



LAND FOR WILDLIFE NEWS



Newsletter of the LAND FOR WILDLIFE scheme



Whistling Kite sitting on a Land for Wildlife sign at Hospital Swamp near Geelong. Photo: Craig Morley.



Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria, Australia.

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Inside

Editorial	2
Letters to the Editor	3
Conservation Broker	4
Environmental Management in Agriculture Worksheet Series	4
Environmental Farmers Network	4
Bush Detective	
Bark Stripping, leaf clusters, lyrebird mounds	5
Tuans and cats	6
Pobblebonk poetry	6
LFW Open Property Scheme	7
Practicalities	
Bushland restoration in suburbia	8
Little Land for Wildlifers	
Sustainable Schools	9
Vale to Ellen McCulloch	9
Research	
Weed control using sugar	10
Property Profile	
Boho South	11
Property Profile	
Torquay Primary School	12
Economic Benefits of Biodiversity	
BushBroker	13
Recent Publications	14
Properties for sale	15
Courses/Field Days	16
Contact List	16





Editorial

Dear Land for Wildlifers,

This issue of the newsletter has information about a couple of new and very important initiatives. The first is a program offering assistance to buyers and sellers of conservation property and to real estate agents who wish to broaden their knowledge on the value of conservation properties. Turn to page 4 to find out more about the Conservation Broker project.

BushBroker is another recent initiative, launched recently by Minister Thwaites, and provides landholders with a potential new income stream while protecting the environment. Page 13 of the newsletters gives further information on this new scheme.

Thank you to all the landholders that hosted a Land for Wildlife Open Day. There was a great range of properties, including sheep/cropping farms, bush properties and an aluminium smelter. One of the open days has been described on page 7.



Illustration: Alexis Beckett

DSE Customer Service
Phone the freecall number if you have any questions relating to natural resources and the environment

136 186

Blackberry infestations are certainly a problem on many properties. On page 11 you will read an inspiring article on the control program carried out by LFWers in the Strathbogie Ranges and the positive outcomes this has had for wildlife, such as the Southern Water Skink.

Included in this issue is the index for Volume 5. If your folder is getting full, Extension Officers can send the cover and spine inserts to place in a folder. Unfortunately we can't cover the costs of a second folder but we can supply the inserts for folders with clear plastic spine and cover pockets.

This will be my last newsletter for a while as I am going on maternity leave for approximately 12 months. I wish you all the best with your nature conservation projects.

Felicity Nicholls
Statewide Coordinator
Land for Wildlife Program

Visit the Land for Wildlife Web site at
www.dse.vic.gov.au

and enter via 'plants and animals', 'native plants and animals' and then 'Land for Wildlife'

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See page 16 for a list of Land for Wildlife Extension Officers and Contacts.

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LFW MEMBERSHIP	PROPERTY AREA	RETAINED HABITAT	HABITAT UNDER RESTORATION	NEW PROPERTIES SINCE LAST EDITION
5,975	565,017 ha	142,695 ha	24,156 ha	116

Figures include reductions to areas due to de-registrations of properties. Current at 30th March 2006.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am a member of Land for Wildlife and would like to know if you have any information on managing a termite problem in a house. I have had advice from the pest controllers but do not relish the idea of spreading thousands of litres of chemical poisons around the house to form a barrier or baiting to kill the colony as they serve a very good purpose in the bush. Any ideas on options or information?

Mark Myers, LFWer, Dixons Creek

Dear Mark,

Termites certainly do play an extremely important role in the natural environment. They play the role of decomposers, breaking down the wood as they feed, and the hollows they sculpt in the trees form the homes for many birds and mammals. Of the 200 species in Australia, about 20 species appear to cause economic concerns. But how do we stop them from destroying parts of our houses without disturbing the important role they play in the surrounding bush? Does anyone have an answer to this question? I believe all new buildings in Australia should include non-chemical termite prevention features, but how do we cope with termites in current buildings. Please send your ideas to me for the next issue of News.

The Editor

Dear Editor

Reading our Land for Wildlife newsletter has prompted me to share some of our magic moments. We have a stainless steel bowl in the garden, probably about 20cms tall and diameter. As you can see from the photographs, it is just off ground level. We have innumerable visitors to this water.....hundreds of little birds, all day long, kangaroos, wallabies and in summer everyday at midday or there about, echidnas. These are the funniest things.....they not only drink, but climb in, do a lap or two, despite the fish, weed, frogs etc, hang on to the rim, give themselves a shake and then fall out and off they go. I know we have two different echidnas, may'be more. The other classic visitor was on a

particularly hot day when I looked out and there was a wallaby sitting in the dish.....knees hard up against one edge and tail popping over the other.....he too obviously felt in need of a cool off. I have also seen young wallabies up to their shoulders pulling the water weed and eating it like fresh wet lettuce with great glee. So we get real value for money from this quite small water source...birds galore, frogs, lizards and a particularly impressive copper head.....all share this bowl of wetness.

Ev and Chris Hales, LFWers, Hurstbridge

Dear Ev and Chris,

Thank you for sharing your wonderful observations of visitors to your water bowl. I often tell landholders that there is no need to leave out food for visiting wildlife, when a water bowl can be just as effective and would probably bring a wider variety of species. Sometimes leaving out grain, bread etc can attract one species of animal and these will tend to dominate over the other species. For example, leaving out parrot seed may cause an influx of lorikeets or cockatoos, which may show aggressive behaviour to smaller seed-eating parrots, finches etc. The food may also cause health problems. When members ask about water bowls I usually recommend that they make sure the water bowl is not a death trap and perhaps put a rock or stick inside in case smaller wildlife fall in and can't climb up the slippery sides. Also I recommend that they make sure cats don't use the bowl as a convenient kiosk to pick off unsuspecting wildlife. If water weed is included in the bowl, can I suggest that you make sure it is not a variety that could spread to water ways and become a potential weed - eg caught in echidna spines and dropped into a creek!

What a great and entertaining way to observe wildlife close to your house! The photo below certainly indicates that the wildlife appreciate this very simple action.

The Editor



Conservation Broker - the place to buy and sell conservation land in Victoria

This project is a joint initiative of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and has the support of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria and leading conservation organisations, including Landcare Australia and Trust for Nature. The project includes the launch of a new guide to help real estate agents assess and market conservation values of properties as well as a useful web site. It provides the opportunity for the brokerage of conservation land and additional information for both real estate agents and landholders.

Buyers can search for conservation properties by location, price and size. The buyers page has a link to the planning scheme online, allowing interested parties to view information on relevant zones, overlays and provisions, which dictate what activities can take place on a particular piece of land.

Many landholders who have put much emotion and resources into protecting conservation values on their property want potential buyers to have the same plans and interest in the values of the property. This web site may provide an avenue for finding the perfect new owners. Sellers can advertise their property according

to the guidelines for property listings.

Additional information includes the following topics:

- Environmental management incentives and organisations
- The relationship between native vegetation and the planning scheme
- Environmental News Updates
- Agent's Manual and Land Assessment Sheets
- Useful Links.

www.conservationbroker.net.au

The Agent's Manual allows real estate agents to undertake a basic environmental assessment of

properties. The manual contains the following information:

- Land Assessment Sheet and supporting material
- Users Guide to the planning scheme online
- Information on regulatory constraints relating to natural resource management
- Opportunities to assist in marketing properties
- Other avenues for marketing conservation land
- Phrases and terminology to improve marketability of properties
- Useful Field Guides.

For further information about the project contact Rowhan Marshall on (03) 5761 1569.

Environmental Management in Agriculture Worksheet Series

In the last issue of Land for Wildlife News (page 12), the Native Biodiversity Resource Kit was described. Available on the web, the kit assists farmers and landholders to work towards improved conservation of biodiversity. Part of the kit included 8 worksheets relating to self assessment, site records, classifying vegetation, assessing habitat quality, conservation status, setting targets, management actions and monitoring. These sheets are now available as a hard-copy booklet. Please contact the Statewide Coordinator, Land for Wildlife, if you would like a free copy on 5430 4363.

Environmental Farmers Network

The Environmental Farmers Network (EFN) is committed to improving environmental health of private and public land in farming areas. The EFN has a clear platform, it aims to:

- Promote policies for best practice environmental management on farms and in farming regions,
- Advocate for greater private and public support for rural environmental programs, and
- Generate greater environmental awareness in the broader community.

www.environmentalfarmersnetwork.net.au
or (03) 5352 1530.

Has it been a long time since your property was visited by a *Land for Wildlife* Extension Officer?

Have you got lots of new questions to ask?

Would you like to show them the changes that have happened on your property to improve its conservation value?

Give your local *LFW* Extension Officer (see page 16 for contacts) a call and invite them out to your property for another visit.

Did you get.....?

As members of *Land for Wildlife*, you should have received a folder with some back copies of newsletters and a full set of *Land for Wildlife* Notes series (43 notes in the set).

Please contact your local *Land for Wildlife* Extension Officer if you did not receive these after your property assessment. They are also available on the Web. See page 2 for more details.

Bush Detective Who made this? Who did this?



Another mystery bark stripper!

Gwen Sanders sent in this photo, taken from her Land for Wildlife property at Maintongoon, near Alexandra. The Hairpin Banksia had been stripped bare, effectively ring-barking the plant, leading to death. Cockatoos could possibly be stripping the banksias and nipping off branches. Cockatoos are known to strip bark as they search for grubs. The best way to avoid this is to wrap chicken wire around the trunk/stem of the shrubs/trees you wish to protect in your garden or project areas.

Refer to the recent publication; *Wild Neighbours - the humane approach to living with wildlife*, (2005) by Ian Temby, Citrus Press, for more solutions to problems caused by cockatoos (review on page 14).

Mystery Leaf Clusters



Doug Robinson and Lance Williams sent in these photos of leaf clusters in a tree trunk near Rushworth. Does anyone have any ideas of who may have made these clusters and why? Send your ideas to the Editor, Land for Wildlife News.

Crop Circles in the bush!



Have you ever wondered why strange circles have appeared on your property?

These images are of a Superb Lyrebird display mound. Male Lyrebirds scratch out several bare earth mounds throughout their territory, where he performs an alluring display of song and dance. During the autumn to winter breeding season displays occur daily. Males may mate with more than one female but take no part in nesting duties.

Kylie Singleton, LFW Extension Officer, Traralgon

Reference: Complete Book of Australian Birds. 1990. Published by Reader's Digest.

Photo: Lyrebird mound at Rob and Viv Jones LFW property at Foster North.

Tuans and a cat

We bought our property 5 years ago – 5ha of Box-Ironbark regrowth on a ridge top, next to what is now Greater Bendigo National Park. We love living here – it's a 10 minute drive to Bendigo but is secluded and very peaceful. The wildflowers are beautiful in Spring and we have many bird, bat and reptile species being added to our list including Speckled Warblers and Tree Goannas. We were thrilled to discover that what we initially thought were rats in the roof of the mud-brick studio near to our house are actually tuans (Brush-tailed Phascogales).

They made plenty of noise but were very shy and in the first couple of years we managed only two separate sightings - an adult and a juvenile at dusk heading out to feed.

Mik later had the privilege of being observed by a tuan for about an hour while he painted in the studio. In June this year the tuans started to make themselves more at home, running about on the roof of our house and climbing in wall cavities, presumably looking for prey – spiders, insects and mice. Late one night I heard a commotion from the chook pen and discovered an adult tuan savaging one of the chickens. It mauled the chicken's head badly.

However the most wonderful experience happened in October this year. One evening we noticed a tiny black brush-tail hanging out of our kitchen cupboard and upon investigation we found a tiny baby tuan amongst the saucepans. The next night it reappeared darting out from next to the stove and we managed to take some photos of it. In the next few days we discovered that

what we initially thought was one baby tuan turned out to four! They became bolder at each visit – one would be climbing the brick wall in the laundry while another was investigating the bedrooms while yet another was climbing the blinds in the lounge room. We became used to them exploring the place and even left them a dish of mealworms to eat which they enjoyed. Our children were able to get quite close to them (see photo).



After a week of visits we were devastated to see a cat on our verandah late one night. It was obviously someone's pet judging from the collar and bell. The cat

kept visiting at night and over the next week the number of tuans dropped until 12 days after our first sighting there were no more.

Male tuans live for twelve months and are the largest marsupial carnivores to die off after their first mating season. Losing possibly an entire generation of tuans in a fortnight is a tragedy and we don't know whether the population will be sustained.

The local area is being subdivided and suburbanised at a rapid rate and we can expect more cats in the future. Even though Bendigo Council has introduced a dusk to dawn cat curfew, it is not policed. Laws requiring that cats be kept on their owners' properties at all times and compulsory de-sexing will be a move in the right direction. We've bought a trap which we have set up permanently now. If we are ever fortunate enough to have another troupe of tuans visit us, we'll be ready to protect them from cats.

Lisa Cox, LFWer, Strathfieldsaye

Pobblebonk

Oh to have a Pobblebonk
To sit and watch for days
That gorgeous little creature
With its Pobblebonking ways
The way they sit and just inhale
Till you think that they might burst
And then before you know it
They "BONK" through lips quite pursed
Where other frogs will chirrup
And the lazy ones ka-plonk
Our gorgeous little Pobble
Does a banjo bonk

So if you are out there
In the shrubbery
And you hear
A leafy rustle



Listen very closely
And ne'ry move a muscle
For if you hear
a bonking
Coming from the creek
It might be the gorgeous
Pobble
So go
and take a peep.

Lei Parker

Photo by Rhyll Mathews

Land for Wildlife Open Day on "Grasstree Ridge"

In October 2005, a handful of Land for Wildlife members opened up their properties to the public to share their ideas and experiences. The following is an example of one of the properties opened to the public for the annual Land for Wildlife Open Property Scheme.

The weather was on its best behaviour for the annual Land for Wildlife Open Property Day, hosted by John and Karen Fuller on their 30 hectare property 'Grasstree Ridge' in South Gippsland. About 30 visitors arrived to a hot cuppa, a biscuit and an opportunity to mingle with Land for Wildlife members and non members alike.

Upon arrival, one can not help but notice the eroded landscape. In its former life the property was crown land, managed by local government for gravel extraction to construct local roads.

During the 1980's, a nature reserve was proposed for the site that was unsuccessful, and over the years local children used it as a playground. In 2004 the Middle Tarwin property was purchased by John and Karen, who now have the challenging task of rehabilitating the quarried area and managing the remaining remnants of Lowland Forest and Riparian Scrub.

After introductions and acknowledgment of the traditional owners, the Gunai Kurnai people of Gippsland, Bronwyn Teesdale from Greening Australia was introduced to discuss EVC's (Ecological Vegetation Classes). Two maps were presented, one showing the cover of native vegetation pre European settlement and another detailing the current extent of remaining vegetation. Participants were amazed at the scale of vegetation that has been removed in just over two hundred years. The maps certainly demonstrated the importance of managing and protecting remaining native remnants.

Following Bronwyn's presentation, we began our guided

tour of the property. The tour commenced in remnant Lowland Forest, with an understorey dominated by magnificent old grasstrees *Xanthorrhoea australis*. Many native species were in flower including Common Rice-flower *Pimelea humilis*, Long Purple-flag *Patersonia occidentalis*, Pink Bells *Tetratheca ciliata*, Prickly Geebung *Persoonia juniperina*, Common Heath *Epacris impressa*, Wax-lip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Salmon

Orchid *Thelymitra rubra* and a Caladenia orchid.



Grasstrees in Lowland Forest. Photo: Jim Blucher

Small birds were heard throughout the forest including Willie Wagtails, Spotted Pardalotes and thornbills. Several large Powerful Owl pellets were also discovered (pellets are regurgitated bone and fur from prey). Since purchasing the property, John and Karen have observed Fairy Martins (with mud nests) Koalas, Sugar Gliders, Tree Goannas, Blue-tongue Lizards and White-lipped Snakes.

We made our way down towards the old quarry where restoration has started in earnest. Some sections of the quarry have been direct seeded, resulting in the recruitment of eucalypts, acacias and heaths. To reduce erosion, contour drains have been constructed to divert water flow around the worst effected areas, whilst blue metal, logs and branches has been placed in the gullies.

At the bottom of the quarry there are a series of settling ponds designed to filter out clay and sand particles, before the water flows into the catchment.

It will take many years to rehabilitate the old quarry but with John and Karen's dedication and enthusiasm for the property, a great deal will be achieved.

I would like to sincerely thank John and Karen for hosting the open day on their property and our guest speaker Bronwyn Teesdale from Greening Australia.

For South and West Gippsland LFW members interested in hosting an open day on their property during September or October, please contact Kylie Singleton on Ph: (03) 5172 2123.

Kylie Singleton, LFW Extension Officer, Traralgon



Resilient native species reclaiming the old quarry. Photo: Kylie Singleton

Restoration of a bushland property in suburbia - personal experiences that may assist others

Your article on the use of native grasses as lawns has prompted me to throw in my experiences that may assist. We have been successful in establishing a range of native grasses over a very high percentage of this 1ha. bushland property in the middle of suburbia in an eastern suburb of Melbourne.

I cannot sing the praises of Weeping Grass *Microlaena stipoides* enough, reliable, tough, drought tolerant, kid proof and attractive. Even with the dryness of recent years there is always a touch of green evident and at the first sprinkle of rain it turns green. It gets no artificial watering whatsoever and requires cutting 5-6 times a year.

Various species of Wallaby Grass, *Danthonia* sp. were mentioned to me as probably being suitable but on examination I feel they are not as robust as the above and don't have that underground stolon characteristic which is ideal for a tough lawn.

We had a reasonable component of *Microlaena* that had been growing here on our block and it had been regenerating naturally. After the total disturbance of a large area through the construction of a dam we had some pretty significant areas of bare soil to cope with. My main concern was a large area of freshly spread topsoil that had been redistributed and was ready to erupt with weed species as there was quite a mixture prior to disturbance, unless I acted pretty quickly. As it turned out we took a right decision in covering all the bare areas with mulch. This gave us time and the opportunistic weed species were slowed. We had a supply of *Microlaena* that I had been nurturing along our gravel drive and now the transplanting began. I did a real hair transplant job pugging in hundreds, digging them from anywhere I could find them around the place. Like any other plants that have just been moved, they require water so make sure they get a drink until they are established. At the same time I was pulling the weed species before they had the time to seed. This was time consuming for the first season, gradually tapering off as the good guys spread. As the supply of grass increased I was able to thicken lean spots and give more attention to areas where weeds were doing well. On a couple of occasions I resorted to Roundup because I just wasn't winning - these were usually smaller areas so I started again - the rewards were quicker as it was surrounded by good grass. You may be asking are there any problems in establishing this grass? Well it can be cut low and it looks good, however if it gets into garden beds it can be a bit of a nuisance with its underground stolons, probably like a number of other species.

November/December is a busy time as this is when most grasses are flowering, but the weeds will seed within a few weeks of germinating, particularly quick colonising species such as Annual Poa and Panic Veldt, and this means constant vigilance from the first rains after summer to when the dry sets in. Other species, such as Sweet Vernal, flat weeds and thistles are easily removed provided they are not allowed to seed. Perennial lawn grasses such as creeping bent and rye grasses flower at this time too and make identification easier so I mattock these out as they are good spreaders and need to be dealt with immediately. Spray would probably work ok but I have limited this to an absolute minimum as frogs are alive and well in the dam, shrieking their heads off most nights and there is no way I am going to chance their demise through runoff. Any sign of couch grass or kikuyu and it is dug out - it will show up over summer/autumn when it becomes active. Paspalum gets the same treatment and fog grass is pretty easy to remove. Bulb species are harder to eliminate, the little purple onion grass, Montbretia, angled onion, freesias etc. We had a good dose of some of these and I used to try for an hour a day and do a square metre at a time and dig systematically. It takes about 3 years to be sure you've got the lot but I've been at montbretia for 8 years now and almost consider it gone -don't despair this is on a 2.5 acre property. In fact we have the weeds on the run here and there is only light weeding to do every couple of months, however I have to admit that whenever I am walking around the place I remove them as I see them.

Be certain to remove the weeds to a compost heap and not drop them back in the garden, I take a bucket around which I find helps. The really nasty ones like couch, kikuyu, the bulbs and creeping bent goes into the trundly.

To obtain supplies of grasses, indigenous nurseries are a fine source of local provenance plants and if you can purchase these in thumb pots they are much cheaper if you need quantity. *Microlaena* is a prolific seed setter from December to March and collecting quantities is straight forward. If you walk through areas where it grows during seeding time you will get to know it well as it has the wonderful habit of imbedding itself in your socks and it is not uncommon for people to have to stop and remove them weeks later - believe me.

In recent times I have removed some huge Sweet Pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum* from an area that I regard as sealed, ie. an area that has little chance of

continued on page 13

Little Land for Wildlifers



Sketch of bandicoot by Alexis Beckett

Sustainability in Schools

Has your school ever thought about going that extra step and becoming a sustainable school? There are many schools that have developed flora and fauna habitat on the school grounds (including over 120 Land for Wildlife schools/education institutes) and have introduced the students to the wonders of nature and its conservation. But with the assistance of the “Sustainable Schools” program, these positive actions can be incorporated into a holistic approach to sustainability.

The Victorian Sustainable Schools pilot was developed and delivered by Gould League and CERES Community Environment Park with major funding support from the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage and additional funding provided by the Victorian Government and Philanthropic Trusts.

Sustainable Schools is suitable for primary, secondary and specialist schools. A sustainable school

demonstrates a committed whole school approach to sustainability education and improving triple bottom line

outcomes. Students change their schools and learn how they can change their community through Sustainable Schools. They make real decisions that are relevant to their lives. Sustainability is one of the richest authentic learning areas and can generate hundreds of exciting areas of learning.

The Sustainable Schools initiative is based on the following principles;

- Best Practice Education,
- Ecologically Sustainable Development,
- Co-operation and collaboration, and
- Flow-on effect from schools to the broader community.

For more information about the Sustainable Schools initiative go to the web site www.sustainableschools.com.au



Tree planting drawing by Rhys Buchhorn, Balnarring

“To truthfully reflect and say, yes we’ve made a better world for all our children is perhaps the only real measure of success”.

(a quote from “Bushcare in Tasmania” No. 98, 2003)

Vale to Ellen McCulloch OAM Birdwatcher, conservationist and Land for Wildlife crusader

Land for Wildlife would like to express great sadness in the loss of Ellen McCulloch in November 2005. Along with Reg Johnson, Ellen McCulloch had a huge role in the initiation of the Land for Wildlife program, hence the association of the Land for Wildlife program with the Bird Observers Club of Australia. As written in the obituary by Tess Kloot in the Feb 2006 edition of The Bird Observer;

“During the 1970’s she attended, with Reg Johnson, a fellow BOCA member, the quarterly meetings of the then Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Division. A series of lengthy discussions held over a time finally led, in 1981, to the Land for Wildlife project..... Peter [her husband] relates that of all her achievements, this gave her the most pleasure and pride. Always ready to give credit to Reg Johnson, she never failed to remark, when passing a property displaying the logo, just how proud she was to see this visible sign of their achieve-

ment. Now thousands of property owners participate in the scheme.”

Ellen was an active birdwatcher and conservationists and instigated many projects relating to the study and protection of Australian birds. These included writing and producing many leaflets on a diverse range of subjects, representing BOCA on many committees, the Birds and Gardens scheme, supported the Australian Bird Environment Fund, supporting many surveys such as the Western Port Bay Survey over three decades, was the author of books such as “Birds in your Garden” and much more.

As Tess Kloot described in her article; “She was honoured by a Life Membership in the Bird Observers Club in 1985, the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1990, and the Order of Australia in 1991 for “services to ornithology”.

A Sweet end to Weeds

Sugar has the potential to control annual weeds according to recent research trials conducted by researchers from Charles Sturt University (CSU).

The researchers, ecologists Dr Suzanne Prober, Dr Ian Lunt and Dr Kevin Thiele, have applied sugar to trial plots for a project funded by the NSW Environment Trust on how to restore understorey species in endangered Grassy White Box Woodlands.

“It appears sugar is a tool we can use to help change a system back to one dominated by native species rather than weeds,” said Dr Prober who has been working to conserve and restore grassy white box woodlands for the past 15 years. Nearly all of the woodland belt, from southern Queensland to north-east Victoria is now used for agricultural purposes, principally wheat and sheep.

The researchers in their trials near Young, central western NSW, have found that an application of sugar, which is one of the fastest ways to reduce soil nitrates, provides a good, short-term non-chemical and ecologically friendly method of weed control.

Dr Prober’s research compared soil nutrients in undisturbed woodlands and disturbed, degraded sites. She found the most striking difference between the two was in nitrate levels, which were extremely low in undisturbed remnants and high in degraded remnants.

“It seems that many of our weed problems are due to high nutrient levels,” said Dr Prober.

The researchers, who spread half a kilogram of refined white sugar to each square metre of soil every three months, found this inhibited weed growth of most annual weeds giving the native plants the opportunity to become well-established.

“We realise that the sugar levels we used in our trials would not be economic to use over broad scales”, said Dr Prober, “but at the moment we don’t know if we would get similar results if we used less sugar or if we used cheaper alternatives such as molasses or sawdust”.

Dr Ian Lunt from one of CSU’s leading research centres, the Institute for Land, Water and Society, explained that when sugar was spread on the soil, it fed soil micro-organisms, which absorbed lots of soil nutrients as they grew.

“The micro-organisms then hold these nutrients so the weeds can’t gobble them up. In effect we are ‘starving’ the weed species that require lots of nutrients

to grow,” he said.

The lack of nutrients stopped the weeds from growing large, allowing the native plants, which can grow well in low nutrient levels, to grow bigger and faster.

Using sugar as an organic weed control, to help to restore endangered woodlands and native grasslands, is an innovative alternative to using herbicides.

While the researchers are primarily interested in using sugar as a tool to help restore the understorey species in grassy box woodlands, they are aware their research could be the basis for other more agriculturally driven research.

“Broad leaf weeds such as Paterson’s Curse are the bane of every farmer’s life. Once infestations get very bad, it gets very difficult to control them,” said Dr Lunt. “Sugar may help land managers to control broad-leaf weeds and to re-introduce perennial grasses in many places across the region. In particular, it could be a really helpful tool in organic farming or in places where herbicides are difficult to apply.”

*Margrit Beemster, Communications Officer,
Institute for Land, Water and Society,
Charles Sturt University.*

For further information contact Dr Ian Lunt on ilunt@csu.edu.au or Dr Suzanne Prober on suzanne.prober@bigpond.com or contact Charles Sturt University on (02) 6051 9992.

Also, visit the following web site for more research on the use of sugar for weed control;

<http://www.csu.edu.au/herbarium/woodlandweb/>



Illustration by Dawn Harris

Property Profile

Of skinks and sunshine

We signed up our 14-ha property “Aviemore”, situated at 480 m altitude in the Strathbogie Ranges, for *Land for Wildlife* soon after we bought it in mid-2000. Its major assets are a small area of Swampy Riparian Woodland and a larger tract of Herb-rich Foothill Forest, both in good condition. eastern grey Kangaroos, black Wallabies, Wombats, Echidnas, Platypus, Bobucks, Common Brushtails, Ringtails and Sugar Gliders are prominent elements of the larger mammalian fauna, and our bird species count presently stands at 78.

The major blot on Aviemore’s landscape is blackberry, vast tracts of it, in places forming thickets tens of metres across and up to 3 m tall. We’re making good progress in our battle against it, though we have a long way to go. We began by tackling a 120-m stretch of a shallow, spring-fed, rocky creek which runs across our land; about half of its length was choked with blackberry. Indeed the blackberry growth along a 25-m length in an open, sunny area was so dense that it had formed a sediment-trap, and silt had built up to the extent that, except after torrential rain, the creek flow had disappeared underground.

We carried out a limited and carefully targeted spraying program using a knapsack spray, slashed foliage and stems, grubbed out roots and crowns, and finally burned the debris at the end of the second season. Results quickly became evident: mountain swamp gum, silver wattle, black wattle and *Cassinia* appeared throughout the formerly infested area, and we added some blackwoods which we grew from seed collected on the property. By dint of a small amount of “river

improvement” we also persuaded the creek (at any rate an appreciable fraction of its flow) to run on the surface again. We felt well rewarded for our hard work; not only did the area now look (and sound!) attractive, but a major weed infestation was beginning to be replaced by native vegetation. That wasn’t the end of it, however: a bonus was in store for us and over the next two summers it became very evident.



Southern Water Skink. Photo: Nick Clemann

We had previously noted the presence of a population of Southern Water Skinks, *Eulamprus tympanum*, downstream from this area. Our newly-created open, sunny stretch of creek turned out to be water skink heaven: suddenly they were everywhere. It is now possible to sit quietly and see as many as 6 in one eyeful: basking, foraging, interacting (the territorial display is a vigorous nodding movement, often followed by a chase) and diving into refuges

when disturbed. We had left nearly all the fallen timber in place along the course of the creek, and now we added more old logs with plenty of crevices and hollows. With them, and with the abundance of rocks which are gradually emerging from the silt as it gets washed downstream, our carrying capacity for water skinks has graduated from modest to astronomical.

But will our embryonic eucalypt and wattle forest eventually shade the creek to the extent that it becomes sub-optimal skink habitat? We (or more likely our children or grandchildren) will worry about that when it happens.

Angus and Sue Martin, LFWers, Boho South, north-eastern Victoria



Before (2000)



After (2005)

Property Profile

Torquay Primary School

Children are innocent creatures, right? Guileless? Surely this is one of those given universal truths.

I am somewhat relieved we didn't have an Edible Garden...I may not have grown up at all!).

So why then, the slow creeping dread as knowing glances are traded and wry smiles emerge upon diminutive faces? I turn the berry over on my tongue; irrevocably committed to an act that perhaps in hindsight, reflected an ill-advised trust. Rule One: Never work with children or animals.

I wonder briefly how much detention one would earn for poisoning the Land For Wildlife Officer in the Edible Garden? There are no witnesses, they will collaborate and dissemble as only children can! A sudden moment of panic, 'ware treachery'...Kangaroo Apple! But no, the fruit is ripe. Only the leaves and the unripened fruit are poisonous. Onwards brave-heart, they have not killed you yet – merely they seem pleased with themselves for feeding you a distasteful berry.

Reflections of a pleasant day spent on assessment at the Torquay Primary School. Jest aside, my intrepid volunteer escort Chelsea, Ashlee, Victoria, Julia, Madeline, Stacey and Lauren (from Mr Pace's Grade Three/Four Class) did a great job ushering me through their school. All the while, they kept up an elaborate running commentary that was both informative and appreciated, and understandably enthusiastic.

For I don't recall primary school as a place where you were asked to collect the food scraps from the classroom and take them out to the chickens. We didn't have a veggie patch to till, or a dry creek bed to play in at recess. No bird-hide overlooking a wetland that fills from the catchment of the school buildings. No bush trails through Harmony Forest. No Growling Grass Frogs in the Office, or Water Pythons in the corridors. Nor...I can assure you, did we ever have anything like a Central Bearded Dragon named 'Tinkerbell' for a class pet. Is anyone else feeling robbed yet? (Though, for my part



Mr Dave Pace with Tinkerbell, the Central Bearded Dragon and his Grade Three-Four Class



Students at the wetland site



The statue of Mr Pobblebonk at the wetland site

Torquay Primary is home to over six hundred students and has been at its current location for five years. Initially the six-hectare site was completely devoid of vegetation. However, over the intervening years, with the help and support of The Department of Education; The Surf Coast Shire; Landcare; and various local industry groups, the school community has planted in excess of 12,000 indigenous trees. Focused as an educational resource, the plantings are diverse. The range encompasses examples of temperate rainforest species

through to woodland, heath land, and grassland plants. There are also the previously mentioned wetland areas and informative Aboriginal Interpretive Garden.

The students themselves raised half the trees planted on the school site. Their nursery is of note as they have even had some success with the Red-Fruited Saw Sedge, a very difficult plant to propagate. Middle-school students are also involved in raising the South African Leaf Hopper. This invertebrate is a biological control agent that will help to combat the South African Bridal Creeper, a noxious weed that infests local waterways.

Mr Dave Pace, who was formerly the Education Officer with the Melbourne Zoo before coming to teach at Torquay Primary, states that while environmental education is not a stand-alone subject at the school, environmental awareness is woven through all aspects of the school curriculum. The aim is to encourage in the students a fundamental respect for the environment. The school also functions as a community model for the promotion of environmental best practice, centering on improving water conservation; energy efficiency; and recycling, whilst increasing biodiversity.

*Kelly Dufty, LFW Extension Officer
Photos: Kelly Dufty*

Economic Benefits of Biodiversity

BushBroker - Trading native vegetation credits

The Victorian Government has adopted a new “whole-of-landscape” approach to protect and restore native vegetation to ensure better biodiversity outcomes and achieve greater certainty and economic efficiency. BushBroker, Victoria’s native vegetation credit registration and trading system will facilitate the new approach.

In most cases the clearing of any native vegetation that requires planning approval must be offset by a gain elsewhere. Offsets are permanently protected and linked to a particular clearing site. Offsets can often be generated on the permit applicant’s own property. But there are situations where this is not possible. BushBroker provides a system where offsets can be located on a different property to where the native vegetation is being cleared through the purchase of native vegetation credits (a gain in the quantity and/or quality of native vegetation that is subject to a secure and ongoing agreement). Native vegetation credits are listed on the BushBroker register and these can be bought by another party and subsequently used as an offset for the approved clearing of native vegetation.

Landholders have the potential to generate a new income stream and improve biodiversity by establishing native vegetation credits. Establishing a native vegetation

credit is as simple as achieving a gain in the quality or extent of native vegetation by;

- Improving the management of an existing patch of native grassland, bush or scattered trees,
- Revegetating cleared land using locally indigenous plants; or
- Protecting old native trees.

Native vegetation credits can be established in a number of ways, including;

- The landholder provides their own funds to establish the native vegetation credits and enters into an agreement with a public agency,
- Through a credit auction, similar to BushTender, where landholders nominate a price for the establishment of credits. Credits are subsequently sold to permit applicants.
- A permit applicant locates and funds a landholder to establish native vegetation credits, or
- Private land is contributed to the public conservation reserve system.

For further information go to the Department of Sustainability and Environments web site www.dse.vic.gov.au or ring 136 186.

continued from page 8

being flooded with introduced weed seed by wind or whatever from neighbouring properties or weedy sites. This area is protected by a dense wall of vegetation and the main invasive species are spread by birds such as pittosporum, privet, cotoneaster, blackberry, coprosma etc. Three sides are protected by areas we had regenerated earlier. Under the removed trees nothing grew, in fact the big old stringy barks had succumbed years before we arrived. I believe mainly from the dominant competition of the Pittosporum who are guzzlers of all water with their spreading surface roots and as many of you know stringybarks cannot stand anything tinkering with their roots and an alteration in the water regime is fatal. With this cleared area our planting began, not frantically, as we wanted to see if there would be any natural regeneration after 25 years of Pittosporum leaves and there has been - Tasman Flax-lily *Dianella tasmanica*, Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella revoluta*, Honey Pots *Acrotriche serrulata*, Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*, Creeping Bossiaea *Bossiaea prostrata*, Rough Fireweed *Senecio hispidulus*, Cotton Fireweed *Senecio quadridentatus*, Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, Pale Grass-lily *Caesia parviflora*, Cherry Ballart *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, Wallaby grass *Danthonia*, Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra*, Handsome Flat-pea *Platylobium formosum*, Common Cassinia *Cassinia aculeata*, Prickly Currant-bush *Coprosma quadrifida*, Ivy-leaf Violet *Viola*

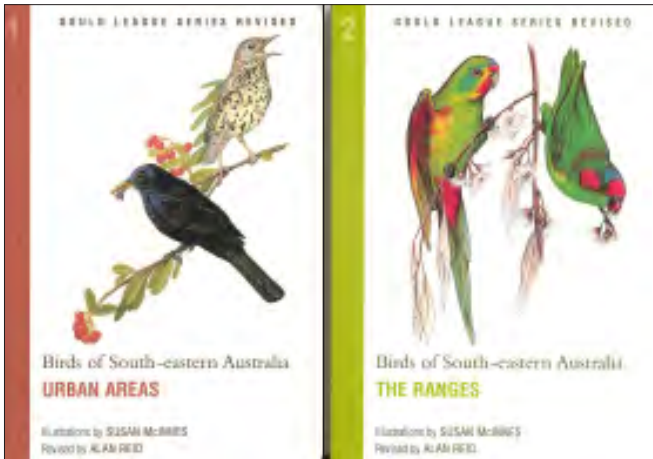
hederacea, Spiny-headed Mat-rush *Lomandra longifolia*, Wattle Mat-rush *Lomandra filiformis*, Small St John’s Wort *Hypericum gramineum*, Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata*, Short-hair Plume-grass *Dichelachne micrantha*, Common Rice-flower *Pimelea humilis* and several others.

The maintenance regime in this area is high as it is Spring and I do a weeding run weekly, but this will pay off handsomely later as there will be no seed from them and regeneration will be almost pure.

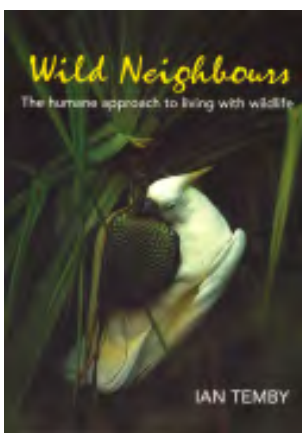
We are constantly experimenting with different approaches to Pittosporum removal. One technique I used when weeds were more apparent was one of ring-barking the Pittosporum with a bow-saw, to only the depth of a blade and over the 18 months or so it takes the tree to succumb the light is let in progressively and I can control the weeds at my pace and re-establish grasses etc before complete tree removal. The shoots below the cut I remove by hand and after a couple of goes the stump is ready to give up when the final cut comes. Lately with the complete removal of the tree in one hit I spray the stump immediately and no more problems and within 3 months an area can be completely sealed. Regeneration has been staggering over a 2 year period after total clearing.

Trevor Blake, LFWer, Ringwood East

Recent Publications



Birds of South-eastern Australia, No.s 1-7, Updated by Alan Reid (2005). Illustrated by Susan McInnes. First published by the Gould League. Now re-published by Overthefence Press. This new edition is a commemorative set dedicated to natural history artist and farmer Susan McInnes who, with her husband Ivan, died in a natural disaster at Tamboon Inlet in Eastern Victoria in 2002. Six of the seven books focus on a habitat (urban area, ranges, beaches, inland waters, dry country, and farmlands), and one book looks at rare birds. In a fantastic new full colour production, the illustrations of Susan McInnes are beautifully reproduced. All the text and maps have been updated by noted ornithologist Alan Reid. Single books retail at \$14.95 and boxed set at \$95. To order, contact Overthefence Press on (03)9714 8234 or through the website www.overthefencepress.com.au. The books are also available at a number of retail outlets.



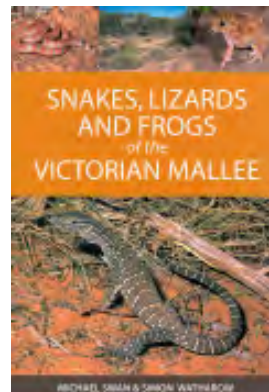
Wild Neighbours - The humane approach to living with wildlife (2005). Ian Temby. Citrus Press (02) 9211 3033. This book offers expert know-how, and some lateral thinking for realistic, harmonious and humane solutions to living with wildlife in the inevitable competition for shared space. Each species that is included (including native and introduced species) has a section on its natural history, including range, habitat, diet and reproduction. This is followed by a section on public health issues (eg parasites, diseases), the problems and their solutions. Each species has a black and white illustration by Elisabeth Bastian. At the start of the book there is very important information about the strategy of conflict resolution, feeding wildlife, health issues in dealing with wildlife and tools and tactics. Available at some retail outlets.

Woodlands - a disappearing landscape (2005).



David Lindenmayer, Mason Crane and Damian Michael. CSIRO Publishing. This beautiful book explains with lucid text and spectacular photographs the role that woodlands play in supporting a range of native plants and animals that has existed there for millions of years. The book is set out as a series of chapters working from the woodland canopy, through the understorey, the ground layers, and to the lowest lying parts of the landscape - wetlands, creeks and dams. Each chapter illustrates many key topics in woodland biology with text and images, explaining important aspects of woodland ecology as well as woodland management and conservation. Available from some retail outlets or CSIRO Publishing (03) 9662 7666 or www.publish.csiro.au

Snakes, Lizards and Frogs of the Victorian Mallee (2005).



Michael Swan and Simon Watharow. CSIRO Publishing. This guide represents the first comprehensive publication on the herpetofauna of the Mallee region. It covers 56 species that inhabit the area as well as a further 24 species occurring in fringe riverine and woodland systems. The reader is able to identify species by means of a photograph supported by a distribution map, a diagnostic features key and descriptive species accounts. Available from some retail outlets or CSIRO Publishing (03) 9662 7666 or www.publish.csiro.au

Wedge-tailed Eagle. Australian Natural History Series. (2005).



Penny Olsen. CSIRO Publishing. This book gives a comprehensive overview of Australia's largest true eagle. The book covers distribution, habitat, hunting, relationships, reproduction and chick development. A final section deals with threats to the existence of this powerful bird. Available from some retail outlets or CSIRO Publishing (03) 9662 7666 or www.publish.csiro.au

Conservation Properties for Sale

Contact the Editor if you would like to advertise your Land for Wildlife property for sale in this section. It is a free service to members.

Sassafras. Character filled, well maintained chalet-style home at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac bordering the Dandenong Ranges National Park. Nestled on a near flat block of approx 0.12ha, large windows frame views of picturesque, quality bushland (LFW approx 14 years) and a sunny veggie garden. A local Friends group maintain the adjacent creek reserve. An open plan design is complemented by three good sized bedrooms plus home office, polished floors and a spiral staircase. Gas ducted heating, wood heater, double carport, dual water supply (mains and 18,000 litre tanks), and workshop are some extras. Close to public transport and schools. A large private balcony to the master bedroom completes a unique home in a superb location. Asking price \$330,000+. See www.realestate.com.au (property ID 103012027) or www.stockdaleleggo.com.au (property ID 114275) or contact agent Scott Allison (03) 9751 2299 or 0407 855 547.

Gippsland, Mirboo North (8 acres) LFW farmlet 1.3kms from schools in secluded location with spectacular views and abundant water - two Spring-fed dams and frontage to Berrys Creek. Established permaculture with over 40 fruit and nut trees, woodlot and extensive revegetation. Commercial planting of Chestnuts and Cricket Bat Willows. Remnant Mt. Grey and Victorian Blue Gums on adjoining properties. Passive solar designed dwelling, radial-sawn hardwood cladding, two brms with study and two living areas (or excellent master brm), expansive decking, Gas and Jotul wood heating. Two rainwater storage tanks. Large, well equipped brick and steel workshop with self contained studio/2nd dwelling attached - decking and Rota-loo composting toilet. Native/exotic house garden, chookrun/orchard, veggie patch, shade house, sheds, drinking troughs and stock yard. Fantastic combination of features. \$360,000 - Agents: Lew & Fiona Rimington (03) 5668.1300

Parwan (Bacchus Marsh). 50 ha property close to Melbourne, Geelong & Ballarat. The land is retired farmland extensively restored, with abundant typical western plains flora and fauna. The dominant feature is 800 m frontage to Werribee River (Melton Reservoir) running through 50 m deep gorge (Rural Conservation zone). Well vegetated river flats. Superb swimming and canoeing when reservoir is full. The multilevel 15 square homestead and 3 1/2 square cabin are solar powered, built from timber and local stone. They have spectacular escarpment and river views from living areas and 2 large decks. More information and photos at www.labyrinth.net.au/~jkoch/oasis.html Price \$565,000. Contact John Koch at jkoch@labyrinth.net.au or 03 97473977.

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 DSE and needs to be returned or picked up.** Advertising your property here is free to Land for Wildlife members.

Eildon. Live with nature. 50 plus acres of pristine Australian bush with 10-15 acres of natural water way abundant with wildlife at your door step. As many as 40 different species of bird life along with Black Wallabies, Kangaroos and Echidnas. Tortoises, ducks and Black Swans live around the property as do many native orchids etc. The home is set on the hillside with panoramic views of the valley across to the cathedral Mountains, just 3 kms from the thriving village of Eildon and the lake. Contact owners on (03) 5774 2667.

Portland. Lifestyle property situated just 10 kms North West of Portland, comprising approximately 20 acres, 12 of which are natural unspoilt bushland with abundant birds and wildlife, including koalas. Large vegetable garden and established orchard. Fully equipped single stand shearing shed, 2 large workshops and machinery shed, all powered. 4 bedroom double masonry brick home, with large country style kitchen, modern bathroom, two living areas, full size cellar. Three way hot water – solar / combustion / electric. 18,000 gallons rainwater storage, 2,000 gallons bore water tank with electric pump. Arbour Potters Cottage – separate 4 star rated, 1 bedroom cottage operating as a thriving B&B business, is situated in the middle of the natural bushland, all furniture, fittings, linen, appliances etc are part of this sale. A ready-made business for bonus income. Contact Frank & Cathy Coulson on (03) 5526 5265 or by email arbour.potters@optusnet.com.au Website at www.portlandnow.net.au/arbourpotters

West Wimmera. 90 acre property, approximately 1/2 hr from Horsham, and adjacent to the Little Desert and close to Mt Arapiles. 50 acres of cleared land and 30 acres of native vegetation. Cream b/v home, double garage, a tunnel house and attached shade house and a large shed. Large rainwater tank and a bore. This sheltered tranquil property enjoys an extensive range of native flora and fauna and is for sale at \$240,000. See LFW News Vol 5-9 for more details (repeated ad). Not a LFW property. Enquiries phone (03) 5387 0526.

If you are looking to buy or sell a conservation property, don't forget to visit www.conservationbroker.net.au

**Land for Wildlife
Extension Officers
and contacts are at
the following
Department of
Sustainability and
Environment
Offices:**

Alexandra
Mike Kopanica
- (03) 5772 0257
Bairnsdale
Lucy Clausen
- (03) 5152 0400
Ballarat
Elspeth Swan
- (03) 5336 6722
Bendigo
Shaun Burke
- (03) 5430 4368
**Central and West
Gippsland**
Kylie Singleton
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Colac
Kelly Dufty
- (03) 5565 4417
- 040965 4425
Geelong
John Hick
- (03) 9785 0134
**Melbourne area &
Port Phillip East**
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- (03) 9785 0134
Portland
Kelly Dufty
- (03) 5565 4417
- 040965 4425
Swan Hill/Mildura
Murray Rohde
- (03) 5036 4824
Wodonga
Mary Titcumb
- (02) 6043 7956

**Statewide Coordina-
tor**
Felicity Nicholls
- (03) 5430 4363
Bendigo

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

Courses/Field Days/Information Sessions

April/May. Grassy Groundcover Restoration Technical field days. Hamilton, Horsham and Werribee. Greening Australia. Join Dr Paul Gibson-Roy as he presents an update on the progress of his project on location at some of the key project trial sites. Discover the successes, failures, key learnings and ways forward in grassland restoration practice. Free. Contact Rebecca Passlow on 9450 5328 or rpasslow@gavic.org.au

May. Frogs. Geelong. Greening Australia. Learn to recognise the various frog habitats in the City of Greater geelong area. Discover what are the threats to frogs, learn about frog habitat, listen and learn about frog calls and find out what you can do to help protect frog habitat. Free. Contact John Rees on 5231 6913 or jr.westernlakes@bigpond.com

May. Greening Golf Courses within the Yarra Corridor. Yarra Valley. Greening Australia. The forum is aimed at Golf Course managers and employees, and particularly those courses that occupy waterway frontage. Guest speakers from Golf Courses, Australian Golf Course Superintendent's Association and Melbourne Water. Cost TBA. Contact Anne Fitzpatrick on 9450 5300 or afitzpatrick@gavic.org.au

May. Wetland Ecology and Management Course. 4 day Residential. Warrambeen Landcare Centre, Shelford. Greening Australia. Cost \$1030 GST exclusive. Farmbi\$ accredited. Contact Rebecca Passlow on 9450 5328 or rpasslow@gavic.org.au

May. Wetland Management in Upper Catchments. 5 day course. Yea. Greening Australia. Cost is approximately \$200. Contact James Greenway on 0427 554 025 or jgreenway@tpg.com.au

May 10 and 24 (repeated Oct 11 and 25). Planning for Sustainability and Stewardship. Tynong North. Peppermint Ridge Farm. This two day course will focus on developing a sustainable land management plan that will address the natural resource issues affecting your property. A field trip to a number of properties is included. \$422.73 plus \$42.27 GST per participant. Subsidy \$211.37 plus \$21.13 GST per participant. (03) 5942 8580 or prfarm@sympac.com.au

September 2. Bushfood. Tynong North. Peppermint Ridge Farm. Discover the exciting array of bushfoods, learn how to harvest bushfoods and prepare delicious meals. Bushfood plants are available for sale from the Peppermint Ridge Farm nursery. \$75 incl GST. (03) 5942 8580 or prfarm@sympac.com.au



Land for Wildlife Accommodation

Have you ever planned a visit to another part of Victoria and wondered whether there were *Land for Wildlife* properties which offered accommodation?

Well the answer is a definite yes. There are a number of LFW properties that do offer accommodation. This provides a great opportunity for you to visit and stay with like-minded landholders keen to protect and enhance their land.

If you'd like to find out more, we can provide a list of LFW properties that offer accommodation. Please contact Felicity Nicholls via email on felicity.nicholls@dse.vic.gov.au or phone 5430 4363 if you would like a list or if you would like to be added to the list.

Visiting WA this year

Want to meet some Western Australian Land for Wildlifers who offer ecotourism services - from B&B to wine-tasting - and learn first-hand about our flora, fauna, farming and landcare?

You need the WA LFW Ecotourism list!

Contact LFW WA
Ph: (08) 9334 0427 Fax (08) 9334 0199
Email: claireh@calm.wa.gov.au