Assistance Scheme.

## ***Willows attacked***

This year the Powlett Project expanded to tackle a number of other issues within the catchment including nutrient run-off and weed control activities.



*David Ziebell showed the group how hand seeding over moulboard ploughing is a cost effective vegetation establishment technique in South Gippsland.*

A highlight of the year was a Dairy Effluent Expo held last March. 75 local farmers were able to see a range of effluent management options designed to help reduce dairy waste running off farms and getting into local waterways.

Willow control works also commenced during 1997 when the Powlett Catchment Landcare Group in conjunction with the West Gippsland Catchment Authority poisoned willows along over 10 kilometres of Powlett River frontage. The willows were causing soil erosion problems and contributing to flooding in the lower reaches of the catchment.

The Powlett project has been supported by Alcoa, BHP, Edission Mission, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Landcare Australia Limited. With these partners on board, the project is set to continue over at least the next three years.

For further information contact Martin Fuller on (03) 5674 3516, Scott Brain on (03) 5662 2204 or David Ziebell on (03) 5662 9212.

# MAKING FUNDING GO FURTHER:

## A group owned Loan Fund

A Landcare Loan Fund is being developed by landcare groups in north east Victoria to overcome funding difficulties for on ground work. It aims to provide low interest loans to landholders for landcare works by autumn 1998.

Molyullah/Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group have initiated the project for the Broken Catchment Landcare Network. The concept is being modelled on Community Loan Funds in the USA which have been owned and operated since 1983 by voluntary community groups without specialist banking skills.

### Project Achievements

Interest in the concept was expressed by groups around Benalla in spring 1995. In March 1996 legal assistance was obtained by the group to refine the legalities involved in setting up a group owned loan fund. Local bankers, DNRE staff, and staff of a fund in suburban Melbourne that provides no interest loans for disadvantaged people have also been involved. Technical assistance was also given to the project by a Community Loan Fund in the USA.

The results of this work were discussed with landcare group members, and an appropriate legal and administrative structure along with draft loan contract and security agreement have now been developed.

The landcare network was keen to develop the concept of the community owned loan fund and is looking to develop a Pilot Program. This Program aims to provide \$30,000 in loans every year from 1998. Administration of the program will be designed to be within the skills set of group members.

It is hoped to invite other groups to join and expand the Fund to provide more than \$100,000 in loans each autumn for landcare work.

The loan scenario is presented below:

Amount of loan:	6 x \$5,000 loans made each year
Repayment terms:	\$1,000/year/loan paid quarterly over 5 years
Total grants needed:	\$90,000 raised over 6 years
Loan loss reserve:	\$4,500
Total loans in operation:	30 (after 6 years)

### The Landcare Loan Fund pilot program

	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	//	Yr 6
Loan sourced from:	6 x 5,000	6 x 5,000	6 x 5,000	//	6 x 5,000
Loan Repayments:	0	6,000	12,000	//	30,000
Grants	30,000	24,000	18,000	//	0

All figures in present values.

Loan repayments would rise nominally in line with inflation. Loan terms and purpose to be decided by a Loans Committee drawn from landcare groups.

Note the initial loan funds are sourced from grants, but over time the Fund relies more and more on loan repayments to operate its loan program.

### What will Fund Participants gain from all of this?

Donations to the loan fund provide people with a secure and cost effective means of assisting landcare groups or becoming involved in landcare. By having their contribution used as a capital base rather than a one off payment, contributors to the fund will feel greater ownership and involvement in the process, a fact the Fund hopes will encourage people to donate funds to the cause.

Once up and running the Fund will depend less on external funding sources. Regardless of the success of other grant submissions, the Loan Fund will generate its own cash flow by borrowers paying back principal and 2-3% interest (to allow for inflation.)

It is hoped that over ten years, \$300,000 worth of loans will have been made to the community for landcare works.

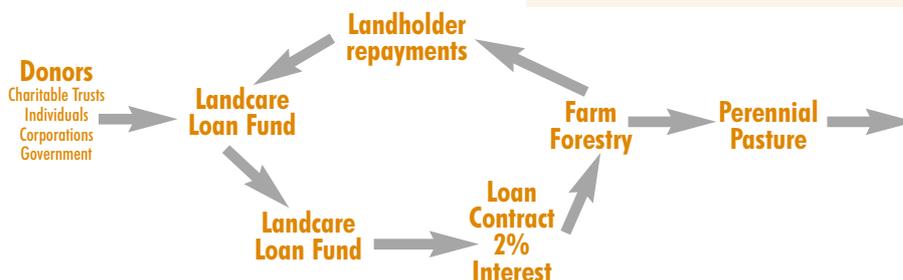
For more information regarding the Landcare fund scheme, contact Derek Mortimer, secretary of the Molyullah/Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group on 5767 2330

### How a Landcare Loan Fund works

A Landcare Loan Fund is owned and managed by a Landcare Network. It begins life with capital grants from donor bodies. Loans are then made by the Fund to landholders to help establish landcare works. Loan repayments are adjusted by the CPI to account for inflation, but otherwise loans are interest free.

A Forestry Rights Agreement secures large farm forestry loans using the new Forestry Rights Act (Vic)1996.

This effectively mortgages the trees (and only the trees) to the Fund until the loan is repaid. As loan repayments are made by landholders, money becomes available again to provide landcare loans.



# Farmer - Corporate partnership lifts district pastures.

By Cam Nicholson

The performance of pastures in the Alcoa Woody Yaloak Catchment Project have been given a boost thanks to a partnership between district farmers and Wesfarmers Dalgety.

A \$10,000 sponsorship from Wesfarmers helped Woody Yaloak's farmers enhance their skills in pasture agronomy and at the same time exposed local Wesfarmers staff to a wealth of landholder experience.

The program, called Better Pastures attracted more than half the farming families in the catchment to a series of farm walks and information sessions, designed to develop confidence in preparing and sowing pastures.

Local farmer Jim Boyle saw Better Pastures as a natural progression from the first four years of the Alcoa catchment project when 3,800 ha of improved pastures were sown.

"The Alcoa funding helped many farmers experiment with pastures on their own farms and wet their appetite for further work," Jim said.

Access to advice in the paddock has become more difficult as demand for information on pastures has increased, according to Jim.

"We needed to develop our own skills so we are better informed when discussing

The Better Pastures program has not made us pasture experts but it has helped us become more self reliant."

## Good Business

Joining the Woody Yaloak project was good business according to Peter O'Loughlin, area agronomist for Wesfarmers Dalgety in Geelong.

"We wanted to improve our support for pasture management in the Woody Yaloak catchment and this provided a great opportunity to grow our business.

"Better Pastures provided the opportunity for Wesfarmers staff to learn from the experience and knowledge of the Woody Yaloak farmers."

"The format of Better Pastures suited our approach to build personal relationships with our clients."

It is also paying dividends for Wesfarmers with landholders in the catchment beginning to shift business towards the company.

## The program

Better Pastures was designed by the Woody Yaloak farmers who clearly identified where they wanted to develop their pasture expertise.

*Participating landholders chose a "problem paddock" on their farm, a soil test was taken, pasture species identified and management options discussed.*

were considered but didn't suit the group's immediate needs.

"We needed to gain more confidence with the basics such as plant identification and reading a soil test." Jim said.

"Once we have mastered the basics these other courses have a lot to offer."

Better Pastures involved a series of short information sessions followed by visits to three or four different paddocks to put the theory into practice.

Participating landholders chose a "problem paddock" on their farm to use as a case study. A soil test was taken and the pasture species identified.

This information was discussed and a course of action decided.

For more information on the content and delivery of Better Pastures, contact



# RANDCARE - Landcare moves

By Rob Youl, Landcare Foundation Victoria

*A continent away; a country no longer apart ...*

Landcare works for us - what about a much more populous country with a stratified, apartheid-scarred community?

Educational standards are high, but most South Africans have had little schooling. Eleven official languages, nine provincial governments - some new - and huge gaps between the resources, skills and outputs of the export-oriented European farmers on large properties, and the millions of maize-growing tribal farmers feeding large families from two hectares!

The country's strong technical infrastructure includes community monitoring programs, and many creative community projects, some financed by overseas governments and welfare groups.



L➔R - Rob Youl, Larry Clark (US), Cyprian Buthulizi, Njabula Nduli, Elaine Spencer-White and Sue Marriott

Generally women retain traditional roles, but feminism grows, with many female officials and politicians emerging lately.

*... and parallels abound*

Common threads: English for communication; mediterranean climate; lengthy occupation by indigenous peoples; multicultural environments; ancient landscapes, extraordinary flora and fauna; similar government, export industries and public institutions - and land-use problems.

### **Fruitful friendship**

Two years ago, as a Churchill Fellow studying land restoration, Sue Marriott met Elaine Spencer-White, Johannesburg media consultant.

Sue and Elaine vowed to try to introduce Landcare to South Africa.

The intervening months filled with faxes and phone calls, and several senior Pretoria public servants gave fine support. Nevertheless, Sue needed huge vision, optimism and courage to raise the necessary \$110 000.

But she did - from Alcoa of Australia, AusAid, Ace Radio-3HA, the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research, the Ern Hartley Foundation, the Landcare Foundation, the Poola Foundation, the Republic of South Africa's Departments of Agriculture and Water and Forestry, the Uebergang Foundation, the US Department of Agriculture and Hamilton's Wool and Rural Industries Skills Training (WRIST) Centre.

### **Come September**

The men and women I met at Perth on 5 September comprised three Zulus, three Afrikaners, three of English descent, two Xhosa, one Swazi and one Venda.

Four national-level policy-makers, two from agroforestry community projects, two in media, two in projects for provincial governments, one in agricultural training, one in agripolitics (the Zulu canefarmers federation), and one in computer systems support.

All work at what we'd call landcare activities so could share their own useful experiences. And as few knew each other, they'll form long-lasting bonds.

### **On the road**

Our superb route criss-crossed the WA wheatbelt, looking at Alcoa accelerated catchment projects at West Dale, Tammin and Gabby Quoi Quoi: enormous regional salinity problems, scores of committed landowners doing large-scale restoration works.

Peter Thabethe's Swazi gumboot dance complemented an ultra-friendly South Yoting bush hop.

Georg Schutte (R) & Hendrik Smit (L) explain South Africa to Victorians Wally Brown and Pat Francis



Landcare people from two continents at the WRIST CENTRE in Hamilton

We toured Alcoa's excellent minesite rehabilitation and joined an amiable forum on WA landcare led by Theo Nabben.

Welcomed to Victoria by Minister Tehan, the group dined with Don Ross of New Zealand Landcare Trust. Driving to Hamilton we visited the Blakes at Shelford and the Weatherlys at Mortlake, all committed to improving sustainability.

### **Partners**

Twenty-five Australian landcarers attended Sue's second forum - at WRIST Centre. Over two days Viv McWaters oversaw an open-space conference, full of co-operation, learning and friendship.

After meeting the Milnes at Melville Forest, we saw some of Black Range Dundas Group's over 140 kilometres of corridors created since 1985.

### **Bop 'til you drop**

The group participated fully in the exciting National Landcare Conference, providing benchmark dinner dance



# Westwards

rhythmic performances when hundreds bopped 'til they dropped.

Next day Primary Industries Minister John Anderson presented Mrs Najbula Naduli, delegation leader, with a Landcare South Africa logo, the caring hands shape readily adapting to outline the African continent.

Najbula, a Zulu and director in the Department of Agriculture, Pretoria, responded memorably. The logo would be official. It recognises the interdependence of Africa's countries, and the need for continental environmental goals.

Rowan Reid's and Andrew Stewart's Birregurra agroforests were bus-stops when returning to Melbourne, with a happy last evening meal chez Youl.

On Monday 22 September, the group, its sponsors and Viv McWaters reviewed the tour at Melbourne Town Hall. Lord Mayor Deveson, who had worked in the republic, wittily farewelled our visitors, who flew out in great spirits, vowing to maintain momentum and keep contact.

They praised Australian honesty, the Landcare-generated trust between government and people, and the involvement of passionate, knowledgeable farmers at all levels.

## **In future**

Three things seem likely: we have advanced landcare in South Africa, Australian landcarers can assess their place in the world, and we will run partnership tours for other regional groups.



# In Brief

## **\$1 Million funding boost**

The State Government has strengthened its commitment to the Landcare Partnership Initiative with the allocation of \$1 million in grants for the coming year announced by the Conservation and Land Management Minister, Marie Tehan.

The funding will continue 25 existing on-ground projects and co-ordinator positions and allow the commencement of six new projects worth \$162,720 during the next 12 months.

The funding is for the appointment of community based co-ordinators who will assist in the implementation of priorities identified in the Regional Catchment Management Strategies, funds specific on-ground works and gives financial support to Landcare Foundation Victoria.

## **Landcare Month 1998**

The theme for the next Landcare Month, in March 1998, is 'People in Landcare.' It aims to recognise the contribution that individuals and groups are making towards healthy land and a healthy future.

A calendar of Landcare Month events around the State will be included in the March issue of the Victorian Landcare Magazine. If your group has an event that you would like included fax the details to Jo Safstrom at DNRE on (03) 9412 4442.

## **Competencies**

The Department of Primary Industries and Energy and Environment Australia are developing a set of 'competency standards' for facilitators, co-ordinators and leaders working with community groups.

Competency standards are statements that describe the skills and knowledge required in a job, and the application of those skills and knowledge. The standards will be developed through consultation with practitioners and industry across Australia.

Competency standards help to identify the skills and knowledge required to do a job and assist in focusing training on the essential skills required.

David Beckingsale from DNRE is a representative on the Project Management Committee and is happy to answer queries people may have about the project. Call David on (03) 9637 8336.

## **1998 Victorian Landcare Group Survey**

The Victorian Landcare Group Survey, conducted by Dr Allan Curtis from Charles Sturt University will be undertaken again in 1998. The survey has been conducted in 1991, 1993, and 1995. As such, it provides valuable information on the state of Landcare Group activity over time.

The survey increases the understanding of the issues groups face. It also provides an opportunity for assessing the level of group activity and the factors likely to impact on their performance. Importantly, it represents an opportunity for groups to outline their needs. A sample of groups from each CMA region will be surveyed in mid 1998.

## **Natural Heritage Trust Update**

The Commonwealth recently announced at least \$34 million to Victoria for implementation of Natural Heritage Trust projects. Funding covers a number of NHT programs including projects submitted by community groups and under the recently signed Commonwealth/State Partnership Agreement.

Approximately \$13 million has been allocated to the National Landcare Program. Applicants should have received advice as to whether their projects were funded.

Applications for 1998/99 will be called for this month (December) and will close in February/March. Victoria's submission will be forwarded to Canberra in June.

Should you require further information about your 1997/98 application or the 1998/99 process, please contact the NHT contact officer at your local DNRE office.

# When the skies are alive, with

By Carri Tiffany

Long-billed Coreellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Galahs. When most of Victoria was cleared for farming the numbers of cockatoos, particularly the Long-billed Coreella, took a beating.

The early settlers replaced their traditional food source of Native Yam with exotic grain crops and weeds like Onion Grass. The birds adjusted well to a change of diet. But competing with rabbits, losing habitat and the uncontrolled use of poisons severely reduced their numbers.

Ask a grain farmer today about cockatoo numbers and you'll get some staggering figures. In the Wimmera flocks of 3-4,000 birds are not uncommon. The birds are no longer competing with large numbers of rabbits, (mainly due to the introduction of myxomatosis in the 1950's) and food is readily available. Long-billed Coreellas have now recolonised their traditional range whilst Galahs head further and further south.

The birds flock in large numbers, descending on paddocks of emerging crops and causing significant damage. They are also attracted to vines, young gum trees and timber structures like farm sheds and



*Sulphur-crested Cockatoos scratching for onion grass.*

houses.

Ian Temby, Wildlife Damage Control Officer with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment says the key to controlling cockatoos is understanding their behaviour patterns.

"Cockatoos are sociable birds. They form flocks and develop regular flight paths to feeding areas. The formation of big flocks comes through enhancement behaviour- a few birds land to feed, they are seen by other birds from the air who then land to feed, and the pattern goes on..."

Ian Temby says the birds are attracted to sprouting crops. Their preferred foods are onion grass, oat and rice grains and sunflower seeds. "During winter cockatoos can feed all day, in the summer they feed in the early morning and late afternoon."

According to Ian Temby the best cockatoo control revolves around good farm management and vigilance. "Farmers need to avoid giving the birds a decoy feed through spillage of seed or excess seed in the stubble. And they need to get in early; scaring the birds away as soon as they arrive and returning often to re-inforce the message."

## **Decoy feeding**

Ken McPhee has tried giving the Coreellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos that frequent his property west of Stawell a

'free feed' to distract them during sowing.

Last year Ken ploughed-up 10 acres of onion grass 800m away from the paddock he was sowing and had 'reasonable success.' He did the same this year, but unfortunately with little benefit.

Ken McPhee doesn't know why the onion grass worked one year and not the next, but he does know the birds are smart. "Our farm is on a main road and there's a lot of utes going past but they know which one is mine."

Ken admits he puts a great deal of effort into cockatoo control. He will often visit a paddock five or six times a day when the young grain shoots are emerging, always with his rifle at hand.

It's when he works away from the farm, as a hay contractor, that the major damage occurs. "In one area I lost 40 acres of wheat and 30 acres of oats over a three day period. 95 percent of the crop was damaged."

Ken McPhee's advice is to try and sow all crops at the same time. This means bird surveillance can be done in one concentrated period, reducing labour and frustration.

Ian Temby says decoy feeding is an option worth considering. In a trial of decoy feeding in South Australia 4,000 Long-billed Coreellas were fed 20 tonnes of Oats over a ten week period- while the main seeding and germination phase of



*Merv Cupper from Yelta, near Merbein, with his gas operated scare gun. Merv uses the gun to keep Little Coreellas out of his young trees.*

# the sound of cockies

winter cereals was completed.

Taking into account the value of the grain, wages and on-costs the result was a 10-15 fold benefit. Plus the lower costs to farmers of the reduced scaring effort needed and the extra time available for other tasks.

In Victoria rice hulls and almond skins have also been used as successful decoy feed.

## Flying high

Ian Ross uses kites to help control Corellas on his 200 acres at Telangatuk, on the Glenelg River. Ian says there has always been a Corella problem in the area and as cropping increases, so have bird numbers.

"A few Galahs come in first, followed by Corellas. When the big flocks form they can easily devastate a 40 acre paddock in just one day," says Ian.

Ian Ross' use of kites as a Corella deterrent came by chance. His children brought home a kite from a show bag, he attached it to a fence and was amazed to see it kept the birds off 20 acres.

Ian Ross set to work designing a bigger, stronger kite. After some experimentation he settled on a sled design constructed from black plastic and dowel. The kite is fixed to a fence into the prevailing wind on 3-400 metres of baling twine. Ian's basic advice is, "the higher, the bigger and the blacker, the better." One kite will protect around 80 acres.

Ian Ross believes the kites are successful as they mimic birds of prey. "The Corellas take one quick, low lap of the paddock and head off. The kites work best on a light breezy day. They are no good when its still, or too windy."

Ian Ross stresses that the kites are just one more option for cockatoo control. They have halved his use of the scare gun. He also shoots with a regular rifle to "let them know he's serious."

" I use a variety of methods and certainly the kites have been worthwhile. They're cheap to produce, but time consuming. It would be good business if someone wanted to go into making them."



Cocktaoo damage to a maize crop east of Colac.

## Free traps

The only legal ways to control cockatoos are shooting, ( if you are a farmer protecting trees, vineyards, orchards or any commercial crop), and trapping and gassing. Traps are available for loan from a number of Department of Natural Resources and Environment Offices.

Ian Temby says that whilst some farmers may be tempted to use poisons, the risks are unacceptable. "Ultimately poisoning doesn't have any real effect on population numbers. Then there is the risk of inadvertently destroying 'non-target' species and of contaminating crops."

Ian Temby says poisoning is illegal and dangerous. "Farm safety is a really key issue."

## Cockatoo Control

### 1 Good farm management

- Control onion grass
- Avoid free feeding in the crop; avoid spillage, sow at recommended rates, minimise residual grain in the stubble.
- Consider minimum tillage practices.
- Feed stock in the evening when the birds are not around.

### 2 Scare guns

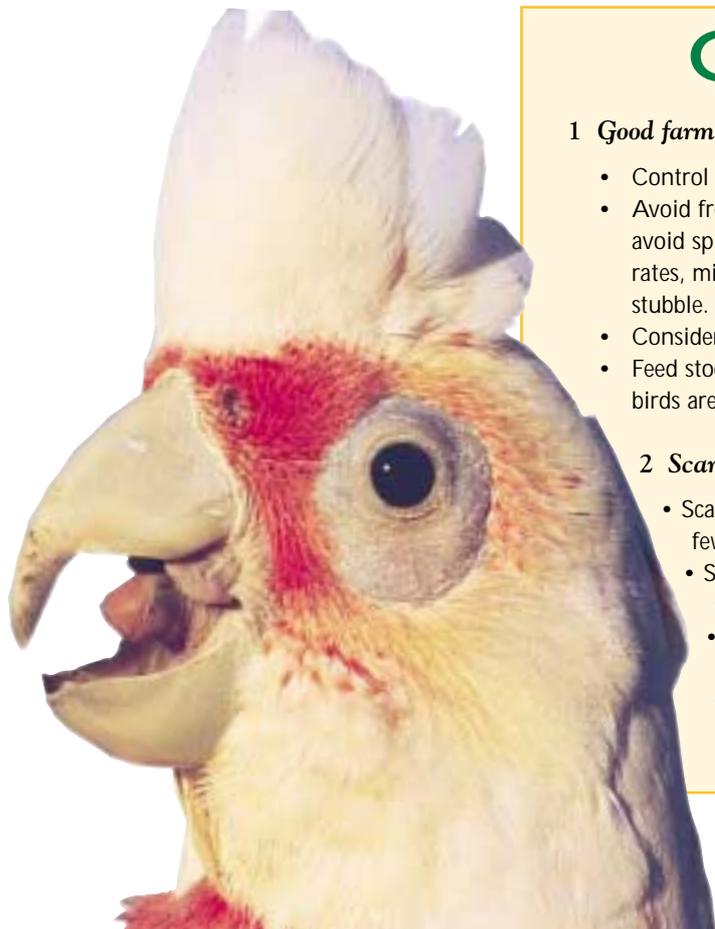
- Scare early- when the first few birds arrive.
- Scare often. ( Evening scaring can be successful.)
- Shift the scare gun regularly.
- Back up with use of a real gun.

### 3 Kites, scarecrows, hides and vehicles

- Combine several methods of scaring.
- Scaring must be erratic- shift the scarer often.
- Use kites that simulate birds of prey.
- Works better on small paddocks.

### 3 Decoy feeding

- Use second seed, or plough onion grass to expose corms.
- Decoy feed as far away as possible from real crop site.
- Continue scaring at real crop site.
- Extra feed will not increase population numbers. It only diverts existing birds from your crop.



# MERV & JAN CUPPER: Our top

Merv and Jan Cupper are the winners of the 1997 Harold J Hanslow Award for sustainable land management in the Mallee Region. They are also the winners of the 1997 Landcare Primary Producer Award. The Cuppers will represent Victoria in the Primary Producer category at the National Landcare Awards to be announced in Canberra in March 1998.

In 1959, when Merv Cupper was 11 years old, he entered a story writing competition in the Weekly Times and won ten shillings. Merv's story was about a swamp, he described it as a bird paradise. Nearly forty years later Merv is winning competitions for farm management and still dreaming of birds.

Merv and Jan Cupper farm 46 hectares of irrigated grape vines and citrus at Yelta, North West of Merbein. Citrus production represents about 25 percent of the farm, winegrapes and dried vine fruit make up the rest. Merv purchased the land in 1970, and is starting to see reward for his efforts at 'meshing farming and conservation together.'



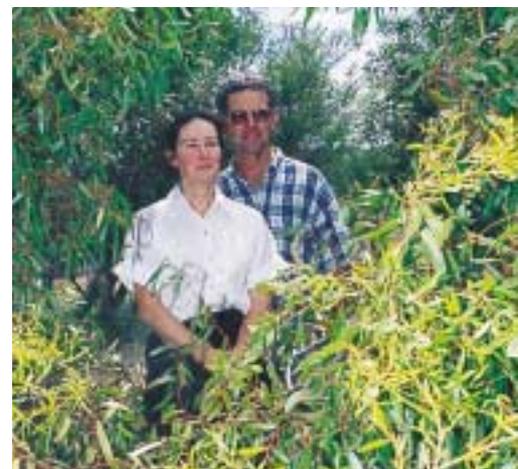
Merv believes diversity is very important for the horticulturalist. "In general I have managed to develop strategies to combat most of what nature can throw at me. However, the whims and fickleness of politicians and our trading nations create quite another challenge."

"A good strategy is to be as diverse as possible and maintain the highest quality standard for the fruit produced. A recent example was the 1997 citrus season - juice prices as low as \$25 per tonne with export navels to America well in excess of \$500 per tonne. With an export packout of 92 percent and 8 percent juice, the results are obvious."

The Cuppers property has an average yearly rainfall of around 250 mm - but with considerable variation from year to year. An additional 750 mm of water for irrigation is supplied from the Murray River via a privately managed irrigation pumping system. Merv maintains the 100 H.P. electric motor driven pump to a high mechanical and environmental standard.

Merv is an active member of the Nyah to the Border Salinity Implementation Group. He has been involved in the planning, writing and now implementation of the areas Salinity Management Plan.

*Merv uses 'no cultivation' farming.*



*Merv and Jan in an area of White Mallee*

His knowledge of salinity, picked up through the group, has directly affected the way he runs his property.

"On this property, with the different soil types and widely varying infiltration rates of water, there is the potential to cause shallow perched watertables, particularly in the lower areas. This, in turn, can lead to associated problems such as waterlogging, land degradation and poor production."

Merv has invested a great deal of effort in matching irrigation application rates with soil types and plant usage. His irrigation methods vary from patch to patch and include overhead and under tree sprinklers and drip irrigation. Ultimately he plans to change totally to drip irrigation because it gives better control of the water and fertiliser requirements to the plants.

Reducing water use is one of Merv's passions. "As a result of five years experience with drip irrigation I can confidently say that irrigation rates can be reduced by 30 percent. This means money savings and more importantly, less drainage waste and increased environmental flows." Merv says water use by the horticultural industry could be slashed if drip irrigation was used more widely.

Another feature of Merv's management strategy is non-cultivation, which he believes has led to a more even production over the farm.



*The fruits of their labour: Merv and Jan Cupper with the Mallee Region Hanslow Cup*

# primary producers

In 1970 Merv had a severe gully erosion problem in a vineyard of Shiraz winegrapes. Heavy rainfall had created a natural storm water course and tonnes of soil was washed away. He put a lot of effort into filling the gully just to see the soil wash away again during each heavy rain.

Merv planted the area and moved to non-cultivation. Now he witnesses torrents of water flowing through the same water course, but with almost no damage. Merv admits non-cultivation has created some problems with weeds, and a special effort is needed to deal with them. He resorts to hand weeding and burning, stubbornly refusing to bring out the cultivation implements.

Although Merv admits it isn't practical to retain trees within an orchard enterprise, he has still managed to develop several regeneration areas and replant sites of native trees and shrubs.

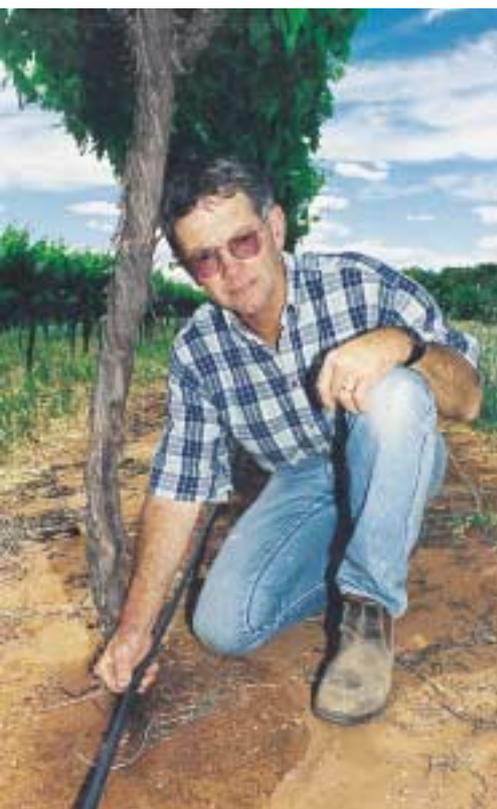
His two hectare site of inland red gums serves as a drainage reuse area. Merv knows that careful management is required with trees grown using drainage water in excess of 2000 EC. The best site for the project was under citrus and vines, so Merv removed them. A dramatic move,

but a successful one. Recently the Nyah - South Australia Border Salinity Implementation Committee has become involved with the reuse plantation. They are providing funds to expand the area and use it as a demonstration site.

Merv is excited by this development. "The site is considered a valuable contribution to the battle against salinization of the Murray River and its valuable associated wetlands; and to the education of the community about their responsibility to better manage the environment. Now that's something worth being involved in."



*Merv aims to produce the best quality fruit possible.*



## Crown land a 'valuable asset'

Merv's guiding principle in his farming exercise is to always be aware of the consequence of his actions beyond the farm boundaries. Merv tests his achievements on a six acre area of crown land to the west of his property.

"At my own expense I have fenced this area (with DNRE approval) and progressively planted it with indigenous, but salt tolerant, trees and shrubs.

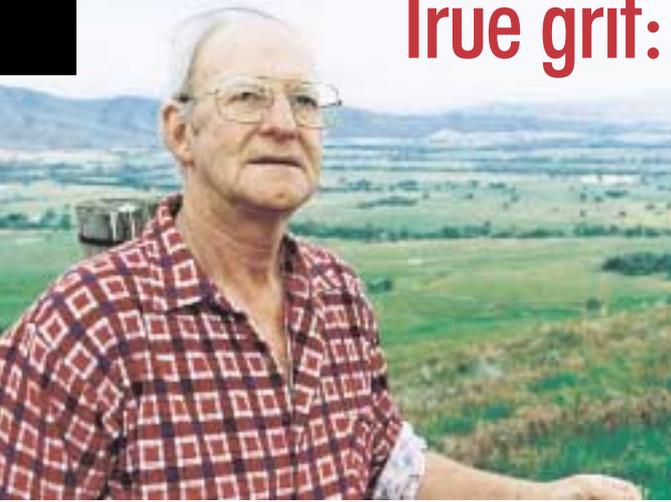
"As the land has recovered from seepage and dry salting damage I have moved in and planted mostly White Mallee (*Eucalyptus gracilis*). The final stage was planted in Spring 1996."

Merv is negotiating to purchase the site which he believes will be a valuable addition to his property. "One day, when I'm not spending so much time at meetings I'd love to get my binoculars out again and rekindle my passion for bird watching."

*Merv with the drip irrigation he believes gives better control of water to plants.*

# True grit: Burgoigee Creek and Hodgson

By Carri Tiffany



*Myles McCormack retired from banking in Melbourne to an eyrie in the Murrumungee hills. Myles runs sheep on very steep country with a severe bracken and rabbit problem. He has worked with neighbours on a massive spraying and bait laying program. 50-60 bags of baits were laid by hand on his 40 acre property.*

on their own place. The Group is important for co-ordinating the action, getting funding and loaning equipment."

The Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Group is a bigger affair, bringing in more hobby farmers that live on the outskirts of Wangaratta and Beechworth. Arthur Bennett, a past president of the Group and long time member, says the benefits of joining far outweigh the membership fee of \$20 a year.

"We have quite a store of machinery; a pasture seed drill, boom spray unit, rabbit fumigator, tree planters, bait layer and a deep ripper. Not only do members get to use the equipment but we'll also show them how. Give them advice on the best chemicals and techniques."

## **Rabbit control campaign**

Both Burgoigee and Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Groups have always had a rabbit and weeds focus. In 1996, after a run of mild winters and summer rains, rabbit numbers were almost at plague proportions. One absentee's property had a burrow every square metre.

Unfortunately RCD did little to help the situation, (Royce says it worked as an aphrodisiac!) so with assistance under the 'Rabbit Buster Program' the groups undertook a major 1080 campaign.

*(L to R) Joe, Mark and Lou Grech. The Grech's are newcomers to the Burgoigee Creek Group. Mark says the knowledge and information that the Group has given him is invaluable.*

## **Winners of the 1997 John F Hughes Award for the outstanding work of a group in pest plant and animal control.**

When you drive up to north east Victoria on the huge ribbon of the Hume Freeway, the purple flowers of Paterson's Curse are like a patchwork quilt; some bare squares where it's being controlled, and many purple patches where it has its head.

But once you turn off, down the Ovens Highway, as if you are heading for the snow, the paddocks are noticeably cleaner. This is the country of the Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Group, and when you reach Murrumungee, the Burgoigee Creeks Landcare Group.

## **Two groups; one co-ordinator**

The two Groups share a co-ordinator, Royce Sample. Judy Griffiths, Secretary of the Burgoigee Group describes Royce as "a good sheepdog, he just keeps turning us back." Royce works one day a week for each Group, doing the legwork to keep them functioning.

The Burgoigee Group formed in 1987. The Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Group in 1989. Sheep and cattle are the main enterprises, with minimal cropping- mainly for stock feed. Group members, (110 members jointly) are keen to stress that they are 'real' farmers and that productivity issues and on-ground works have top priority.

According to James Neary, the Burgoigee Group's President, "people do their own thing



# and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Groups



Members of the Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Landcare Group in their meeting room at the Everton Upper School House. (L to R) Andrew Davison, Arthur Bennett, Ron Briggs, Betty Bennett, Peter Bourke and Royce Sample.

A cool room on Ron Briggs' property (a member of the Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Group), was turned into the carrot command centre with a chopper and a constant stock of carrots. Five baitlaying machines were obtained from DNRE and located at 'carrot command centre.'

A roster was developed to make sure the machines were used in a specific area at the same time and returned to the central point each day. The DNRE Office at Beechworth arranged a daily 1080 application every afternoon for a month.

The campaign grew into a huge wave of activity. Group members volunteered to assist others, members and non-members alike, to use the machines. In some cases they actually did the job for older landholders who were not physically able. The Victorian Plantations Corporation joined in too, contracting the Groups to bait three local plantations.

The result was a huge reduction in rabbit numbers. Royce reports that 10,840 kg of carrots were used on 64 properties. In some parts of the catchment not a single rabbit could be found at the end of the campaign.

The rabbit program has been matched by extensive weed control work. The Group's have targeted 'the curse and the wort.' Paterson's Curse and St John's Wort, along with Blackberry and Bracken. Burgoigee Creeks wrote its first weed management plan in 1992. More recently both Groups have obtained funding through the State Government's 'Community Weed Control Scheme'.

The Groups put their success with the rabbit and weed programs down to their Co-ordinator, Royce Sample. Royce deflects this, saying the Groups are "full of go-getters who are prepared to go the extra mile."

James Neary from Burgoigee Creeks says getting the funding is the key to getting some action, and this is where a co-ordinator is important. "Groups need someone who can write the right submissions in the right language. Someone who can keep nudging the funding sources along and make sure they know what we're doing."

James says submission writing should be getting to the point quickly. Royce admits the paperwork can be crippling. "The first submission I wrote as a co-ordinator nine years ago was one page long, each of my most recent submission were nine pages long. Where is it going to end?"

Both Groups see themselves as part of the wider community. They are keen to link up with tertiary institutions in research partnerships and have developed productive relationships with Latrobe University at Wodonga and the Wangaratta TAFE.

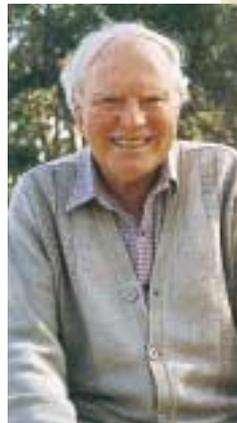
The Groups are members of the Ovens Landcare Network which has a major role in co-ordinating the salinity program in the area. They are sceptical about the benefits of these large regional Landcare networks, saying they further distance advisory staff and government departments from farmers and create more administration for the Groups.

## Future full of hard work

Ken Heywood from the Burgoigee Creek Group says the future has more of the same. More rabbit and weed control, more hard work. "We can't afford to let it slip now. We're running the same rabbit campaign this summer and the weed control is a constant task." The Group is also concerned about increasing salinity problems, they are keen to aerial seed some steep recharge areas with perennial pastures but finding the money isn't easy.

*Judy Griffiths, long time Secretary of the Burgoigee Creek Group, with Royce Sample planning their next rabbit offensive.*

➔ This is where it all began. Ken Heywood next to a gully he planted as one of the Burgoigee Creek Group's first Landcare activities in 1983.



➔ Peter Bourke is the Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Group's 'man of the trees' Peter grows all of the trees for the Group for no charge and with little assistance. He co-ordinates the collection of local seed and is constantly experimenting with different techniques to get the best results.

Worries about age run through the Groups. Peter Bourke says "some of us are getting on a bit. When you look about there aren't many young faces."

The Hodgson and Horseshoe Creeks Group also has another battle to fight on another front. Their meeting room, the Everton Upper Old Schoolhouse, with its walls covered in maps and plans and aerial photographs, is being sold. The Group has successfully stalled the auction and hopes they will be granted the title. For Betty Bennett, the Group's Secretary, it's an issue very close to home. Betty went to school at Everton Upper, as did all of her six children.



# Landcare and

By Greg Rankin,  
Mitiamo

Landcare and grain growing can go together. We farm a mixed Merino and grain enterprise on 9,500 acres North of Bendigo. The average rainfall is 14.5 inches. The operation is entirely 'dryland' based and involves our own ground, leased land and share farming. Since 1994 we've made some drastic changes to the way we produce grain- the result of some obvious economic and environmental logic. Let me explain.

As a grain grower our focus is to increase the water use efficiency of our crops and improve the structure of the soil. I see this as critical. We have limited rainfall so soil structure must allow high infiltration and reduce runoff. Further, crop husbandry (that is rotation, fertility and disease control) must produce healthy crops which can use this water to advantage.

With a healthy crop and good soil structure a high percentage of rainfall enters the root zone. This means runoff and loss below the root zone is dramatically reduced. I believe it also reduces nutrient loss.

**Healthy high yielding crops begin when the pasture phase is planted.**

Pastures are planted with the last crop of a rotation. The pasture phase is a time when soil nutrient levels can be bolstered through applied phosphorus and fixed atmospheric nitrogen. It is also the period when levels of organic matter should be increasing. Organic matter aides soil structure and acts as a slow release nutrient reserve during the crop phase.

Ideally the pasture phase will contain a high legume content to raise soil nitrate levels. It should also aim to improve soil structural characteristics such as drainage and organic content.



**Greg Rankin in a fallow paddock.**  
"Degradation of soils has taken place over an extended period, any move toward their repair is a good move. Obviously the quicker the repair the better, but it should not be at the expense of the farm business."

Therefore good pastures will contain deep rooted perennials which break deep into the subsoil, recycling nutrients and creating pores for future root and water movement. As organic matter builds in soils there is a marked increase in its flora and fauna. Earth worms spring to mind quickly, but termites, ants, fungus, etc. all have a role in creating pores and galleries and converting plant and animal residues into plant food.

Pasture is a productive component of all future crops. It is a rest time; a period of credits in the soil health bank. We now prepare for a crop two seasons prior to planting. Herbicides are used to manipulate pasture content. Once the clovers have flowered my only choice is to cultivate the soil. I am locked into this as our rainfall doesn't guarantee sufficient moisture to cultivate prior to the autumn break in the following year.

**Fertiliser decisions made after soil testing**

Our fertiliser programme is based on well timed soil testing and the application rate is adjusted to produce our target yield without depleting the soils reserves.

*"The time has come where farmers can no longer rely on governments to provide the level of support we have come to accept. The grains industry needs to access government and industry funds under self help arrangements, conduct our own research and market the findings. The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) is our most valuable tool, providing both direction and the means to understand problems and produce logical solutions."*



# grain growing

Tissue testing and regular sap nitrate testing gives us the ability to keep an accurate eye on soil fertility and allows an educated fine tuning of nitrogen applications. Tissue testing shows zinc status which is not reliably detected in soil tests. Nitrogen is applied as urea, in a pre-drill operation and phosphatic fertilisers are planted with the seed.

Gypsum is regarded by many as a cure all. It certainly aides water infiltration and prevents surface crusting but these are long term problems of over cultivation and declining organic matter. We use gypsum as a catalyst when a paddock is first fallowed, but hope that improvements in soil husbandry will achieve the same results in the longer term.

## **A good crop needs good seeds**

A crop needs every chance. Good quality disease free seeds are essential. We aim to achieve approximately 125 shoots per square metre, per ton of grain, per hectare. This can only be done with good quality seed and adequate fertiliser.

Crop rotation is important mainly from a disease control point of view. While the paddock is fresh, having come out of good legume based pastures with grasses removed, I plant canola as a first crop. Canola has been shown to have a fumigating effect; as the crop residue breaks down, chemicals are released which destroy some of the yield limiting diseases in wheat. Following canola, wheat always performs well.

We are beginning to plant Faba beans or Lupins as a third crop and have Lucerne as an undersown pasture Legume. Wheat is direct drilled into this stubble then undersown with Lucerne again. This gives two seasons to establish Lucerne and reduces the effect of unsympathetic seasons. Clovers and Medics are spread along with fertiliser, into the final stubble the following autumn.

As such we have four crops capable of producing high yields and disease is controlled by never growing back to back co-hosts.

*"It is paramount to the long term health of every catchment, that as much grain be extracted from each hectare as possible. If yields are always close to maximum then less area has to be under crop to feed the population. Poor quality crops on marginal land use almost as many resources as high yielding crops. They are an unsound economic and ecological proposition."*



## **Direct drilling is not always the best option**

Producing grain crops today is an expensive business. There is a huge pressure on growers to adopt direct drilling or at the very least, stubble retention, minimum tillage technology. Sowing time is not the time to rush head long into either of these practices without knowledge of the pitfalls.

The body of evidence which says stubble retention systems are superior in the long term is huge and growing. But the machinery to do the job properly, is exorbitant in price. At the end of the day many growers buy a machine that may not perform the task to the optimum. It may be better to adopt minimum tillage and perform operations which leave crop residues in a manageable state, things like slashing

or mowing. The bottom line is still a balance between short time viability and long term sustainability.

## **Landcare and "inputs" can go together**

The road to producing high yielding grain crops is via the adoption of sound soil care principles. We use herbicides, pesticides and artificial fertilisers, but still farm with Landcare principles in mind.

My background was low input and non chemical but I believe the soils and crops we are producing today are much healthier than they were under previous production methods. Responsible fertiliser and herbicide use is part of our Landcare ethic, in a bid to minimise the wider impact on the catchment.

## **Photographs by Carri Tiffany**

*"How do we get other farmers to change? Demonstration paddocks should be set up at strategic sites where grain is produced. The information should be posted in a user friendly format so that at any time a passerby stops for a look it's obvious what's being done and why. I am thinking here of the excellent work being done by the Birchip Crop Demonstration sites. The future will see a shift away from machinery field days to technology transfer type formats."*



# The benefits of 'setting' aside

By Greg Rankin

Land stewardship is not a god given right. Farmers need to view their properties from the outside to see the total picture and the ramifications of their activities.

I would like to see all farmers think about set aside areas for land uses other than those that are accepted as main stream farming. Here are two examples of set aside projects we have underway:

- In 1995, with the assistance of a River Murray Corridor of Green grant, we planted 20,000 trees and shrubs over 40 acres. The area includes a drainage line which is the exit point for most of the water moving through our land.

The plants in this gully will help clean up the water leaving the property and provide habitat for wild life.

*In 1995 the Rankin's planted 20,000 trees and shrubs over 40 acres.*

They will also act as a wind break in an otherwise treeless area and give us an opportunity to make use of nutrients moving through the property from

further up the catchment. I intend to plant many more kilometres of these gullies before my time is through.

The timber produced is a saleable product using otherwise wasted resources. Namely, water and other peoples nutrients, both free to me from higher in the catchment.

- Another site on the property is a lignum swamp of 40 acres which would cost a fortune to drain and bring into crop production. We see no gain at all in doing this. At present it produces small amounts of feed, abundant shelter and costs very little to maintain.

Set aside conservation areas are the logical option for sites like these which require radical modification to become mainstream productive farming areas. These areas should be seen as an aide to productivity and long term sustainable land use rather than a poor compromise.



## Bombers launch Urban Rural Links

Essendon player Michael Long joined students from Barmah Primary School to launch the Urban Rural Links Program's first year of activities recently. Urban Rural Links promotes the Landcare ethos through linking up urban and rural schools, Landcare groups, councils and the wider community.

The launch was a great success with students from rural and urban schools participating in Waterwatch activities followed by a football clinic and a tour of the Hall of Fame. The Program's Co-ordinator Ingrid Duncan said Landcare and football do have some similarities. "Like sport, Landcare is a great way of bringing people together and discovering common ground."

For information contact Ingrid Duncan on (03) 9462 3209.



# Spreading Landcare through the Commonwealth

## A LANDCARE EXCHANGE TO CANADA

By Ross Jones and Geoff McFarlane

April 1997 saw the first phase of a new exchange program between Victorian Landcarers and a group from Alberta, Canada. The fifteen Albertians came to Victoria to investigate how Landcare could complement some of their community development programs. The result of the tour was a positive one, with the Canadians inviting a group from Victoria to visit them and talk to their local communities about Landcare.

In early August this year, 14 Victorian landcarers travelled to Alberta in the second leg of the exchange. A highlight for the Victorian tourists was their hosting program. The participants were billeted with local farming families for 12 nights in four different parts of Alberta. This was similar to the hosting program when the Canadians visited Victoria.

Ron and Doreen Briggs from the Hodgson & Horseshoe Creek Landcare group thoroughly enjoyed the trip. "The tour was highly organised and the Canadians opened their houses and hearts to us and made us really welcome." they said

Tom Dumaresq from North West Mooroopna Landcare Group was impressed by the Canadians enthusiasm to diversify their farming operations.



*The tour looked at all forms of agricultural production including ranching.*

"The tour gave us a chance to have a good look at all forms of agricultural production from intensive cropping, ranching, feedlotting, bison and other alternative farming ventures. The enthusiasm shown by our hosts to diversify their enterprises was astonishing" He said.

Environmental issues such as water and air quality, soil salinity, pest plants and animals,

and the impacts on remnant vegetation by clearing were also looked at by the group. Gerard McKinley from the Dookie Land Management Group commented that the issues in Canada were not all that different to home "There is general recognition of these problems by most of the (Albertian) farmers and there is a great potential for community groups to tackle these issues like they have done in Australia."

Both exchange tours were organised and led by Geoff McFarlane DNRE Tatura, who after visiting Canada as a recipient of the 1993 Sidney Plowman award felt Landcare would be a program that could be implemented in Alberta. He visited Alberta again in March 1996 and was able to arrange the visit to Victoria by the Canadians earlier this year.

Another tour to Alberta is being planned for late June 1998 involving 15 - 20 Landcare people from Victoria. If you are interested in finding out more details please contact (after hours) either Ross Jones, Katandra on (03) 5828 3378 or Geoff McFarlane, Shepparton on (03) 5831 3250.



*Members of the Exchange tours in Alberta Canada.*

# Weed funding, weed busting,

## **\$1.6 million boost for weed war**

Conservation and Land Management Minister, Marie Tehan has announced grants totalling more than \$1.6 million to tackle problems caused by weeds throughout rural Victoria.

The Minister said the grants would fund 100 projects nominated by landcare groups, local government bodies and other organisations to take place over the next 12 months.

The latest grants are the second in the State Government's \$12 million, four year Weed Initiative announced earlier this year by Mrs Tehan.

Mrs Tehan said stage two of the Weed Initiative would concentrate on 39 declared weed species covering a total of 3,958,641 hectares.

"Weeds cost the State more than \$360 million a year in lost agricultural production alone and the environmental impact is also very substantial."

Applications for the grants were assessed by the regional Catchment Management Authorities under guidelines set down by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

*Weed warriors: Gordon Carter gets a helping hand from his grandson, Mitchell Abson, at the Koolunga Reserve working bee. Photograph reprinted with permission of Leader Newspapers.*



## **Weedbuster week**

National Weedbuster Week took place in Victoria from the 12-19 October 1997 and attracted a great deal of community interest. More than 100 activities took place during the week as groups and individuals worked to tackle weed problems specific to their area.

The Friends of Koolunga ran a successful working bee to target Angled Onion weed in the Koolunga Reserve at Ferntree Gully.

Gordon Carter, from the Friends of Koolunga said 18 people attended the working bee and handweeded 12 large bags of Angled Onion. "They all worked very hard. We certainly made an impact but there's much more to do, particularly along the creek."

Angled Onion is a small plant with a strong onion smell and white bell shaped flowers. Its seeds and bulbs are carried by water moving down hills, creeks and drainage lines. It is also spread during roadworks when soil is being shifted. The Knox Council came and collected the weeds at the end of the day.

Gordon Carter said the Friends Group was keen to reduce the impact of Angled Onion and would be holding more working bees throughout the year.



*Nadine and Amy Munzel from Wakool got their copy of the Win the War against Weeds Kit at Elmore Field days.*

## **Huge demand for Weed Kit**

10,000 copies of the new Weeds Kit have been handed out in the past three months.

The kit contains a comprehensive booklet with information on Victoria's major problem weeds. It aims to increase awareness and understanding of what the problem weeds are, and how to control them.

Requests for the kit are coming in thick and fast from regional offices of DNRE, farmers, landcare groups, community groups and schools.

Copies of the weed kit will be available until the 12th of December 1997 by telephoning the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (freecall) on 1800 678 886.

# weed reading and weed alert

## **Weed Alert: Kyllinga kills pasture production**

Kyllinga, or Mullumbimby Couch, is thought to be spreading in irrigated pasture throughout northern Victoria. Animals avoid grazing infested pasture which can mean dramatic reductions in milk production.

Russell Pell, a member of the Wyuna Landcare Group, said the weed has spread from Kerang to Katunga in recent years and could easily be seen throughout the dairy pastures of the Goulburn valley.

According to Russell Pell many farmers found it difficult to identify the weed. Kyllinga is a perennial sedge that can grow up to more than 20cm and form dense patches. It has slender shiny green leaves and creeping underground runners.

Kyllinga appears around Christmas time and looks like rye grass, producing a sweet smell when crushed.

From December it produces small green, knob-like flowers and seed heads. The weed yellows and dies off in autumn, forming dark patches in pasture over winter.

For more information contact Geoff Strachan at the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on (03) 5381 1777, or Earle Phillips from the Wyuna Landcare Group on (03) 5859 4204.

## **Weed Alert: Uruguay Needle Grass sighted in Melbourne area**

Uruguay Needle Grass, a highly damaging noxious weed, has been sighted in the Port Phillip Catchment. A native of South America, Uruguay Needle Grass (*Nassella charruana*) was first sighted in Victoria at Thomastown in 1990. It has also been reported at Epping.

Dr David McLaren from the Keith Turnbull Research Institute at Frankston



*Uruguay Needle Grass at Thomastown*

says the weed forms dense competitive infestations and is very poor stock food. It is unpalatable and has very sharp and clinging seeds.

David McLaren believes the weed may be potentially more hazardous than Serrated Tussock. "It is essential we exterminate small populations to prevent any significant outbreak."

The Weed Society of Victoria and Victoria University are running a workshop on Needle Grasses (*Nassella species*) in March 1998. For further information contact Ros Shepherd on (03) 9783 6876.

For further information about Uruguay Needle Grass contact your local office of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.



*The flowers and seed heads of Kyllinga.*



*Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan looks at problem weeds with Peter Brock on his property near Hurstbridge.*

*Left: Kyllinga forms dense, brown patches in paddocks.*

# Expanding statewide revegetation options

Victoria's fleet of direct seeding and tree planting machinery has been significantly upgraded following a strengthening of the partnership between Greening Australia Victoria and Alcoa of Australia.

The expanded Alcoa Revegetation Assistance Scheme was launched by well known weatherman (and new GAV board member) Rob Gell at the property of John and Merrilyn Oldfield near Nhill. Over fifty local landowners, landcare group members, representatives from local government and Catchment Management Authorities, Government Agencies and direct seeding technicians were able to see the new machines in action.

The vast Wimmera landscape provided a dramatic backdrop illustrating the needs and challenges of re-establishing vegetation cover to the land and in doing so maintain and enhance productivity.

A gathering of vintage Grey Fergies supplied by the Nhill Vintage Tractor Club provided a perfect match for the Hamilton Tree Seeders as they were set to work seeding nearby paddocks, while the old Fergie's great grandsons, supplied by local AGCO dealers, Polas of Nhill, pulled the new mechanical planters.

Prior to the new funding initiative, the GAV fleet comprised six Hamilton Tree Seeders, an Eco Seeder and a Narromine Mechanical Treeplanter. These have all been refurbished and repainted.

The new additions will give the Alcoa Revegetation Assistance Program greater flexibility, with a range of specialised equipment to suit varying conditions.

The new machinery includes:

- **'Stirling Rippa Seeder'.**

This robust and simple direct seeder is particularly suited to light sandy soils where scalping for weed control and water harvesting could be an advantage, and will also have application where sites are rough and stony.

- **'Roden III Scalping Seeder.'**

This machine has been specifically designed for low rainfall districts and areas with non wetting sandy soils.

- **'Waikerie' seeding planter.**

Designed to plant 'cell raised' seedlings, and capable of planting over one thousand per hour.



*Ron Dodds, GAV's Wimmera based facilitator introduces Rob Gell to the Waikerie seedling planter.*

- **'Youmans' tree planter.**

This simple and robust machine is capable of planting conventional tubestock, bare rooted and 'cell raised' plants.

Ongoing funding support by Alcoa will see the continuing maintenance and development of this program and its fleet of machines.

All machines are available to landholders and landcare groups throughout Victoria to assist in large scale revegetation projects. Advice and bookings can be made by contacting GAV regional facilitators or Jim Robinson at GAV in Melbourne on (03) 9457 3024.



## The CRA Group supports Landcare

**We believe that a co-operative community approach can reverse much land degradation and help achieve sustainability.**

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*The CRA Group is pleased to be a partner in CRA PROJECT PLATYPUS with the landcare groups of Upper Wimmera and their fight to restore habitat and improve water quality in the Upper Wimmera Catchment.*

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# Bandicoots 'go home' to Branxholme

The Fenton's field day at Branxholme near Hamilton looks like the standard fare. A mob of farmers and a few government officers swapping stories in the shearing shed. But this field day is not about pastures, or fencing, or soil types. It's about creating habitat for Victoria's most endangered native mammal, the Eastern Barred Bandicoot.

The bandicoot was once widespread across the basalt plains of Western Victoria. Landholders around Branxholme reported it was common in the grasslands around 60 years ago. Loss of habitat, the introduction of predators and the use of chemicals like DDT saw the bandicoots reduced to a small population around Hamilton. It is the descendants of these animals that have been released on the Fenton's property 'Lanark'.

Cicely Fenton proudly reports this is the first time the bandicoots have been released to live in the wild on a farm. "Bringing back the bandicoots is the result of many years of our work at Lanark," she says. "We have been tree planting, fencing and re-filling our wetlands for over 30 years. Ten percent of the farm has been

of grasslands to dig and build nests and thick scrub to harbour from predators. They are terrific at keeping the insect pests down. And they really are such beautiful creatures, it is a delight to have them sharing the farm with us," she says.

50 bandicoots have been released at Lanark over two years. Regular trapping programs show that the population is surviving and breeding well, thanks to the Fenton's efforts at predator control. On the night before the field day Cicely worked with wildlife officers to set traps around the house, six healthy bandicoots had been caught by morning. Each animal has a micro-chip implanted behind the ear so the population can be constantly monitored.

Cicely has been vigilant in controlling foxes and feral cats on the farm. She says this has benefits for their lambing enterprise as well as the bandicoots. "I lay Foxoff baits every week to ten days and we have drastically reduced fox numbers. This means better lambing percentages. And there are other benefits too. With less foxes and cats we are seeing more native birds breeding in our sacred Ibis are great insect so we welcome their increase."

's aim for the Lanark is to have a self sufficient Bandicoots may then be and taken to other areas to w colonies.

o secretary of the Smokey ndcare Group. The group is g on a plan to create habitat e bandicoots from Lanark, ough several other farms, and entually linking with a disused ilway line at Coleraine.

cicely says she has found the project very satisfying. "We have always loved wildlife. It is a great privilege to have something as special as the Eastern Barred Bandicoot on our doorstep," she says.

*Cicely Fenton checks a trap for the Eastern Barred Bandicoots that now share the farm at Branxholme.*

## NEW PRIVATE FORESTRY COUNCIL

Victoria's private plantations will be tripled to 750,000 hectares by the year 2020 allowing the creation of 10,000 new jobs in regional areas.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture and Resources, Patrick McNamara addressed the new eleven member Private Forestry Council, which will implement the strategy, as well as 80 representatives from local government and the timber industry in Benalla recently.

The Minister said Mr Angus Pollock, General Manager of Forest Resources at Australian Paper in Morwell, will Chair the Council.

The Councils' aim is to develop an industry-government approach to achieve the plantation expansion of around 20,000 hectares per year in Victoria.

The State Government recognises the major potential of private forestry. At maturity, the proposed additional 500,000 hectares would result in \$6 billion per annum in benefits and provide over 10,000 additional rural jobs in growing, harvesting and processing plantation timber, the Minister said..

The Deputy Premier said the Council will be appointed for a three year period to oversee the strategy.

The inaugural Private Forestry Victoria Councillors are: Angus Pollock, Lloyd James, Don Jowett, David Roberts, Dominique La Fontaine, Douglas Stevenson, Peter Sutherland, Russell Washusen, Peter Anderson and Malcolm Tonkin.



# Rural Womens Leadership Bursaries announced

Twenty three rural women are the 1997 recipients of the Victorian Government's Rural Womens Leadership Bursaries aimed at enabling talented women from rural or remote Victorian settings to receive leadership training.

Each recipient receives \$2,000 towards the costs associated with seeking further leadership education, including relief labour for their small business or farm, child minding costs or travel expenses.

In announcing the recipients, Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture and Resources, Mr Patrick McNamara, joined the Minister for Womens Affairs, Ms Jan Wade, in congratulating the successful applicants for their keen interest in the leadership bursary scheme.

"All the successful candidates have clearly demonstrated their aspirations to attain key positions within the public life of their communities and that their contribution will be enhanced by undertaking leadership training programs," Mr McNamara said.



The 1997 recipients of the Rural Womens Leadership Bursaries are: Karen Barr, Lancefield. Anita Graham, Romsey. Lorraine Ermacora, Simpson. Kate Scroggie, Terang. Louise Numn, Noorat. Virginia Falls, Casterton. Cheryl Pike, Bacchus Marsh. Joanne Bourke, Rupanyup. Liz Boland, Bairnsdale. Karen Bertram, Bruthen. Margareta Osborn, Tinamba. Clare Le Serve, Corinella. Meg Parkinson and Patricia Fleming (joint recipients), Fish Creek. Lorraine Percy, Sale. Linda Bennison, Moorooduc. Jenny Farrar, Churchill. Margaret Crisp, Corryong. Vera Fleming, Shepparton. Margaret Brown, Cudgewa North. Jennafer Perri, Echuca. Carol McFadzean, Undera. Nola Evans, Bonnie Doon.

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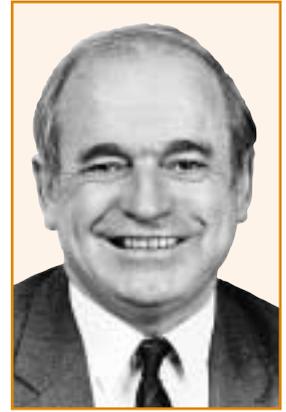


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# Bruce Lloyd to head new Australian Landcare Council



Victorian farmer Bruce Lloyd has been appointed as the chairman of the Government's new community-based Landcare advisory body, the Australian Landcare Council.

Bruce Lloyd has a long association with the farming community and government, and a keen interest in land and water management issues in Australia.

The Australian Landcare Council will provide advice and strategic direction to the Government in relation to the Landcare and Rivercare programs, and will replace the former National Landcare Advisory Committee (NLAC).

Bruce Lloyd is one of eleven new appointments to The Australian Landcare

Council, including Peter Clarke, Mark Thomas, Rick Farley, David Papps, Tim Scholz, Clive Thomas, John Smink, Tracker Tilmouth and Rex Edmondson. Victorian Landcare identity Alison Teese has also been appointed.

Federal Primary Industries and Energy Minister, John Anderson said the community representation of The Australian Landcare Council was strengthened by the appointment of a number of active new members with a practical awareness of the issues faced by landcare groups. "Landcare has been an outstanding success in Australia, with over 3,250 landcare groups and more than 25,000 active members successfully achieving improvements in both sustainable agriculture and

environmental conservation," he said.

The Australian Landcare Council will

be one of five expert panels providing advice to the Natural Heritage Trust Board, comprised of Mr Anderson and the Minister for the Environment, Senator Robert Hill.

"The Natural Heritage Trust will draw together a number of complimentary programs such as Landcare, Bushcare and Rivercare to greatly improve the status of our land, water and vegetation resources, and provide a valuable legacy for future generations," Mr Anderson said.

## Small and sustainable: 1997 Small Farm Awards

Part-time farmers and small landholders are on the increase in the Port Phillip area of Melbourne. The Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan, recently announced an inaugural award to encourage sustainable land practices on small holdings.

The Award is the result of a joint Department of Natural Resources and Environment and National Landcare Program project which investigated what information small rural landholders required about land management, what was the best way to deliver such information, the characteristics of small rural landholders and their goals.

Mrs Tehan said small property holders often find themselves in an information vacuum and have difficulty accessing relevant land management information.

DNRE and Landcare are bridging these gaps through the production of a land management information direc-

tory, a quarterly newsletter, The Small Rural Property Networker and bi monthly information forums and field days run in conjunction with the Victorian Farmers Federation."

The winners are:

**First Prize:** Anthony Hooper and Julie Weatherhead of Peppermint Ridge Farm, Tynong North.

**Second Prize:** Ian McPhee, of Phillip Island.

**Third Prize:** Mary and Greg Downes, of Doreen.

The winners' received goods donated by Wesfarmers-Dalgety and BHP Wire Products, an annual membership to the Natural Resources Conservation League and an enlarged aerial photograph of their property from United Photo and Graphic Services.

The Cleveland Winery and Bed and Breakfast at Lancefield supplied a night's accommodation to the winning couple. Second and third prize winners received a complimentary dinner and bottle of wine at De Bertoli's Winery and Restaurant at Dixons Creek.

*The 1997 Small Farm Award Winners' property at Tynong North. They use this relocated school building to run courses on sustainable farming.*



# Landcare study tour a rolling success



*The group of Victorian landcarers buckled in and ready to roll on their mystery tour to the National Landcare Conference.*



*South Gippslanders Bruce and Marianne Standfield, Cam Walker and John Flemming prepare to board the bus bound for South Australia.*

## By Alex Arbuthnot

A Landcare study tour and visit to the National Landcare Conference in Adelaide was organised by the VFF with funding assistance by the National Landcare Program.

Forty one Landcarers selected from ten CMA regions around Victoria participated in the study tour from September 14 - 20 culminating at the National Landcare Conference in Adelaide.

The VFF Landcare Sub Committee initiated the project to increase participation by Victorian farmers and landcarers in national landcare activities. The tour was organised by Greg King, the former VFF Landcare Manager, who, with the assistance of a selection panel chose the 41 successful participants from a field of over eighty applicants.

The tour visited the 1997 Victorian BP Catchment Award winning project, Rio Tinto Project Platypus in the Wimmera. This large scale catchment project aims to improve the water quality in the Wimmera River, and eventually leading to the return of the Platypus.

The group inspected monitoring equipment in the Iron Pot Creek sub catchment however the visit the Aston Scour was interrupted by some very welcome rain. Tour members did manage to discuss project development and management directions with the Project Platypus Committee, and shared ideas about their own projects or groups.

In Horsham on the second day the group visited salinity and landcare works in the Drung region. Drung South Landcare Group have demonstrated outstanding communication activities with schools and the community through which involve-

ment and knowledge has followed. The morning tea put on by our hosts was out of this world.

A visit to the 1997 Wimmera Region Hanslow Award winners, Adrian and Lorraine Coad's farm at Telopea Downs was fascinating. Six years ago the Coad's were struggling with the major management issue of "non-wetting sands". With the adoption of mixing clay with sand, a range of productive and conservation benefits have resulted in a turn around in Landcare activities.

The tour introduced landcare people from across the state and enabled them to get to know each others issues and group perceptions of landcare in Victoria. The tour also enable them to get into the learning mode prior to the national conference.

The tour party enjoyed the networking opportunities throughout the Conference in Adelaide, and returned to Victoria full of new ideas, contacts and with their batteries recharged.

On behalf of the tour group and the VFF I would like to thank Greg King and Coral Love for their untiring work in organising this successful tour.

For more information contact Alex Arbuthnot on (03) 9207 5555

# Scouts Plant 90,000 Trees

Photos by Alan Foon

The Bass Valley Landcare Group hosted over 1,200 scouts recently. The troops planted nearly 90,000 trees and shrubs within the Bass River catchment to celebrate the Australian Scouting Association's 90th anniversary.

During the weekend the hoard of scouts set what is believed to be a world record for tree planting.

"The enthusiasm and effort put in by the scouts were a credit to the scouting movement" said Martin Fuller, the Bass Landcare Coordinator. "They hauled trees up and down hills all day - all in the name of helping remedy soil erosion problems and to provide habitat for native wildlife." He said.

The Scout Project was funded by the National Heritage Trust and through a new partnership between Edission Mission Energy and the Landcare groups in the area.

For more information about the Scout Project contact Martin on 014 402 249



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# ON THE SHELF - New Publications

## **Know Your Catchments, Victoria 1997**

This impressive atlas-style report is a snapshot of the condition of Victoria's catchments in 1997. Each catchment is considered for its soils, groundwater and salinity, pest plants and animals, vegetation and wildlife habitat and streams and wetlands.

Know Your Catchments is an attempt by the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council to make information more accessible for landholders and catchment managers. It will be an important resource document for the new Regional Catchment Management Authorities.

The report uses 'interim indicators' to assess the condition of the catchments. Reader are invited to respond and help define what are the right indicators to measure.

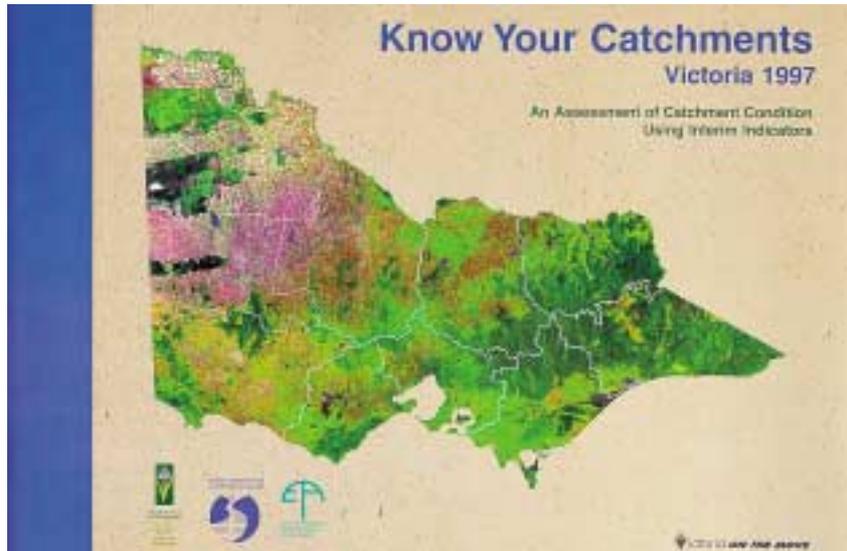
Know Your Catchments is available for \$20 from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Information Centre on (03) 9637 8080.

URL address for Know Your Catchments  
<http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/catchmnt/conditn>

## **Are there seeds in your wetland?**

This excellent hand book produced by the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation and the University of New England looks at the 'hidden treasure of wetlands'- seedbeds.

The hand book provides simple guidelines on assessing a wetland using a vegetation survey, germinating seeds, identifying what comes up and then comparing results. It doesn't attempt to give full details on waterplant identification because plants and conditions vary so much throughout Australia. However it is a good starting point for groups and individuals interested in learning more about the possibilities of their local wetlands.



Free copies of the hand book are available by faxing (02) 6299 6036.

## **Sustainable Agriculture: Protecting our Heartland**

Looking for teaching resources about the Murray Darling Basin? Look no further. This new kit from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Geography Teachers Association and the Murray Darling Basin Commission is a comprehensive tool aimed at senior secondary students studying geography.

The resource materials cover land and water resource management and policy and

productivity issues on sustainable agricultural systems in the Murray Darling Basin. It is relevant to studies in geography, the environment and agriculture and has over 30 activities.

The kit is the third in a series of resources on sustainable agriculture in the Murray Darling Basin which focus on biology, chemistry and geography. The kit is available from the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria (03) 9824 8355 for \$45 + \$10 postage and handling.

## **Landcare Best Practice**

Launched at the National Landcare Conference in Adelaide, Landcare Best Practice is a series of case studies on Landcare issues contributed by groups, researchers and co-ordinators across Australia.

The book was drawn together to acknowledge the efforts to date of Landcare groups and to inspire and increase the effectiveness of other Landcare groups as they prepare strategic plans and undertake on ground activities.

The case studies are an eclectic mix of research and articles. They range from scientific papers to profiles on individual farmers who talk about their history and ideas.

A limited number of free copies of Landcare Best Practice are available from Angela Carini at the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on (03) 9412 4622.

