

LAND FOR WILDLIFE

NEWS



Newsletter of the LAND FOR WILDLIFE scheme

Land for Wildlife 20 Years of Voluntary Nature Conservation



Conservation efforts by private landholders may hold the key to ensuring the survival of threatened species such as the Speckled Warbler.

Land for Wildlife members are playing an important role in protecting biodiversity on private land.

Photo: Chris Tzaros



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Editorial

Dear Land for Wildlifers,

I am proud to say that it has been 20 years since the concept of Land for Wildlife was first initiated by members of the Bird Observers Club of Australia and the Fisheries and Wildlife Department (which was once a program of what is now the Department of Natural Resources and Environment). Over this time, more than 6,600 properties have been assessed with over 5,400 properties currently enjoying membership. Our records also show that 855 properties have been members for 10 years or more. As a token of our appreciation for their long-term commitment, these members have been sent a certificate and a special-edition metal badge.

Even though I have been in the Land for Wildlife team for 8 years, I am still amazed at the efforts and contribution of landholders in helping to protect biodiversity on their land. As members, your commitment and efforts, no matter how small they are, have greatly benefited conservation of biodiversity on private land. Keep up the good work!

What does the future hold for Land for Wildlife? The ever increasing arrival of applications, complexity of conservation issues and other duties keep the Land for Wildlife Extension Officers very busy. The program will continue to strive to deliver its services as well as it can. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships with other organisations, with farm families, industries and communities. The program will continue to support and encourage incentives for landholders including rate rebates, tax incentives and management agreements (such as BushTender). Extension Officers will target areas of high priority, which may involve community meetings and

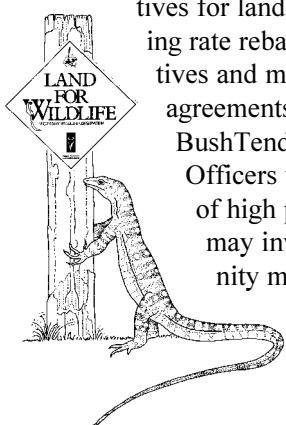


Illustration:
Alexis Beckett

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door-knocking. Priority areas may have flora and fauna species that are threatened, may have vegetation types that are diminishing or may be vital to linking up nearby large remnants.

This year we ran a very successful inaugural Land for Wildlife Open Property Scheme. As a trial, the numbers of properties was limited to 10 and the publicity was minimal. The properties were open in September as part of Biodiversity month. The properties were visited by 200 people and proved to be a great success (see page 7). Next year will be bigger and better and we hope to combine it with celebrations of Land for Wildlife's 21st Birthday.

Land for Wildlife was recently launched in the Litchfield shire area in the NT and I wish them success with the program. Congratulations to Land for Wildlife in WA. 'Western Wildlife', their quarterly newsletter, won the State section of the National Landcare Media Award.

Have a Merry Christmas and all the best with your nature conservation activities in the New Year.

Felicity Nicholls, Editor and State-wide Coordinator, Land for Wildlife.

LFW MEMBERSHIP	PROPERTY AREA	RETAINED HABITAT	HABITAT RESTORATION	NEW PROPERTIES SINCE LAST EDITION
5,488	551,145 ha	126,527 ha	21,554 ha	147

Figures include reductions to areas due to de-registrations of properties. Current at 19th November 2001.

Letters to the Editor

Many landholders are lucky enough to live next to public land. However, the following is part of an email from a member of Land for Wildlife who describes one of the negative aspects - the noise of trail bikes.

Dear Felicity,

Because there is a reasonably high turnover of population in Bullengarook over time, there may well be people new to our community who are unaware that trailbikes have long been a very controversial issue out here. After all, most of us do not expect, when shaking the dust of the city from our heels to retreat into the bush, that the din of traffic on a weekend is going to be so much worse out here than it is in the city.

I have approached our local member of parliament with the suggestion of an exclusion zone for trailbikes around Bullengarook..... The suggestion is not by any means to ban bikes, merely to ban trailbiking within a given circumference of inhabited bushland areas.

*Bruce Donaldson, LFWer,
Bullengarook*

Dear Bruce,

The noise of trailbikes, rally cars, barking dogs etc are certainly becoming a problem in areas such as Bullengarook where rural areas are next to public parks or where rural areas meet the urban fringe. Many people are aware of the incredibly annoying sounds trailbikes can make, but the environmental effects also need to be considered.

I encourage people to contact your local member, your local government environmental planners, councillors etc about this issue, as individuals and as community groups, to try to come to an agreement, where all parties are satisfied. These discussions should also involve the local and state trailbike associations.

The Editor.

As Editor, there is nothing more positive and inspiring than receiving positive mail. Letters have been sent to me, to the Extension Officers and even to our Regional Managers. These letters are a credit to a fantastic team of Land for Wildlife Extension Officers and to all the people (including landholders) who contribute to the newsletters.

G'day Felicity,

Just a quick note to say what a great job you are doing with the Land for Wildlife News. We find it always informative, interesting and practical! Thanks for your effort, it makes being a part of Land for Wildlife more enjoyable and worthwhile.

Kester Baines, LFWer, Bambra

To Judy Backhouse (Regional Manager, Port Phillip Region),

I would like to thank NRE and their representatives Bessie Hussey, Kate Mackie and another woman whose name I did not record (Elise Jeffery - 3 Extension Officers during a training visit -Ed).

Their professionalism and enthusiasm was great. They responded to all my queries at the time and followed up with further information to anything that they could not supply at the time. They were frank about the various issues that I should be facing (some of which I was unaware).

Their knowledge seemed very good indeed and I was impressed with the amount of time that they spent in researching various plant types.

In all, the NRE visit was far more useful than I imagined and has given me some energy to address the issues that they indicated.

Marq Bellingham, LFWer, St Andrews

Dear Mike (Land for Wildlife Extension Officer, Alexandra),

There is certainly a wealth of useful information in the Land for Wildlife Notes. The Note on nest boxes inspired me to build a couple and install them on the block.

We've planted a lot more trees and shrubs since we saw you - some more eucalypts and a lot of wattles, which brings us up to around 200 for the season. Next planting season we'll be concentrating on understorey - by then we should know what other types of plants we've got on the block.

Charles Wade and Heather Harvey, LFWers, Tolmie (see photo of Charles and Heather standing with Mike Kopanica, LFW Extension Officer from Alexandra)



Helping an outdoor cat adjust to life indoors

Although it takes patience and work, an outdoor cat can be turned into a perfectly content indoor pet. The key is to make the conversion gradually and to provide lots of attention and stimulation while the cat is indoors.

Begin by only letting the cat outside during the middle of the day. Cats do most of their hunting between dawn and dusk, and this change will help shift them from the hunting urge. Gradually shorten the length of time the cat is outside until you no longer let him or her out at all. Cats are creatures of habit, so you must be careful to slowly replace their old routine of going outside with a new one of staying in. Substitute outside excursions with periods of special playtime. Supervised trips out on the balcony, deck, or patio can make the transition from outside to inside a little easier. Some cat owners even screen in porches or small enclosures from their homes. These enclosed 'outdoor' environments protect the cats yet allow them to get fresh air and sunshine. See below for companies that can supply these.

Provide plenty of toys or other objects to keep the cat occupied inside. Especially important is extra play and attention time. Cats need human companionship to be happy, and when they spend all their time out of doors, they get very little TLC. An outdoor cat may welcome the indoors if she or he gets lots of love, attention and play.

Try to have a litter tray for each cat, positioned in a quiet spot where the cat won't be disturbed. Keep it very clean as cats are very fussy about their litter trays. If you supply a litter tray with high sides the cat can dig and not spread the litter around on your floor.

This is a tough one, but don't give in to your cat's wails to be let out. If you are diligent, your cat will eventually see that all the fuss is getting him or her nowhere.

It is true that some cats will develop behavioral problems when they are no longer allowed outside. Most of these problems can be attributed to a change in routine that is too abrupt or to lack of attention and stimulation inside. If your cat becomes destructive or unhousetrained, consult a veterinarian or animal behaviorist to find ways to solve the problem. Remember that these symptoms can also be

attributed to boredom and loneliness.

Here are a few tips to help cat owners keep their pets amused and fit behind closed doors:

- Open screened windows to let some fresh air in. Fresh air and sunshine are great for cats but make sure the screen is secure. Make a shelf for the cat to sit on if the window ledges aren't wide enough;
- Plant pots of indoor greens for cats to chew on. Grass, alfalfa or catnip will provide cats with fresh, tasty treats;
- Give cats something to do while everyone is away. Hide treats, leave open paper bags out or cardboard boxes;
- Provide toys that are safe and stimulating; and
- Provide a scratching post at least two feet high.

Follow the suggestions above and your cat could be safe and happy inside and wildlife can roam safely outside.

Taken from "Helping an outdoor cat adjust to life indoors" and "Keeping cats happy indoors", Humane Society International Animal Welfare Fact Sheets.

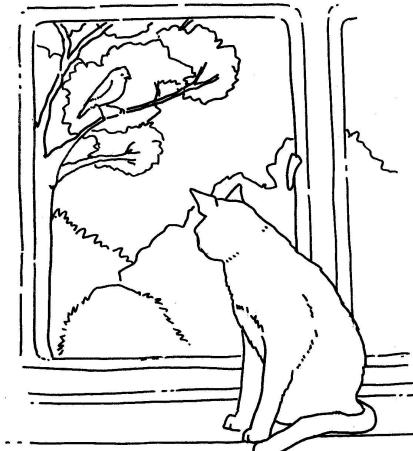


Illustration by Dawn Harris

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Bush Detective

Who made this?

Who did this?



How did these chocolate lilies and orchids get on top of the stump?

The seeds of chocolate lilies and orchids are quite small and the wind probably blew the seed on top of the stump. The rotting wood would have provided a medium for the seed to germinate in. Photo: Jennifer Johnson

Did you know.....?

About half (30-60%) of a platypus's total body fat is stored in its tail. The fat helps to insulate the tail (which is thinly furred as compared to the rest of the body) when an animal is active in cold water.

Researchers can get a good idea of how fat a platypus is by examining the shape of the tail and gently squeezing its edges: the tail of a very fat animal will be rounded in cross-section and cannot be bent inwards, while a thin platypus will have a strap-like tail that can be folded along the midline.

Taken from "Ripples" Newsletter of the Australian Platypus Conservancy. Issue 19 Winter 2001.

Tall Wheat Grass

- a threat to Orange-bellied Parrots

Like all good things, there has to be a downside. And it may be on the horizon for that great salt-tolerant grass that has reclaimed so many salt affected discharge sites in Victoria, especially the south-west.

Unfortunately, tall wheat grass has begun to spread into coastal salt marshes and may displace valuable Orange-bellied parrot habitat. The endangered Orange-bellied Parrot is a migratory bird that spends its summer in Tasmania, and winters along the coasts of Victoria and South Australia. Saltmarshes, beaches and dunes provide food sources for these brightly coloured birds.

The Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Team have raised concerns about the use of tall wheat grass in coastal areas. They have highlighted the need for research investigating the extent of the tall wheat grass areas and its mode of spread and possible long-term implications to the habitat of the Orange-bellied Parrot.

In the meantime, avoid planting tall wheat grass adjacent to, or near, coastal and inland wetlands that may have high environmental values.

Many people have found that simply fencing stock out from saline discharge areas can allow regeneration and gradual 'healing' of salty scalds. Keep an eye out for further developments in species suitable for sowing on salt affected areas - both native and more production-orientated varieties.

Taken from: Paul Whinney, NRE, Geelong, AgUpdate No. 2 May-June 2001, NRE.

Orange-bellied Parrot. Photo: Dave Watts

"The Orange-bellied Parrot can be ranked along with the Giant Panda, the Whooping Crane and the Siberian Tiger as among the rarest and most endangered of the world's wildlife. The population numbers fewer than 200 adult birds. It is a migratory bird spending summer in south-west Tasmania and then wintering along the coasts of Victoria and South Australia".

Action Statement No 43 (1993), Flora and Fauna Guarantee Program, NRE.



Property Profile

Restoration of a gully - an inspiring story

Robert and Rosalind Ellinger's 125 hectare property is located outside Drysdale on the Bellarine Peninsula, east of Geelong. The property first became part of the *Land for Wildlife Scheme* in 1987 and was reassessed in June of this year.

Little native vegetation remained on the property when Robert & Rosalind purchased the property in 1979. A majority of the property had been cleared, with the exception of a few River Red Gums. The area surrounding these magnificent trees has been fenced and the results of natural regeneration have been excellent.

In addition to the protection of the retained habitat, this property has had its fair share of restoration works, predominantly around a gully running through part of the

property that had become severely eroded. Rehabilitation began in 1980 with the first 250 metres of the gully fenced to exclude stock. It was planted with indigenous trees, hand-grown by Rosalind's father from local seed. Trees were merely planted into a hand-dug hole in the grass and given a thick layer of mulch plus a little watering to get them started. Moving to the property in 1983, Robert and Rosalind then set about growing their own trees and shrubs from local seed. Although there was plenty of planting left to do in the first section, a second section of the gully was fenced and planting began. In 1984 the remainder of the gully was fenced and this time before planting the trees, there was weed control with herbicide and the ground was ripped. This provided an extra advantage to these later trees, which quickly caught up to the trees planted in 1980. In total, approximately 2000-3000 indigenous tree and shrub species have been planted including *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum), *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum), *Acacia mearnsii* (Black Wattle), *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria) and *Myoporum insulare* (Common Boobialla).

Since completing the project, the Ellingers have seen numerous wildlife come back to the area. Utilising the understorey has been quail, a variety of species of honeyeaters and parrots as well as Superb Blue Wrens, who have had numerous successful breeding seasons on the property. The improvement in the aquatic habitat has also seen the return of Straw-necked and Sacred Ibis, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills and cormorants. Natural regeneration is now evident along the gully, ensuring that this wildlife habitat will remain for future generations.

I think the pictures tell the story. What a wonderful restoration project for the birdlife of Drysdale! Congratulations to Robert and Rosalind for all their hard work.

Elise Jeffery, Land for Wildlife Extension Officer, Geelong

Photos.

Before: The eroded gully on the Ellinger property in the early eighties before restoration began. Photo: Rosalind Ellinger.

After: The gully as it looks today, providing a significant refuge for local birdlife. Photo: Elise Jeffery

Before



After



Babblers and Bogs - the Land for Wildlife Open Property Scheme

As part of Biodiversity Month, ten properties were opened to the public, for the inaugural Land for Wildlife Open Property Scheme. Treating the scheme as a trial, the feedback from the 200 visitors was so positive, we have decided to make the scheme an annual event.

Why did we decide to have an Open Property Scheme?

The aims of the scheme include:

- To promote the Land for Wildlife program to the community in general;
- To allow non-Land for Wildlife members a chance to learn more about the program;
- To provide an opportunity for members to meet up with their local Land for Wildlife Extension Officer;
- To allow local Land for Wildlife members to meet up and network; and
- To provide information on nature conservation on private land.

The Open Property Scheme provided a relaxed and pleasant venue for the above aims to be met. It provided a chance for people to see a sample of the more than 5400 Land for Wildlife properties.

How was it organised?

Five Extension Officers from throughout Victoria, arranged for ten properties to be opened to the public. Publicity was organised by a flier, biodiversity month fliers, TV interviews, local newspaper articles and word of mouth. Details were finalised too late to advertise the scheme in the newsletter, however, this will occur next year.

Activities to suit all visitors

Properties ranged from semi-urban to larger working properties. Activities included wildflower walks, shrub planting for the Grey-crowned Babbler, talks on threatened species, visits to unusual perched bogs, picnics and landholder guided tours. To judge the success of the day we asked the visitors to fill in an evaluation form. Results showed that one third were members, one third of the non-members decided to apply for Land for Wildlife membership and 96% of all visitors said the day was of great interest. Everybody who filled out the form said they

would go again next year. Visitors were asked - what did you enjoy most? Answers included;

“Relaxed but informative process”

“Knowledge sharing”

“Seeing changes made from scratch”

“The interaction between people”

“Meeting like-minded people”

“Confirmation of people’s commitment”.

Next year

Many lessons and ideas were learned from the first Open Property Scheme. Next year we hope to go bigger and better - more properties, increased publicity and a bigger brochure. We are also combining this scheme with celebrations for Land for Wildlife’s 21st Birthday. That’s a lot of cakes to bake!

If you would like to add your property to the list of potential open properties, please contact your local Land for Wildlife Officer.

Thank you to the landholders who kindly allowed their properties to be opened to the wide range of visitors.

We hope to see you at next year’s Land for Wildlife Open Property Scheme.

Felicity Nicholls
Statewide Coordinator, Land for Wildlife



John Robinson explaining to the visitors about his efforts to re-establish the local flora at his Strathfieldsaye property. He has used planting, seed broadcasting and direct seeding (above). The dead tree in the photo below, was brought into his property and cemented into the ground using a large crane. John created spouts and hollows for wildlife. Sacred Kingfishers, Cockatiels and Sugar Gliders are some of the species that have nested in the hollows. Photos: Felicity Nicholls



Above left. As part of the Open Property Scheme, visitors helped to plant shrubs for the threatened Grey-crowned Babblers at Lake Eppalock. NRE, Axe Creek Landcare Group and Goulburn Murray Water are working together to protect the babblers. Photos: Julie Hennessy

Conservation down the street - greening the nature strips

The following is an article about the journey a Land for Wildlife member took to engage the community in conservation works. The message from this article is that streetscapes, be they urban or rural, can also play an important role in local biodiversity conservation.

My family moved to the Mornington Peninsula in 1993, and purchased a cottage on top of Arthurs Seat, the highest point of the peninsula. The area is well known to Victorians, as it is a very popular visitor's destination with breath-taking views. My very first impressions of the area, and in particular the street, were not that positive. The State Park, which is adjacent to our street, was surrounded by lovely old Manna Gums, Swamp Gums and Blackwoods. However, the roadside was heavily infested with boneseed, English ivy, cotoneaster and masses of arum lilies and blackberries.

The land we purchased is only a stone's throw from the State Park. The land was thick with mature pines and native vegetation was sparse and rather unhealthy. The understorey was struggling and many garden escapees were growing in large numbers. Regeneration on this land looked grim. My first priority was to plant a native garden – indigenous and non-indigenous. During this time I was fortunate to purchase a bush area next door. The sole reason for this was conservation. The land was very significant, as it consisted of mature Swamp Gums, peppermint gums, Blackwoods and a good understorey. Once all the pines were removed, along with the sycamores and pittosporums, the regeneration was quick. Today, it consists of Hop Goodenia, Austral

Indigo, Sweet Bursaria, cassinia, Prickly Moses, Running Postman and many native grasses. The property is also a haven for wildlife with nesting birds, skinks, boobook owls, kookaburras, reptiles, frogs, possums and lorikeets.

Land for Wildlife status was granted in 1995 and this was the nemesis for moving into the street to do a similar thing. The plan was very simple: 1) Restore habitat on the roadside; 2) allow indigenous plants to regenerate; and 3) to remove weeds and create a wildlife corridor along the street connecting to the State Park. I then organised residents to tackle a large roadside area that was covered with weeds. The local shire agreed that they would collect the rubbish and supply plants if residents did the labour. This sounded good to me! Over the next twelve months we had a number of regular working bees, as we moved up and down the street. There was a lot of trial and error, at times a loss of interest. Some working bees attracted only six people – but this didn't matter. I asked residents to stop mowing their nature strips, roped off significant areas and followed the Bradley method of weeding. These areas now consist of ghania, lomandra, bidgee widgee, cassinia, Snow Daisy-bush, Austral Indigo and poa grasses.

As the years have passed I have willingly become the major driver of the street work. Some other residents of Arthurs Seat have contacted me wanting to do the same thing in their street. I find this very exciting and encouraging. Residents felt that we needed to protect the area, so we approached the Shire and the local Ranger, who organised 'Tree Conservation Area' signs for the street. These signs gave a clear message to visitors and also residents that this area is a special one, and needs protection.

However, in January 2001, a private contracting company used by the Shire crudely pruned our roadside, destroying many indigenous plants. This harsh pruning was done without the knowledge of the Shire's Conservation Officer or with consulting local residents. It did seem all the years of our hard work, was destroyed in one day! Although upsetting, it became obvious to me that we needed to form a partnership with the Shires who had always been supportive and encouraging. A local councillor suggested I apply for a Community Partnership Grant that the Shire was awarding to worthwhile environment projects. This financial grant would cover plants, mulch,

continued on page 9

Photo: Shire of Mornington Peninsula



Gardens for Wildlife - helping Mornington Peninsula residents protect and enhance their environment

The ever increasing applications that Land for Wildlife receive keeps the Extension Officers very busy. In addition, we appear to be getting more applications from people with very small properties such as urban blocks and gardens. This indicates that there is a need to provide information and assistance to these people, no matter how small their land is. This is where programs such as Gardens for Wildlife can play a major role. The Gardens for Wildlife concept is currently operating in the Mornington Peninsula area, but with further support and funding, we hope that one day, this wonderful project will spread across the state.

The following information has been taken from the Gardens for Wildlife website at;

www.sef.org.au/gfw

The natural vegetation of the Mornington Peninsula is rapidly disappearing. With the spread of human settlement and agriculture, immense pressure is being placed on our native flora and fauna. One way to help reverse this disappearance is to plant local species in our gardens. A garden developed using local plants is easy to look after, conserves water and provides habitat for local animals.

Gardens for Wildlife is a community concept helping to create a sustainable future, by bringing together expertise and resources to promote indigenous and ecological gardening. We can all improve our backyards and gardens to support wildlife, and at the same time make the environment more attractive.

Gardens for Wildlife responds to an increasing need in the community and

consequently has a vital role in providing information, site visits and on-going advice to the urban community.

Some of the projects it hopes to develop are:

- create an educational resource website;
- create a series of display gardens demonstrating the benefits of Gardens for Wildlife;
- develop a register of Gardens for Wildlife gardens; and
- develop a school guide and resource kit.

The Web site provides a three step process where residents can identify their region and the flora and fauna found there, discover information on how to create habitat and then are invited to register their property with Gardens for Wildlife where a site visit will occur. Registration provides recognition of the owners efforts.

If you would like to contact Gardens for Wildlife or are able to provide support or funds, please contact Luke Taylor on 0408 348 157 or email gfw@sef.org.au

Photo: Gardens for Wildlife



continued from page 8

education material and support. In March of this year the Community Partnership Agreement was signed and 'Significant Roadside Vegetation and Wildlife Corridor' signs were placed at both ends of the street.

The partnership has given us confidence and enabled us to continue our work in providing a wildlife corridor along our street,

but also the partnership has acknowledged the work done here at Arthurs Seat by volunteers. Street revegetation works in bush areas is very important. It brings people together, provides well-needed wildlife corridors and is a good, worthwhile and fun activity.

Greg Holding, LFWer, Arthurs Seat

Property Profile

Amongst the trees.....

The first thing that you notice when you go to Elaine and Graeme Crawford's farm, is the number of trees. Their agroforestry enterprise has allowed them to plant more than 20,000 trees on their 220 acre property.

Originally part of a larger family farm - "Woodstock", Elaine and Graeme's farm is located 15 km SE of Traralgon on Flynn's Creek. Graeme's father had already started to plant trees on the farm as early as 1967, a time when many farmers were still removing them. His foresight is evident and has been continued right across the entire farm, in which species are planted for commercial and aesthetic value to this very day. Pines, Blue gums, Cottonwoods, Bat Willows and Blackwoods were and are planted for sale for saw logs, manufacture of cricket bats, furniture and pulp for paper. Graeme also grazes stock beneath the trees and the cattle really enjoy the benefit of the shade on hot days and shelter on

cold days.

Integrated with the farm enterprise are areas of native bush. These include large areas along the creeks and tributaries that run through the property. Graeme and his brothers have undertaken the laborious task of removing the willows that have been choking Flynn's Creek. In their place, a range of native species have been planted. They have also fenced the rehabilitated creeks for the long term to ensure that the vegetation and the creek banks are protected from the stock.

A large dam with an island was also created entirely for the purpose of attracting wildlife, in particular the different and varied birds that a farm can attract. Enthused by this project, Graeme and Elaine complete a bird survey of their farm four times a year, recording all the species seen and heard and send the results to Birds Australia. Birds such as the Southern Boobook Owl, Brown Treecreeper, and Grey Shrike-Thrush have been recorded in the woodland areas. The Australian Shelduck, Pelican, Royal Spoonbill and Red-Chested Button-Quail have been sighted in the dam and surrounding area. So far, approximately 60 species of birds have been recorded on the property and Graeme and Elaine still have the summer season recording session to complete.

So successful is Graeme and Elaine's agroforestry farm, it is regularly used as an agroforestry demonstration site for national and international visitors. Graeme and his brother won the prestigious Victorian Tree Farmer of the Year Award in 1991 and the National Tree Farmer of the Year Award in 1992. They are also members of the Gippsland Agroforestry Network and the local Landcare group.

Graeme and Elaine have managed to successfully combine their love of trees and their farm business. They have achieved a balance between production and conservation of biodiversity on the farm and created a haven for wildlife, in particular birds.

Cheryl Edwards, past LFW Extension Officer, Traralgon

Photos: Bruce Atkin.

Top: Graeme standing next to a mixed plantation of 14 eucalypt species.

Middle: Graeme enjoying the tranquillity of the large dam on the property.

Lower: Graeme demonstrates the size of one of the oldest trees on his property - a large Manna Gum.



Ecological values of Bracken Fern

The impacts of Bracken Fern *Pteridium esculentum* as an agricultural pasture weed is well known to many landholders. Graziers have long been frustrated by the difficulty of effectively controlling the plant. One farmer was reported to say "after 13 defoliations in one year, the bloody fern came up with its head ducked so as to miss the mower knife". However, the ecological role of this common and widely distributed plant in the regeneration of cleared land has not been comprehensively researched or documented.

This article aims to highlight the positive roles that these plants can play in the regeneration of old and neglected pastures back to bushland as a pioneer ground cover.

Bracken - a natural component of Australian bushland

A common misconception among many land managers is that bracken fern is not a native species. Historical accounts indicate that Australia's indigenous people have utilised the plant both as a food source and also for medicinal purposes. Bracken is a highly competitive and adaptable fern with a widespread distribution in Victoria, south of the 500mm isohyet. Bracken species occur throughout the world.

A fast regenerator

The rapid regeneration in response to disturbances, especially fire, often results in a dense low bracken 'canopy'. The established underground rhizomes and root system survive fire as do dormant frond buds. Following adequate rain, rapid post-fire regrowth occurs, ahead of potential competitors. The rapid emergence and expansion of bracken fronds can shade many competitors. In addition, bracken produces inhibitory allelopathic chemicals which may further assist its competitive nature.

How can bracken be used to encourage regeneration of cleared land?

In the context of regeneration, bracken can be used to our advantage. It initially inhibits the growth of weeds, many of which also respond quickly to disturbances. Loss of grasses as a result of bracken, further compounds the 'weediness' label commonly given to bracken in productive pastures. However, in the management of bush regen-

eration the shading out of exotic pasture grasses is considered an advantage.

Does this dense cover of bracken inhibit or benefit the natural regeneration of shrubs and trees?

Where existing bushland adjoins neglected pastures, bracken fern can be an ally in managing the edge and gradually allowing the edge to move outwards.

In the event that bracken totally dominates an area, it may inhibit the regeneration of local shrubs and trees. However, its dominance can be manipulated to allow regeneration to occur. The reduction of exotic weeds and grasses by bracken has become a huge advantage in the initial establishment of plants.

Under natural conditions, bracken decreases in density once a canopy cover develops and creates shade. However, on a bushland/neglected pasture edge situation, other methods of manipulation may have to occur. In some situations, frequent burning may weaken and reduce bracken. Chemicals may also offer some scope. Clearing patches of the bracken may be easier and regeneration may need to be enhanced by hand sowing or planting seedlings.

Values to wildlife

In natural ecosystems bracken is an important structural component in many forest systems. It provides cover and foraging opportunities to animals that inhabit near-ground vegetation such as lyrebirds, Eastern Yellow Robins, Eastern Whipbirds and bandicoots. Bracken-dominated edge habitat that often forms an ecotone between open forest and pastures is utilised by native foraging and grazing fauna such as Black Wallabies, Echidnas, Superb Blue Wrens and bandicoots.

Felicity Nicholls, Statewide Coordinator, Land for Wildlife

Adapted from :
Clancy, N. (2001)
Some Ecological values of
Bracken fern. Land for
Wildlife Queensland, Vol. 1
No. 4.

Platt, S. (1993) Bracken - a much maligned but most useful fern. Land for Wildlife News, Vol. 2 No. 1, NRE, Victoria.

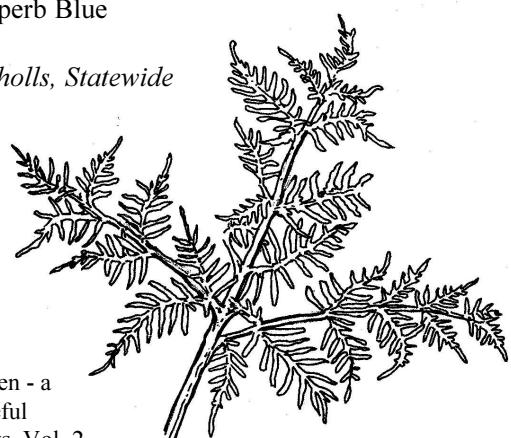


Illustration by Dawn Harris

Economic Benefits of Biodiversity

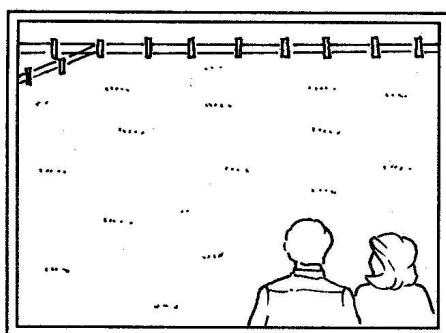
Protecting Biodiversity on your land can increase its resale value

Benefit - the dictionary meaning is 'advantage'. The advantage of having trees on your farm - be it pockets of trees, timber trees or shelter belts - is huge, both in value and in capital growth.

Trees will make your land more valuable. There is no doubt about this. If your land becomes more valuable then your capital growth is better, your lifestyle is better and you are happy within yourself with your achievement. Afterall, we like to think that our properties are desirable and increasing in value. Plant trees and you will achieve this. In all my dealings with land, I have found that if you spend say, \$10,000, on planting trees I can guarantee that your initial investment will multiply three to five times. Not a bad return, is it?

The increase in value can be attributed to different areas.

Without trees, you can see the other boundary

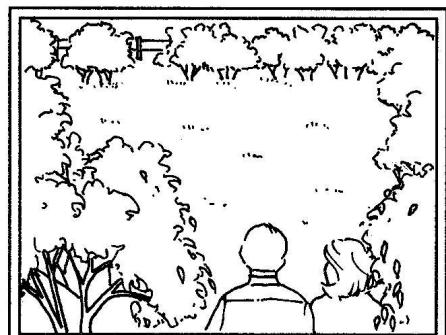


Aesthetic

More and more these days, the aesthetic value of a property outweighs the production value. Higher and higher prices are being achieved because of the purchasers' perceived beauty of a property.

I can assure you that when a purchaser is trying to decide on two similar properties, the one with aesthetic value will win over every time. As every decade goes by, new younger generations are purchasing land and the respect and appreciation for trees is becoming stronger and a much larger issue.

Often my clients will walk up to a tree and touch or feel it. This is called the 'wow factor' in the real estate industry. When a purchaser starts saying 'wow' in body language, it's a real give-away. The salesperson thinks "I've got 'em"!



Framing with trees can make the property look larger and also increases its aesthetic value

Commercial trees

Obviously there is value-adding to your property with commercial planting of trees.

Shade and shelter

Properties with good stands of trees planted for shade and shelter also make the land more valuable, particularly to primary producers.

What purchasers like

- Not being able to see the opposite boundary of a property as this makes the property appear bigger
- As with a picture, framing with trees can enhance the property
- Plantings with a greater variety and mix of species different heights, colours and textures - will have more appeal to the buyer (preferably indigenous species - Ed.)
- Trees create a feeling of privacy, value, well-being and security.

So, plant the shelterbelts, revegetate the unproductive areas of your farm and protect the remnants and you will definitely increase the value of your property. This applies to all sizes, shapes, locations and soil types on any property. No doubts!

Brian Moulton, Director of Hooker Realty, Busselton.

Taken from Moulton, B. (1998). Social benefits of trees on farms. Western Wildlife, Vol. 2 No. 2. Land for Wildlife, WA, DCLM.



Illustration by Dawn Harris

Dispersal of olives by birds

Olives are particularly noxious weeds, once established, *Olea europaea* forms a dense and permanent crown under which olive seedlings can grow, but native trees cannot regenerate.

In the 1990s a new thrust to develop an Australian olive industry has come about and has resulted in proliferation of new olive orchards on various scales, ranging from large commercial to small hobby level.

As birds are commonly regarded as major vectors of seed dispersal, a review was done by Charles Sturt University, of the avian vectors likely to be involved in the dispersal of olives. The following species have been identified as birds that feed on olive drupes and have a role in dispersing the pits:

- Spotted Turtle-dove (feral)
- Common Myna (feral)
- Blackbird (feral)
- Common Starling (feral)
- Emu
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- Satin Bowerbird
- Australian Magpie
- Pied Currawong

Observations have been made of Emus feeding on olives in olive plantations and carrying the seed in their gut into the Grampians National Park. It was observed that Pied Currawong pellets contained an average of eight (but a maximum of 23) olive seeds per pellet. Common starlings had one to six drupes in their gut when shot and examined.

Many birds in Australia have begun to feed extensively on olive drupes. Olives are already recognised as a woody weed in parts of South Australia and western Victoria. The combination of increased dispersal vectors and the expansion of the olive industry may increase the risk of infestation by this woody weed across the continent.

If you own an olive plantation or even a couple of trees, remain vigilant about the possibility of plants going feral. Monitor, report and act on it.

Reference:

Spennemann, D.H.R. & Allen, L.R. (2000) The avian dispersal of Olives *Olea europaea*: implications for Australia. *Emu*, Vol. 100 pp 264-273. RAOU.

Hollow formation in eucalypts

A study was carried out in mixed-species eucalypt forests of East Gippsland, Victoria and southeastern NSW. The study aimed to examine factors associated with the occurrence of tree hollows in four eucalypt species. A total of 1,256 standing trees and 328 felled trees was examined. Variables measured include diameter at breast height (dbh), competitive position, hollows, aspect, stem and tree form and annual precipitation. Age of trees were estimated from felled trees at recently logged sites.

Hollows with large entrances were more likely to occur in trees with a large dbh and hollows with small entrances in trees with a small dbh. The entry size of a hollow appears to be indicative of the diameter of the branch previously shed or broken.

Hollows were more likely to be deeper if they had a large entrance width and occurred on large, dead, or partly dead branches.

For all tree species and values of dbh, trees had the highest likelihood of containing hollows if dead, or exhibiting poor form. Dead trees represented a considerable proportion of all trees with hollows in the unlogged survey sites.

Trees of all sizes and ages contained hollows, although larger and older trees had a higher probability of doing so. There was a greater than 50% probability that some species of eucalypts had hollows when the trees were greater than 180 years old. Larger hollows (>10cm entrance width) had a higher probability in trees greater than 240 years old.

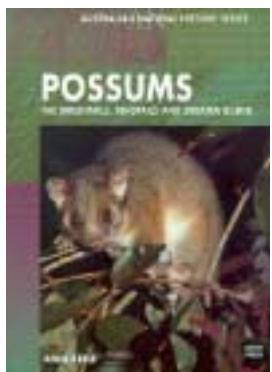
Results indicate that land managers should be encouraged to protect large trees and dead trees, as these provide the greater number of hollows, especially larger hollows. Avoid cutting down dead trees as firewood as the study indicates that they provide a large number of hollows. A wide range of vertebrate fauna use hollows in dead trees, with some species showing a preference for this resource. They are a precious resource that need to be protected, even isolated trees in paddocks.

Reference:

Gibbons, P., Lindenmayer, D.B., Barry, S.C. and Tanton, M.T. (2000). Hollow formation in eucalypts from temperate forests in southeastern Australia. *Pacific Conservation Biology*, Vol. 6: 218-228.



Recent Publications (see page 2 for member discount)



Possums - the brushtails, ring-tails and Greater Glider. Anne Kerle (2001).

This book is a detailed text providing information on how to care for injured or abandoned possums, how to live

with them in harmony and how to properly understand the specific needs of our possums. It is one of the few books devoted to describing the natural history of the 'larger' possums of Australia. The book outlines where and how to find the large possums and provides information about their breeding, feeding, behaviour, relationships, survival, conservation and interactions with people. UNSW Press. RRP \$39.95. Also available from the NRE Information Centre (page 2).



Field Companion to Fungi (2001).

Bruce Fuhrer. Fully revised & updated second edition. In this book, Bruce Fuhrer has compiled a fascinating collection of photographs with informative text to enable the layperson to develop a knowl-

edge of these fascinating plant forms. He gives information that allows for the identification of fungi, their natural habitats, whether the fungi are edible and much more. Bloomings Books. RRP \$24.95. Also available from the NRE Information Centre (page 2).



Business and Biodiversity - an Australian business guide for understanding and managing biodiversity (2001).

Earthwatch. This guide sets out the business case for protecting

biodiversity. It provides a framework for business to understand their legal and regulatory responsibilities as well as a step-by-step guide to measuring and managing their biodiversity impacts. A useful publication for all business leaders. Copies available from Earthwatch (03) 9682 6828 or downloaded from www.earthwatch.org/australia/pubs.html

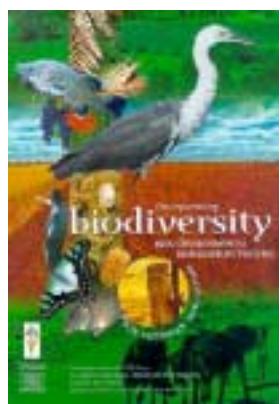
Also available from the NRE Information Centre (page 2).



Freshwater Ecosystems Biodiversity Management Issues (2001).

Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This set of 10 Notes (plus an introductory brochure) have been designed to increase community knowledge of threatening processes in

freshwater ecosystems and ways in which they may be ameliorated. The brochures cover issues such as 'changes to natural flow patterns', 'salinity' and 'toxic materials'. If you would like copies, please phone Alicia Lucas NRE on 9412 4233 or contact your local Land for Wildlife Extension Officer or Felicity Nicholls, Land for Wildlife Statewide Coordinator on 5430 4363. Also available from the NRE Information Centre (page 2).



Incorporating Biodiversity into Environmental Management Systems for Victorian Agriculture (2001).

Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This discussion paper aims to stimulate change through voluntary mecha-

nisms that improve the understanding and encourage the adoption, among a broad audience, of the conservation and restoration of biodiversity in the Victorian agricultural sector using Environmental Management Systems (EMS). Obtain a copy from the NRE Information Centre, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, 3002 or 9637 8325.

Conservation Properties for Sale

Bend of Islands/Kangaroo Ground area. Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative. A unique living experience only 50 minutes NE of Melbourne, the co-op is situated on 132.1ha of bushland. The objective of the co-op is to conserve its land while allowing shareholders to build dwellings on pre-determined sites, to cultivate small kitchen gardens with firm guidelines and controls so as to minimise impact on the environment and create a residential sanctuary. Shares are available for sale - as vacant home sites or pre-existing dwellings. Conditions for membership and purchase apply. For further information please contact: Fabio (03) 9712 0615 or Kerry (03) 9712 0354 or visit our website www.netspace.net.au/~kerry

Darraweit Guim. ‘Park Farm’. 122 acres capturing tranquility, seclusion and serenity. Architect designed passive environmentally influenced home offering 30 squares. 3 bedrooms. Every window takes advantage of the magnificent views. The property has a combination of pasture plus attractive native vegetation that has become home to abundant wildlife with a permanent creek. Only 50 minutes from CBD. Double garage, workshop, machinery shed, sheep yards, silo and dam and full watering system. \$450,000. Contact Elders at Kilmore on 5782 1433.

Gippsland Lakes. Boole Poole Peninsula. 32 acres of natural bush with 800m water frontage on the Bunga Back Lake - opposite Ocean Grange. With boat access only, this property offers the ultimate in privacy and seclusion. Features include a private (shared) jetty, a 2m x 3.6m shed with phone connected, a prepared house-site with views over the lake and nature trail. The extensive wildlife includes Eastern Pygmy Possums, the introduced Hog Deer as well as kangaroos, wallabies and echidnas, together with a bird list of over 70 species. This property is ideal for many activities including: sailing, water-skiing, lake and surf fishing, walking and swimming for all ages. The waterfront has a lovely sandy beach. \$125,000. Phone owners for more details on (03) 5668 2035 or view on the internet www.australiarealty.com.au Ref: G150019.

Bullengarook. Escape to nature. Lifestyle 10 acres or weekender with abundant wildlife and large dam. 3 bedrooms. Easy access to Calder Highway. Huge shed. Wonderful secluded retreat. \$195,000. Contact Professionals on 9744 2555 or 0418 354 285.

Bullengarook (near Gisborne). 10 acre bush block, with one decent paddock, ensconced in the Wombat State Forest 12 km out of Gisborne. Very secluded spot. At least one acre is water. Limitless household and garden water. 60 species of birds, roos, wallabies, koalas, water rats, sugar gliders etc. A wildlife paradise. 20 square cedar house is 8 years old. All 3 bedrooms, lounge and hexagonal study with cathedral ceilings. Large deck at bush canopy level. Much exposed wood. 45 minutes from CBD. Price \$308,000. Ring 54289448 or 93768000.

Have you sold or are you thinking of selling your Land for Wildlife property?

If you sell your Land for Wildlife property, please inform the Extension Officer or Statewide Coordinator. We can then alter the database and invite the new owners to join. The Land for Wildlife sign is the property of NRE and needs to be returned or picked up.

Advertising your property here is free to Land for Wildlife members.

Erratum

‘The Refernery’ In Land for Wildlife News Volume 4 No. 9 page 10, an incorrect phone number was given for Allan & Julie. It should be 5689 1309.

Land for Wildlife Note No 42
Phytophthora root disease. **Page 2. Last sentence in fourth paragraph should read “ Unfortunately, significant areas of Australia have poor soils that are low in organic matter and therefore are not able to suppress the disease”.**

Land for Wildlife Extension Officers are at the following Department of Natural Resources and Environment Offices:

Alexandra
- (03) 5735 1240
- (03) 5772 0257

Bairnsdale
- (03) 5152 0400

Ballarat
- (03) 5333 6928

Benalla
- (03) 5761 1525

Bendigo
- (03) 5430 4368

Geelong and Melbourne West
- (03) 5226 4953

Melbourne East
- (03) 9785 0134

Portland
- (03) 5523 3232

Port Phillip East
- (03) 9785 0134

Central and West Gippsland
- (03) 5183 9103

St Arnaud
- (03) 5495 1700

Swan Hill
- (03) 5036 0832

Wodonga
- (03) 6055 6173

Other Land for Wildlife contacts:

Colac
- (03) 5233 5533

Horsham
- (03) 5362 2111

Bird Observers Club of Australia
PO Box 185,
Nunawading, 3131
(03) 9877 5342 or
1300 305 342
(country callers).

Courses/Field Days/Information Sessions

27th November - 22nd December 2001. Wild Grasses in Victoria. 8 sessions over 4 weeks. Currawong Bush Park, Doncaster East. Graeme Lorimer, PhD. 9728 5841.

30th November - 4th December 2001. Wetland Ecology - brolgas, bell frogs and buttercups. GAV. Southern Grampians, Dunkeld. \$880. (03) 9450 5302.

1st December 2001. Managing Waterways. Peppermint Ridge Farm, Tynong North. 5942 8580.

2nd December 2001. Managing Wetlands. Peppermint Ridge Farm, Tynong North. 5942 8580.

4th December 2001. Developing and Writing Successful Grant Applications. GAV 9457 3024.

5th December 2001. Keeping up with Native Grasses. Creswick. Victorian Landcare Centre. NRE. 5345 2200.

11th December 2001. Group Facilitation Skills. GAV. 9457 3024.

6th-12th January 2002. Alpine Ecology Course. Bogong High Plains. La Trobe University and Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Lesley Sayer. 9479 2190.

21st-25th January 2002. Coastal Ecology Course. 5 day residential Course. GAV. 9457 3024.

NRE appoints FarmBis Coordinators

The new FarmBis program in Victoria commenced in July 2001 and is managed by NRE with the administration of the grants being handled by the Rural Finance Corporation.

FarmBis will provide over \$6M of grants each year for the next three years in Victoria to subsidise training for farmers, land managers and wild-catch fishers based on eligibility criteria.

The new FarmBis is also committed to recognising the unique circumstances and needs of women and indigenous groups.

Farmers often comment about the apparent competition and confusion associated with training courses and other learning opportunities. To address this problem, a team of FarmBis Coordinators, based at NRE regional offices, have been appointed by NRE to assist potential FarmBis participants to identify and access the training activities best suited to their needs.

For more information about FarmBis, contact the NRE Customer Service Centre on 13 61 86 or visit www.farmbis.ruralfinance.com.au

Are you Fire Safe?

Fire season is upon us again and by now you should have planned for the safety of your family, your property and even your local neighbourhood.

Avoid panic by being prepared. Fires are survivable if you are prepared and have an effective plan.

Whether you choose to stay in your home or evacuate ahead of time, the decision is yours and you must plan well in advance for whichever option you choose.

For example, on an extreme fire danger day, have you sat down with your family and worked out a survival plan? Do you have a set of appropriate clothing handy for everyone in the house in case you have no time to evacuate safely?

Join your local Community Fireguard group. These groups help neighbours to develop a local fire strategy. If there is no group in your area, CFA Community Fireguard will assist you in forming a group. For more information contact CFA on 9262 8444.

