

VICTORIAN

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Winter 2018 Issue 72

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE AND RESEARCH

Collaborative research helps Latham's snipe

Setting up for citizen scientists

Vegetation mapping by smart phone



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Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

WINTER 2018 ISSUE 72

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Cover photograph

Researchers and volunteers prepare to release a dozen Latham's snipe at the Powling Street Wetlands, Port Fairy in November 2017. Photograph by Jodie Honan.



From the Minister

Best practice land management has always been at the core of Landcare. When groups and networks work in partnership with researchers, often harnessing new digital technologies, the results can bring significant landscape change.

The stories in this issue of the magazine show how Landcare groups and networks across the state are using research to further community understanding of their environments, and involve more people in projects.

Studying and surveying the natural world can be challenging; even more so, applying the research to effectively protect it.

Landcare groups and networks are increasingly involved in conducting their own research. The Upper Campaspe Landcare Network is running a two-year project to look for powerful owls, greater gliders, and phascogales in their area. The research aims to engage the community and provide people with the skills to find and identify these species.

This interesting article outlines how to design and run a successful citizen science project.

Community participation is central to Landcare, based on the principle that the best results are achieved by working together to improve our natural environment. It is this sense of 'togetherness' that benefits more than just the environment. There is much anecdotal evidence that Landcare also has social benefits. The West Gippsland CMA has tested this premise with a Social Return on Investment study into the activities of the Merriman Creek Landcare Group. Kathleen Brack's article in this issue outlines how the study was conducted and its results.

This study reveals that every one-dollar grant to the Landcare group resulted in at least a \$3.41 return in social value. The local community reported increased social connectedness and emotional wellbeing; increased natural resource management knowledge and skills; improved group

dynamics; increased physical activity and participation; reduced labour and chemical costs; better weed control; and improved relationships with the local community.

You can also read about, and be inspired by, techniques for monitoring habitat for wildlife; updates on gorse and cactus control projects; and the results from alternative fertiliser trials conducted by Woody Yaloak Catchment Group.

I will be interested in learning more about Landcare-related research projects and how the involvement of community volunteers in citizen science is increasing knowledge about our natural environment.

Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and
Climate Change

Minister for Suburban Development

Victorian Landcare Grants

The Victorian Government has committed \$1.8 million for Victorian Landcare Grants in 2018-19 to support projects that protect and restore the land and environment. Applications opened on 4 May for the Victorian Landcare Grants in the following categories:

- **Project Grants** up to \$20,000 for on-ground works, education and capacity building projects.
- **Support Grants** of \$500 for existing groups/networks.
- **Start-up Grants** of \$500 for new groups/networks.

The grants are available to all Victorian environmental volunteer groups that advance the Landcare ethic and care for the environment, including but are not limited to: Landcare and Coastcare groups/networks, 'Friends of' groups, and Conservation Management Networks.

Applications close: Tuesday 12 June 2018 at 12 noon

For more information: visit www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/victorian-landcare-grants-2018-19

*Studying and surveying
the natural world can be
challenging; even more so,
applying the research to
effectively protect it.*

Surveying birds in revegetation areas

By *Jonathon Starks*

Each year, millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours are spent on revegetation projects. Landcare groups and networks are busy planting a wide variety of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses across the country.

With so much financial and social investment in revegetation projects, an obvious question to ask is – does revegetation actually provide important habitat for wildlife, or are we just planting trees?

Project Hindmarsh is the vision of the Hindmarsh Landcare Network, and it aims to build a biolink between the Little Desert and Big Desert in western Victoria. The project has been going since 1998 and has seen more than four million trees and shrubs planted on roadsides and private property in the Hindmarsh and West Wimmera Shires.



A grey fantail found foraging during autumn in six-year-old revegetation.

Keen to understand whether our biolink is actually making a difference, we applied for a Victorian Government Biodiversity On-ground Action – Community and Volunteer Action Grant to undertake bird surveys at eight Project Hindmarsh sites. We selected sites of different ages and used volunteer birdwatchers to survey sites for birds, with a focus on threatened species.

Community volunteers, mostly from BirdLife Nhill, undertook surveys once for each season of the year during 2017, producing four surveys of each site in total. A standardised survey method was used where volunteers recorded all of the birds identified in a two-hectare area during a 20-minute period. The oldest revegetation site surveyed was planted in 2000, with the youngest planted in 2016.

The results have shown a remarkable diversity of birds at Project Hindmarsh's revegetation sites, with 59 different species recorded to date. Results have varied greatly between sites, with the older sites supporting many more birds than the younger sites.

The most common and most widespread species was the singing honeyeater, though it was only found in revegetation sites six years or older. We have also recorded a number of uncommon and declining woodland birds, such as the shy hylacola, white-browed babbler, black-eared cuckoo and red-capped robin in the older revegetation blocks.

Longstanding Nhill BirdLife member, Rod Stanford, who found the shy hylacola in an 11-year-old revegetation block, said he was surprised and quite thrilled to come across such a hard-to-see bird.

"Our most exciting find was recording a diamond firetail in a yellow gum woodland planted in 2006. This species is a listed threatened species in Victoria, so it's great to know that revegetation can provide habitat for threatened species," Rod said.

Our volunteers have been the key to the success of this project, and it is very rewarding to share their joy in the many different birds they have found in the revegetation sites. It is the volunteers and landholders who made this project such a success.

Jonathon Starks is the Landcare Facilitator for the Hindmarsh Landcare Network. His position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For further information contact Jonathon at jstarks@hindmarshlandcare.org.au



Twelve-year-old revegetation site near Dimboola showing developing trees, shrubs and ground covers.

Nagoya Landcare Conference

By Rob Youl

Australian Landcare International (ALI) was heavily involved in a global Landcare conference that took place in Nagoya, Japan, in November 2017. Half of the 80 attendees were Australians – representing ALI, Intrepid Landcare and the National Landcare Network.

The conference theme was *Global Resilience through Local Self-Reliance – the Landcare Model*.

Landcare arrived in Japan in the early 1970s when Michael Seigel from Barooga, NSW, took up a professorship at Nanzan University, specialising in ethics and environmental policy. Michael had seen how massive salinity affecting his community in the Riverina was diminished after a Landcare network formed and set to work.

With colleague Kazuki Kagohashi he formed the Secretariat to Promote the Establishment of Landcare in Japan, which appointed volunteer coordinators around Nagoya and developed close ties with non-government organisations and communities in the tsunami zone of northern Honshu.

Michael Seigel arranged for a number of student groups from Asia to tour and study Landcare projects in Australia.



The 80 attendees at the Nagoya Landcare Conference in Japan in 2017 make the Landcare logo with their hands.

More recently ALI members have overseen long visits to Australia by Japanese students Tomomi Maekawa (who completed a PhD on Landcare in Japan) and Misato Imase (completing a degree in education and volunteering techniques).

The Nagoya conference was funded by Nanzan University, the Australia-Japan Foundation, the Global Agri-business Alliance in Geneva and donations from ALI members.

As well as Australians and Japanese, representatives from South Africa, New Zealand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Pakistan, Uganda, Ghana, Iceland and USA attended. The program included tours to meet Japanese foresters, farmers and conservationists and sessions on Landcare developments in Mindanao, South East Asia, the South Pacific, Iceland and California.

For further information go to the ALI website at www.alci.com.au

Vale Terry Simpson

By Kevin Spence

It was with great sadness that the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network heard of the recent death of Terry Simpson.

Terry, with his son Greg, ran a merino sheep property at Winjallok in the Avon and Richardson rivers catchment area.

Terry was determined to combat erosion on the treeless property and to improve its profitability and sustainability. He became a major spokesperson for practical Landcare.

Terry was a member of the Victorian Land Protection Council that advised the late Honourable Joan Kirner, then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, on a partnership between landholders, the Victorian Farmers Federation (led by the late Heather Mitchell), and the Victorian

Government to protect our natural resources.

It was on Terry's property at Winjallok that the Landcare Program was officially launched in 1986 by Joan Kirner.

Landcare was originally intended as a program to involve farmers in land protection projects. It has become so successful it has evolved far beyond that – growing into a national and international movement involving people from all walks of life.

As a board member of the North Central CMA, Terry continued to be a strong advocate for Landcare and was particularly vocal about its origins as a farming movement. He stressed the need for Landcare to continue to be of relevance and value to farmers given they have primary responsibility



Terry Simpson at the 25th anniversary of Landcare planting event at Terry's property in Winjallok in 2012.

for managing in the order of 70 per cent of our landscapes.

Our condolences to Terry's family and friends.

Kevin Spence is the Executive Officer/ Landcare Facilitator of the Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network.



Latham's snipe arriving in south-west Victoria.

Collaborative research produces exciting results

South Beach Wetlands and Landcare Group, based in Port Fairy, is involved in a collaborative research project to better understand the ecology and habitat use of Latham's snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*), a shorebird species that breeds in Japan and migrates to Australia for the spring and summer.

The group had been working to protect the habitat of the snipe for many years before the research started. The collaboration developed after Dr Birgita Hansen, a research fellow at the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation at Federation University Australia, provided some expert advice for the group.

The Landcare group had people, accommodation for visiting researchers and long-term onsite knowledge about the birds. Birgita had access to scientific knowledge, ethics and banding approvals, and specialist equipment.

Birgita was also part of a wider network of people with an interest in migratory birds and she initiated the Latham's Snipe Project in partnership with the group.

In 2015 the Landcare group was successful in obtaining funding from the Victorian Government under the Threatened Species Protection Initiative and the Victorian Landcare Grants Program.

The grants also included funding for school and community engagement, survey work, Indigenous art projects, habitat restoration, and radio-tracking tags.

Federation University Australia, on behalf of the Latham's Snipe Project, was also successful in obtaining funding from the Australia Japan Foundation for data loggers. This has led to a strong relationship with the Wild Bird Society of Japan. Several Landcare members have visited Hokkaido to see the birds there.

Managing the different perspectives and expectations from the project has been challenging, but ultimately very rewarding.

According to Birgita, who is an ornithologist, working with a community group means the community are co-researchers.

"Both partners shape how the research is done, and the knowledge is owned and understood much more widely. The knowledge becomes part of a community story. This makes my work as a scientist more connected and meaningful.

"The community is coming from lots of different angles: habitat protection, land management, the impact of development and social, cultural and artistic issues.

"At a practical level it's the local people that know the locations, know who lives where, and put in hours radio tracking tagged snipe in between researcher visits. This has greatly increased the amount of data that has been collected," Birgita said.

The Landcare group began working to protect the snipe habitat wetland area in 1989. The wetlands and the birds are part of our daily lives. Our kids walk to school past the wetlands, the birds fly over our houses at dusk. It's the community that lives with the consequences of any research, or decisions that are made about an area.



Volunteer Richard Chamberlain teaching students from Port Fairy Consolidated School how to radio-track snipe.



A Latham's snipe is checked by a volunteer.



Managing the different perspectives and expectations from the project has been challenging, but ultimately very rewarding.



for Latham's snipe

By Jodie Honan

The research has produced some exciting results. The data loggers allowed us to record the first complete migration of a snipe from Port Fairy to Hokkaido and back. The research confirmed that the birds return to the same location. The radio-tracking in Port Fairy has shown that birds regularly fly between local daytime and night-time habitats. These discoveries have important consequences for protection of habitat and the species as a whole.

Different perspectives enrich process

The diversity of viewpoints in a collaborative research project keeps everyone on their toes. We've had valuable discussions with the researchers about how long particular aspects of the research should continue, how often surveys should happen and what the value of a particular activity is. Within the framework provided by ethics and wildlife permits, the research has evolved in response to findings and needs. This has been very satisfying.

It's also important for researchers to understand that community members are volunteers. Sometimes life gets in the way and things don't happen exactly to plan.

The research has given us a wonderful opportunity to get up close to the birds.

I was extremely emotional the first time we caught a snipe. We'd devoted many thousands of hours to protecting them and their habitat. When the bird was only a few metres away and I could see it up close ... it still gives me shivers!

It has been a great privilege to be able to take part in research that will contribute to local conservation, but also the potential conservation of the species

at a national level. In the long run, it's people's attachment to places and species that protects them. Our Landcare group members have spent 19 years working voluntarily on Latham's snipe because they care.

Jodie Honan is a founding member of the South Beach Wetlands and Landcare Group. For further information contact Jodie at jahonan@hotmail.com

Keys for successful research collaborations:

- Relationships are the key – relationships between people, but also with the land and the species.
- Recognise relationships over the context of time: researchers may have an intense relationship over a short period of time (during the research), but community has a long-term relationship before, during and after the research period. The community must live with the consequences.
- Acknowledge that different partners have different skills and knowledge. Understand these differences and look at possible exchanges of skills and knowledge.
- People are interested in knowing what is going on. Informal communication in a community (chatting) and working with the local school can be more important than Facebook likes or media releases.
- Where possible, integrate the research with other activities – art, music, the local schools, habitat protection projects for other species.
- Make sure that any findings from research are understood and used as widely as possible. The findings can be applied in education, land planning, habitat protection and species protection.

Vegetation quality assessment by smart phone

By Jacqui Salter

The Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network's Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink project, funded through the Victorian Government's Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative, involves revegetation and restoration of indigenous vegetation on 20 private properties between two significant patches of remnant vegetation.

As part of the project, we wanted to visually represent the change in vegetation quality of patches of remnant bushland on the properties that fenced bushland from stock and/or engaged contractors to tackle exotic weeds.

The Port Philip and Westernport CMA provided additional funding for local ecologist Gidja Walker to undertake vegetation quality assessment (VQA) on a number of these properties. Using a smart phone with the Google app My Maps, Gidja mapped vegetation quality by colour-coding patches of vegetation as she walked across the properties. Other phones and apps can also be used in vegetation quality assessment.

A useful assessment technique

VQA is a useful technique for visually representing the quality of an area of native vegetation. It can be used to track changes over time in response to vegetation management or a disturbance.



Ecologist Gidja Walker undertaking vegetation quality assessment using a smart phone.



VQA is a useful technique for visually representing the quality of an area of native vegetation. It can be used to track changes over time in response to vegetation management or a disturbance. It takes into account all vegetation storeys, from ground layer to canopy.



It takes into account all vegetation storeys, from ground layer to canopy.

It can be used to compare the quality of vegetation in different areas, guiding where to prioritise effort for effective weed control. It can also examine the response of an individual plant species to management actions or a disturbance.

The process involves mapping areas of vegetation based on the percentage of weed cover, ranging from Category 1 (undisturbed sites of highest quality)

to Category 4 (severe disturbance and low diversity). The quality of the vegetation is based on the amount of weed invasion.

Gidja used a four-colour code system for easy identification of different areas using the following guide:

Category 1: Green. Areas of bushland virtually free of exotic plants where native plant communities display structure, species composition and diversity typical of those in non-urban areas. Average indigenous cover greater than 75 per cent.



Vegetation quality assessment of a property in the Greens Bush to Arthurs Seat Biolink by Gidja Walker in February 2017. This map of the property shows how additional detail can be provided in the legend using different colours. The maps were popular with landholders, who could see the benefits of mapping over time.

Category 2: Blue. Areas of bushland with moderate infestation of exotics and/or invading native alien species. Average indigenous cover 50–75 per cent.

Category 3: Orange. Areas where bushland is severely infested by exotics and/or invading native alien species and where the regeneration of dominant species of that community are being significantly suppressed. Average indigenous cover 25–50 per cent.

Category 4: Red. Areas where bushland has been almost completely replaced by exotic species or bushland where only overstorey species remain and regeneration is absent due to exotics invading the understorey. Average indigenous cover 0–25 per cent.

These categories can be adapted to different vegetation types and providing you define what the colour represents, additional colours can be used.

The findings can then be used to determine the appropriate management action using the three Rs – retention, restoration or revegetation.

According to Gidja Walker there are a number of considerations when using VGA.

Avoiding bias

“While VQA is a relatively quick way of assessing the quality of bushland, it does involve a certain amount of subjectivity.

“To estimate the percentage of exotic cover requires the assessor to make a judgement. To avoid bias, it’s best to use the same contractor to undertake mapping over time and undertake VQA in the same season.”

Gidja also points out that VQA does not take species diversity into consideration, and cannot be used to examine individual species.

“Other methods such as quantifying species in quadrats may be useful if this level of detail is required. Whilst it does indicate the quality of habitat, it does not consider particular habitat features such as hollow logs,” Gidja said.

One of the landholders involved in the project, Greg Holland, has been undertaking restoration on his property, using the four-colour code system and the three Rs.

According to Greg, a careful survey at the beginning of the work is essential.

“Gidja’s VQA mapping is an excellent way of setting out the details in the field in a short time. Patience really is a virtue.

“Following the removal of weeds, we have had long-dormant seeds sprout to provide plants not seen in the area for years. Our small wetland has not only recovered mostly by itself, rare species such as the floodplain fireweed (*Senecio campylocarpus*) are now thriving in one of the transient water holes,” he said.

Further information on VQA can be found in the *Bush Regenerator’s Handbook* published by the National Trust of Australia. Go to www.practical ecology.com.au for more information on the three Rs.

Jacqui Salter is the Landcare Facilitator for the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network. Her position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. Contact Jacqui at jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au



Uncovering the social return on a Landcare investment

By Rachel Millar and Kathleen Brack



We know that Landcare groups make a difference to the natural environment. Groups use funding to plant trees, treat weeds, fence gullies and stabilise riverbanks. The benefits of these works are well known, well researched and are implemented using current best practice in natural resource management.

What has been more difficult to assess is the social impact of funding a Landcare group. How does the funding change how the group and the community around it connects and functions?

In 2017 the West Gippsland CMA, in partnership with the Merriman Creek Landcare Group and social research company Think Impact, set out to discover more.

The focus of the research project was to investigate how much social benefit (in dollar terms) would be derived from each dollar of investment from government funding.

A grant awarded to the Merriman Creek Landcare Group was used as the basis for the research. In 2015, the West Gippsland CMA received Victorian Government funding as part of the Regional Riparian Action Plan to support community works

along waterways. Merriman Creek Landcare Group received \$15,000 of this funding for on-ground work and project delivery.

The Merriman Creek Landcare Group operates in an area south of Sale in south-east Gippsland. The group follows Merriman Creek from its headwaters to its mouth at Seaspray. There are 33 mostly farmer members who meet several times a year at the Stradbroke Hall.

Works completed as part of the project grant included removing blackberries, putting up fencing to prevent stock access, and planting indigenous trees along the Merriman Creek.

After the funding was allocated, CMA staff started a Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluation to assess the social value created by the project.

The SROI method

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an internationally-recognised framework that identifies and accounts for social change experienced by key stakeholders by assigning monetary proxies to the change. Although the values are expressed in dollars, they do not equate to financial return.

Guided by this standardised process, we set out to discover what value this Landcare project had to the community. We did this by identifying and interviewing key stakeholders, in this case the Landcare group's members, the residents and ratepayers group and the local water authority. From this initial discussion we developed an impact map, or theory of change, which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes.

The next stage involved seeing whether our predicted outcomes had actually happened.

“

The focus of the research project was to investigate how much social benefit (in dollar terms) would be derived from each dollar of investment from government funding.

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Members of Merriman Creek Landcare Group gather around for the important morning tea.



Longstanding members of the Merriman Creek Landcare Group, Peter and Norma Garlick participated in the study.

We did this by interviewing stakeholders face-to-face or via survey.

When we had compiled these results, each of the benefits or changes experienced by the participants was assigned a proxy that could be given a dollar value. For example, improved natural resource management skills and knowledge were given the proxy of a natural resource management course – a course that has a dollar value. Improved group dynamics had the proxy of a team-building course for the Landcare group. In this way each benefit could be assigned a dollar value.

Once we collected evidence on outcomes and monetised them, those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or were a result of other factors were eliminated from consideration.

We then calculated the SROI and were able to identify the greatest outcomes of the project.

Results stack up with Landcare group

One of the key challenges of the research was attaching a monetary value to social change. This is generally not well known and can be difficult to explain. However, when we checked the results with members of the Merriman Creek Landcare Group, they fully endorsed and agreed with the result.

By far the largest reported benefit was giving the group a sense of purpose and renewing enthusiasm as part of the project. One participant said, “without the funding

the group would have continued to limp along without any enthusiasm.”

The work of managing the project meant members were brought together more regularly with something to talk about and work towards. Meetings were more exciting, dynamic and people actually wanted to attend them.

Improved emotional wellbeing generated the second most valuable outcome for all group members. The research revealed that 100 per cent of group members experienced greater emotional well-being from being part of a Landcare group. A participant said “there’s a lot going on in the world and being part of Landcare makes me feel less guilty. I feel good about doing my bit.”

Members also reported the project improved or strengthened their group skills in things such as project management and reporting, while others described how it increased their knowledge of environmental issues.

This knowledge didn’t just stop at the Landcare members’ fence lines either. We learnt that members often spoke to others in the community about their project.

The implications of this research are that the environment is not the only area that benefits from Landcare projects. Landcare projects also have significant advantages for the local community by increasing skills, emotional wellbeing and connection.

“One of the key challenges of the research was attaching a monetary value to social change.”

The study showed that for every \$1.00 granted to the group there was at least \$3.41 return in social value.

We hope to use the results of this research in further funding applications. It’s also available to other Landcare groups and networks to use in their own grant applications.

The study is available to download at www.wgcma.vic.gov.au/getting-involved/landcare

Kathleen Brack is the Regional Landcare Program Officer at the West Gippsland CMA. For further information contact Kathleen at Kathleen.brack@wgcma.vic.gov.au



Local Landcare legends Eddie and Pat Brand talk with Peter Garlick (centre).



From left, Ari, Ziggy and Manu Scheltema, Brad Blake and Lindsey Dobeson spotlighting for greater gliders in the Wombat Forest near Trentham.

Citizen scientists survey local

The Upper Campaspe Landcare Network (UCLN) is using a 2017 Biodiversity On-Ground Action: Community and Volunteer Action Grant to train local people as citizen scientists so they can help detect three iconic threatened species – powerful owls, greater gliders and brush-tailed phascogales in the local area.

The funding is also being used to employ a threatened species officer, and to purchase remote sensing cameras, spotlights and binoculars.

The network is working with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Environmental Officer and more than 15 community groups and schools to conduct the surveys and then enter the data into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. The project aligns with the UCLN's Strategic Plan where increasing community knowledge of threatened species is the first step in working towards protecting them.

Early success with finding phascogales

UCLN's Threatened Species Officer Brad Blake has spent many years surveying greater gliders, powerful owls, spot-tailed quolls and barking owls in Victorian forests.

Brad has been working with the community to conduct spotlight surveys and install remote sensing cameras on public and private land. Phascogales were detected at three of the five initial camera sites, which is greatly encouraging for everyone involved.

"We are conducting surveys at 20 sites, most of which are based on existing Victorian Biodiversity Atlas records of greater gliders and powerful owls. And we have taken note of landholders who have reported seeing and hearing the species on their properties – we will also survey these sites.

"Each site will be surveyed three times. I will lead the surveys, but with assistance from community and Landcare group members who live nearby. After each survey we will enter the results into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas," Brad said.



Brush-tailed phascogale (Phascogale tapoatafa).



Powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*).



We are conducting surveys at 20 sites, most of which are based on existing Victorian Biodiversity Atlas records of greater gliders and powerful owls.



threatened species

By Sandy Scheltema

Advice on the survey methodology has been received from the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research.

According to William Terry, Environmental Officer from the Macedon Shire Ranges Council, even though volunteers are involved, standardised scientific methodology will be used.

"Participants will learn about the methods being used and the importance of scientific rigour. The project has benefits for environmental planning at council. We can only implement measures to protect threatened species if we have sound scientific evidence that they are there," William said.

Project challenges

The main challenges of running the project are around communication, information management and safety.

Making contact with everyone that wants to be involved means using many different communication methods. This takes time. We are using the local newspapers, our Facebook site, email notifications for group members, the council and UCLN's electronic news bulletin and flyers around the towns in our area.

We are also generating a lot of information that needs to be easily accessible to all of



UCLN's Threatened Species Officer Brad Blake shows Campaspe Valley Landcare Group President Jan Elder and volunteer Jessica Rosien how to set up a remote sensing camera.

the team members. Keeping track of maps, remote camera photographs, reports, survey dates and other information has been made easier by creating a joint email and shared folders within Google Drive.

Because most of the surveys are conducted in the forest at night, there are health and safety issues that need to be assessed and managed.

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Community forum generates enthusiasm

The project was launched in March 2018 with a forum attended by more than 100 members of the local community. Three expert speakers, Dr Todd Soderquist, Dr Ross Goldingay, and Jess Lawton shared their wealth of knowledge about the three species that we are researching.

Dr Soderquist has spent more than 20 years working with phascogales and powerful owls. In his experience searching for owls can be a daunting, yet fulfilling experience.

“The distant call of an owl is often faint, and so as you stand in the darkness reaching out to hear it the world falls away in an almost Zen-like moment,” he said.

The UCLN hopes that at the end of this two-year project our community will have the capacity to find and identify these species and to enter this important data into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas. Knowing the species and feeling connected to them is the first step to protecting the habitat that will ensure their survival for future generations.

Sandy Scheltema is the Landcare Facilitator for the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network. Her position is funded by the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For further information go to www.uppercampaspelandcare.org.au or contact Sandy at uclandcare@gmail.com

Photographs by Sandy Scheltema.



Greater glider (*Petauroides volans*).



A brush-tailed phascogale is caught on camera trying to get at the bait of peanut butter, oats and golden syrup. As a result of this successful sighting the Campaspe Valley Landcare Group is now purchasing its own cameras to continue surveying for phascogales, and inmates of Loddon Prison will make 20 nestboxes for the group.



The main challenges of running the project are around communication, information management and safety.



Alternative fertiliser, lime and biological trial results

By Cam Nicholson



Nine years of investigation by the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group has failed to find a biological or alternative fertiliser that is better than using lime or conventional fertiliser products.

In 2009 the group started replicated testing on a range of biological and alternative fertilisers, in response to local landholders questioning the value of the traditional superphosphate, potash and lime they were using.

In the first three years a range of biological products and alternative fertilisers were applied at nine cropping and pasture sites and compared to the application of conventional fertiliser, lime, and no application.

The rate of fertiliser and lime applied was based on soil testing and the alternative products from supplier recommendations.

The initial screening showed pig and poultry manure were as good, if not better than conventional fertilisers, depending on

the rate applied. It also demonstrated that conventional fertiliser gave a predictable yield response when the soil test suggested nutrients were deficient.

Most biological products tested yielded the same as if nothing was applied, but several suppliers suggested the response would take longer than three years.

The group used its own money to continue some of the sites for a further two years, but again no meaningful response was recorded with the biological products.

Since 2014 Southern Farming Systems (SFS) have partnered with the Woody Yaloak group to continue the work. Humates (the major organic constituents of soil) were included for the first time and

the animal manures retested, as well as continuing with a couple of long-term sites.

Senior researcher with SFS Lisa Miller said that after four years there was no response to the humates compared to no fertiliser or lime at one pasture site, but a small increase with the animal manure at another site.

"The results confirm what the Woody Yaloak group found in the early years of testing – where the animal manures gave the equivalent response to conventional fertiliser at the pasture site – but there was little to be gained from the biological products," Lisa said.

More information and results from the testing are available on the Woody Yaloak website. Go to www.woodyyaloak.com.au



Harvesting a trial plot. The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group's research showed that pig and poultry manure was as good as conventional fertiliser, depending on the rate applied.



Anthony Gallacher (right), the then Landcare facilitator for the Loddon Plains Landcare Network, with Network Chair, Laurie Maxted at Durham Ox in 2015.

Peer-to-peer learning for Landcare

By Ross Colliver

A few years ago, I drove to Durham Ox in north-central Victoria to meet with Anthony Gallacher, the then Landcare facilitator for the Loddon Plains Landcare Network, which supports 18 local Landcare groups, and network chair, Laurie Maxted. Laurie had been in the district for 50 years, Anthony two years. I was starting a project to support learning within the Landcare movement, and Anthony and Laurie had agreed to share with me what they were learning about running a network.

After our discussion Anthony drove me around to some revegetation projects. I asked who he was using to bounce ideas off. Who understands the business of supporting Landcare groups and running a network? Not very many people at all, it turned out. Anthony was mostly talking to

himself. And Laurie knew everyone locally, but he didn't have many Landcare people he could talk to outside his area.

Anthony and Laurie's experience is not unusual. Landcare lacks strong networks outside localities, and places where we can meet and talk as peers – that is, as equals, Landcarer-to-Landcarer.

The importance of social knowledge

Landcare has good connections to technical knowledge about soils, land management, revegetation and the scientific side of Landcare. But we have never developed the same connections for social knowledge. Social knowledge is what it takes to organise action in communities, to set up collaboration between organisations and to influence agendas. Alongside our biophysical knowledge,

it's the other half of Landcare knowledge, and as our communities change and our politics tumble forward, it's the knowledge Landcare needs to survive and prosper.

Unfortunately, a lot of that social knowledge is locked up in localities. We operate in isolation from each other. We often don't have time to talk with each other, we don't have places to talk, and we operate in a natural resource management culture where the scientific is dominant over the social.

Landcare Victoria Incorporated is researching how the Landcare community can share its social knowledge, with a project called CLEA – Community Learning for Environmental Action. The Natural Resources Conservation League, a philanthropic organisation focused on capacity building, and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, are our funding partners.

CLEA is now in its fourth year. Our approach has been to take action and find what works – to design something we think will help, test this in action, and then build on it. This is a summary of what we have learnt:

1. Peer-to-peer inquiry means reaching in and reaching out

CLEA has developed three facilitated sessions for Landcare network committees of management to talk as peers about the future of their network. Where do they need to break new ground, to stay viable



The Mid Loddon Landcare Network Committee discussing the network's long-term future.



The Mid Loddon Landcare Network's curlew breeding program has attracted many new volunteers.

“
Landcare has good connections to technical knowledge about soils, land management, revegetation and the scientific side of Landcare. But we have never developed the same connections for social knowledge.
 ”

and vigorous? Inquiry starts with a clear question addressing a shared challenge, and the committee learns to frame a question even when there are no easy or obvious answers. They then review how that challenge has been approached in the past and what can be done now to open up the options that will lead to answers.

It is tough work, to reach in and find the question and then to reach out to others with that question. Over the months that follow, the committee of management keeps track of the new approaches being taken, to find what works and implement it and then to develop their next question. CLEA is now supporting seven Landcare networks across Victoria as they work on what CLEA calls their 'Question Without an Easy Answer'.

2. Peer-to-peer inquiry needs its own time and space

The CLEA sessions make time and space for a committee to think about the network's long-term future, something that is difficult to do when immediate demands crowd the meeting agenda. CLEA has also been working with Landcare Victoria Inc.'s statewide forums, to introduce new ways for Landcare members and staff to share knowledge, solve problems, and open up critical thinking between peers.

3. Peer-to-peer inquiry is big

Peer-to-peer inquiry means stepping aside from the top-down communication based

on hierarchy and connecting to each other laterally – as peers. Our individual passions lead us forward, and together we're inventing new ways to create and learn.

Co-inquiry and co-design are ways of jointly understanding our situation and doing things differently. Through mentoring you, an experienced person, help me, a less experienced person, as I develop my practice. In coaching I am developing a specific skillset, while the coach instructs and gives feedback.

CLEA is getting people together to talk more, online and face-to-face, talking, talking, a river of talk flowing in all directions, unbounded by the organisations we happen to work for, self-organising around our passion for our practice. What works? What's problematic? What needs to be developed, what needs to be challenged? We're all at the start of a very big learning curve!

Ross Colliver is the CLEA Organiser. For further information contact Ross at ross.colliver@bigpond.com

Two questions from the Mid Loddon Landcare Network

The Mid Loddon Landcare Network is made up of six Landcare groups and one conservation management network, situated west of Bendigo. Its members are established farming families and blockies, all with an eye on looking after their bit of country.

The network's first CLEA session was squeezed into a regular committee meeting in 2015. The question the network came up with was: how do we get city folk to understand and appreciate farmers' issues?

Fast-forward to 2017 and the network and their indefatigable Landcare facilitator Judy Croker have developed a number of ways to connect to environmental enthusiasts from Bendigo and Melbourne.

The network's curlew breeding program has been like a honey pot – attracting lots of people that want to help, but also creating the challenge of organising volunteers.

The network has now gone on to a new question: how do we mobilise advocacy for a healthy landscape? The network doesn't want to front the advocacy, but it knows a lot about the impact of ill-considered urban expansion and can support an advocacy organisation.

Influencing urban development is a genuinely tough question, one that more than a few Landcare networks are worrying about. CLEA can help bring those networks together to talk as peers about what they are learning about meeting this challenge.

New wheel cactus map for Victoria

By Max Schlachter

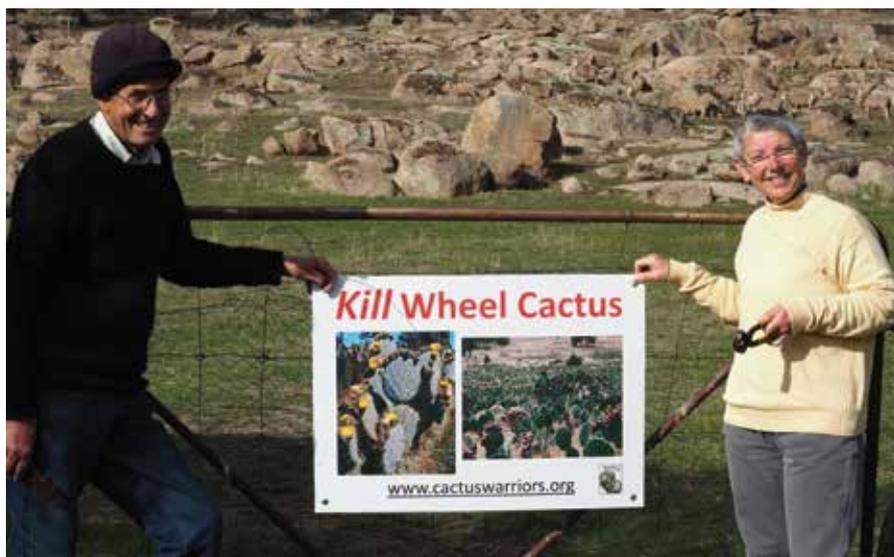
The cactus warriors of the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group (TCCG) have spent more than 10 years battling wheel cactus around the Maldon, Nuggetty and Baringhup districts of central Victoria.

With funding from the Wettenhall Environment Trust, the group recently completed a project to map wheel cactus sites around Victoria.

To create the map, we tried to find as many records as possible. Existing records came from government departments and the Atlas of Living Australia. But more importantly, we also looked for new locations.

Around 70 per cent of the locations we recorded were new and had not previously been mapped at a state level. Many of these new records came from council officers who have been mapping and treating wheel cactus in their own areas. Other records came from members of the Landcare community who responded to our request for locations.

The project resulted in a map showing infestations widely distributed over Victoria but concentrated in a band running from the northwest of the state, through central Victoria to the north of Melbourne.



Cactus warriors Ian Grenda and Lee Mead hang one of the 20 large signs distributed to Landcare groups to alert landholders to the threat of wheel cactus.

Wheel cactus was recorded at a total of 345 sites distributed over 105 localities. There were 237 new records and just over half of these were also new localities. These sites were distributed across 29 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Wheel cactus was identified in seven LGAs that did not have any previous records of the plant.

For TCCG President Lee Mead, the map is a good starting point for the future manoeuvres of the cactus warriors. While the group has been very successful, Lee says that achieving its ultimate goal of eradicating wheel cactus is proving difficult.

"More strategic and integrated management plans need to be implemented by all private

and public land managers within our state," Lee said.

Wheel cactus seed is readily spread by flocks of ravens that eat the fruit, and also foxes. It only takes a few mature, fruiting plants on properties, parks or roadsides for infesting or re-infesting neighbouring properties to occur.

"Despite having successfully increased the number of local landowners who now quietly go about destroying wheel cactus on their properties, there are still many property owners in our district who ignore their responsibilities to destroy noxious weeds.

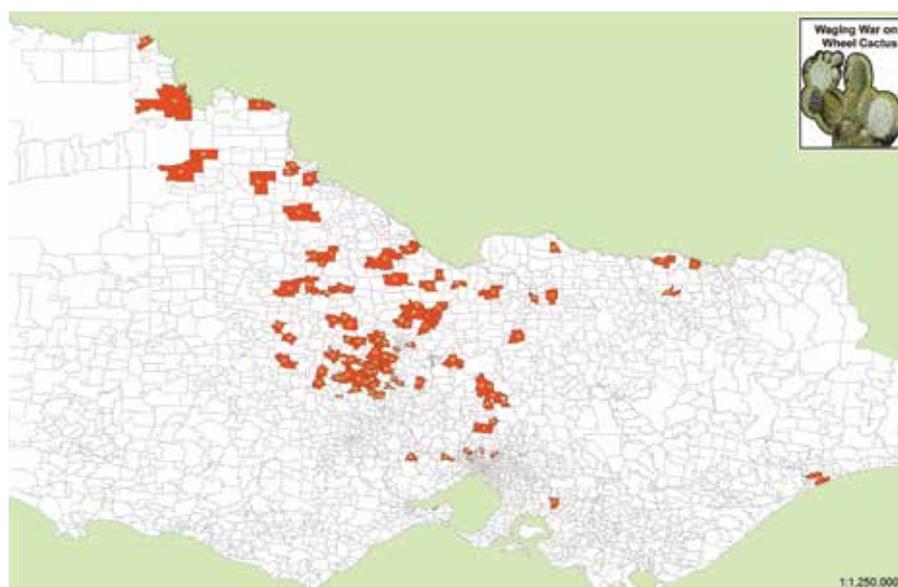
"They are frequently absentee landowners and very difficult for our volunteer group to connect with. This means the seed bank is never eradicated and new wheel cactus plants continue to germinate and spread further."

According to Lee landholders with wheel cactus on their properties need to kill it and do it quickly, before it sets fruit.

To reinforce this message, the TCCG also designed and printed large farm fence signs. Twenty of these signs were distributed to Landcare groups and are now hanging in prominent positions as a warning to other landholders.

The project also involved posting out 1200 information brochures to seven outer localities where the mapping work revealed significant wheel cactus infestations.

The cactus warriors can be contacted through their website www.cactuswarriors.org



A new map of wheel cactus across Victoria produced by the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group shows the weed is widely distributed.



From left to right, Melissa Connors holding baby Ciara, Siobhan, Aidan, and David holding Eire, enjoying rural life.

“

It occurred to Melissa that many other tree changers were in the same situation as her family and that help was available, it was just a matter of making the right connections.

”

This farm needs a farmer!

Melissa Connors and her partner moved to Kyneton six years ago. They bought a small property with the aim of giving their young family all the benefits of a rural lifestyle, but it wasn't long before their lack of land management experience was causing problems.

“We bought six angus steers, but we only have four hectares. The feed quickly ran out and they were pushing through the inadequate fences looking for more grazing. Then the water pipes froze and the tank water ran out.”

“My partner was commuting to the city for work every day and I was here, pregnant, and with a toddler. We were so naïve about what was involved.”

A chance meeting with a neighbour and retired farm-worker, Noel Jenner, brought some useful local advice.

“Noel has been fantastic. His mentoring has meant we have been able to manage our land well and get the most out of it.”

It occurred to Melissa that many other tree changers were in the same situation as her family and that help was available, it was just a matter of making the right connections.

Melissa went on to establish the community development project, This Farm Needs a Farmer. The project is a networking

platform that connects tree changers with retired and active farmers, local businesses, services and advice providers.

Melissa says every new tree change family has different needs and she has been fielding questions from where to find childcare to how to grow olives.

This Farm Needs a Farmer held its first field day at Kyneton show grounds in March 2018.

“It was great to see so many locals turn up – very encouraging for the new families in the area. We hope the field day will become an annual event,” Melissa said.

Melissa and her partner, David, now have four children and just two steers on their Kyneton property.

“We don't have a moments regret about the move,” Melissa said.

“We are in the process of establishing a small orchard on our property. The learning curve has been huge but the kids

love it and the satisfaction of working on the land is enormous.”

Melissa hopes that local Landcare groups may also want to be involved.

“Tree changers are interested in managing their properties sustainably and hungry for advice and guidance,” she said.

Melissa Connors was awarded the prestigious 2018 Victorian AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award for her work founding This Farm Needs a Farmer.

Melissa will receive a \$10,000 bursary to help implement her project. She will also attend the Australian Institute of Directors' Course in Canberra and have an opportunity to become the national award winner, who will be announced in September.

For further information go to www.thisfarmneedsafarmer.com.au or email [Melissa Connors at needsafarmer@gmail.com](mailto:Melissa.Connors@needsafarmer@gmail.com)

Supporting landholders for the long haul of gorse control

By Heidi Snow

Effective gorse control requires a sustained and long-term effort. The Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) has been advocating for a community-led approach to managing gorse since 1999.

The VGT method aims to encourage landholders to control their gorse through education rather than enforcement, creating ownership and inspiring a domino effect towards action when landholders see what their neighbours are achieving.

The VGT sources funding from across government to run a grants program to help communities get the ball rolling in managing gorse. The grants require a matching contribution of at least \$1 : \$1. Participating landholders sign a three-year voluntary agreement to complete any necessary follow up control at their own expense.

Maintaining momentum and commitment

Ashbourne Landcare Group (ALG), near Woodend, has received a number of grants from the VGT and made significant progress in gorse control. In 2015/16 VGT funding of \$13,360 resulted in more than \$66,000 worth of gorse eradication works being carried out by participating landholders.

According to Michael Peck from the ALG, being able to refer to the conditions of the voluntary landholder agreements has been effective at encouraging ALG members to keep up with gorse control in successive years.

"It's important to prepare landholders for what their chosen control method will entail. We found that where possible spraying the gorse plants and then leaving them in place is the best method, as it will deny light to the seed bank, and prevent germination. Some landowners preferred to mulch or slash and they had to be prepared for vigorous regrowth in the following years and the need to spray large areas," Michael said.

Jen Clarke from the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group said the landholder contribution of at least 50 per cent of the gorse control project creates a financial commitment and means they are motivated to do the follow up.

"The initial impact is always eye catching – seeing lots of dead gorse or spaces opened by mulching gives a sense of achievement. However, the critical thing is to maintain the momentum and commitment to the problem.

"In drier years the response to spraying is slower and can be less effective, which is to be expected because of plant stress. This can be discouraging and cause individuals to lose momentum so it is critical to foster community connections to others who are working on gorse, and provide on-going support."



Before



After

Before and after gorse control works at one of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group's participating properties at Staffordshire Reef.



Landholder Stephen Guy at the start of gorse control works on his property at Staffordshire Reef.

In for the long haul

According to Jen, landholders need to know that they are in for the long haul.

“For many people financial support will be required, as well as reminder/ongoing contact from the group and facilitator. We need to regularly check in with our target audience to see how they want their Landcare programs delivered, and adapt to change and stay relevant,” Jen said.

Jen stressed that ownership by landholders and a community-driven approach was crucial.

“Our programs, not just with gorse, but in all aspects of Landcare, have always been community-led. We find the greatest impact and ownership comes when the landholders decide the priorities for themselves and their local landscape, and work within a supportive, community environment to achieve their goals.

“It also helps when the local community sees the impact that gorse control can have in their local area and new landholders join,” Jen said.

Brendan Smith from Tylden Landcare Group feels that VGT assistance provides credibility.

“Many landholders were not aware of their responsibilities in regionally controlled weed management, did not have the funding, equipment and/or skills for weed

management, and some were reluctant to use chemicals. VGT funding showed local landholders that it’s not just Tylden Landcare Group, but a Victoria wide program,” Brendan said.

Tylden Landcare Group utilised an EcoBlade that applied herbicide at the same time as slashing and found this to be a most effective manner of gorse treatment. Additionally, Brendan prepared a gorse management plan for each property, giving people something to refer to in future years.

Creating a community

ALG and Tylden Landcare Group held a field day for all participating landholders at the beginning of each year’s implementation, which created a sense of camaraderie. Where possible, half of each landholder’s funding was given upfront to further cement the commitment and allow them to begin their purchases.

In future they plan to expand the field day to better demonstrate the rabbit and fox control aspects of gorse control and harbour destruction.

Brendan felt that the effect on local landholders, although hard to measure, was the most sustainable outcome.

“Hectares of gorse control was achieved, but the bigger achievement was the introduction of some landholders to the idea that looking after their land is vital.

Showing them that engaging with Landcare has benefits and raises the awareness that they are not alone in dealing with gorse,” Brendan said.

Heidi Snow is the Communications, Community Engagement and Extension Officer at the Victorian Gorse Taskforce. For more information contact Heidi at info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au



Landholders inspect a gorse mowing attachment at a Tylden Landcare Group field day.

Around the State – News from the Regional

Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

Since joining the Victorian Landcare Team I have travelled to various locations around the state meeting with the Regional Landcare Coordinators to develop a plan for a stronger Aboriginal presence in Landcare.

I have also been working closely with Aboriginal Victoria (AV) to build a partnership between the Victorian Landcare Program and AV, which has led to the establishment of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage guidelines for the Victorian Landcare Grants 2018/19.

My goal is to ensure all Landcare groups and networks understand their roles and responsibilities under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

The journey towards understanding Aboriginal culture took a further step forward recently when the West Gippsland CMA held stage one of cultural heritage training. This three-stage program works with the region's Traditional Owners to provide a hands-on approach to Aboriginal cultural competency, which gradually introduces staff into the world of Victorian Traditional Owners.

For further information contact Jackson Chatfield on 0419 504 541.

North Central

The 2018 Future Farming Expo kicked off our regional Landcare events for the year. Held in partnership with the Wimmera CMA, the event attracted more than 120 participants – a mix of farmers, agricultural industry support staff and Landcare volunteers.

The expo focused on future proofing farm businesses, weather and climate outlooks, and chemical and pest resistance in cropping systems. We look forward to progressing ideas generated from the expo.

Updating the regional Landcare Support Plan will be a priority in the coming months, along with chemical users training and social media workshops for Landcare members.

Grant writing and applications for biodiversity projects are also underway. Congratulations to Kyneton resident Melissa Connors on winning the prestigious 2018 Victorian AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award.

For more information visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au (Landcare) or contact Tess Grieves on 5440 1890.

Port Phillip and Western Port

Landcare network leaders and Landcare facilitators came together recently in respective regional forums where they were provided with updates on the Victorian Landcare Program, Landcare Victoria Incorporated, Melbourne Water's Healthy Waterways Strategy and the Victorian Government's Biodiversity Response Planning (BRP) process.

The CMA then called for and collated the BRP biodiversity priorities as provided by Landcare networks across the region. These were fed into the working group for the Port Phillip – Western Port BRP Area. Bruce Boddington from NatureWest and Dave Bateman from the Bass Coast Landcare Network added Landcare network voices to the working group. As a result, several networks have been involved in the preparation of biodiversity projects to help implement *Biodiversity 2037*, the biodiversity plan for Victoria.

Many Landcare groups and networks were also involved in developing funding proposals for the Australian Government's Smart Farming Partnerships and National Landcare Program Phase 2.

For more information visit www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au (Landcare and Sustainable Agriculture) or contact Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

West Gippsland

Autumn has seen a flurry of Landcare activity and events in the region. A new Landcare group has formed around Delburn and the Glengarry Landcare Group has been reactivated.

Maffra and District Landcare Network hosted a pasture to pocket workshop where attendees learnt how to plan, develop and manage their property for maximum efficiency and returns. Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network ran an introduction to soil health workshop in Glengarry.

The Yarram Yarram Landcare Network hosted a workshop looking at drones and how they can be used for monitoring Landcare projects. The Bass Coast Landcare Network coordinated bird monitoring with Dallas Wyatt and the Anderson Inlet, Korumburra, Wonthaggi Urban, Bass Valley and 3 Creeks Landcare groups.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network welcomes Kate McKenzie back from maternity leave. Jill Vella will remain in a Project Officer role.

For more information visit www.wgcma.vic.gov.au (Getting involved/Landcare) or contact Kathleen Brack on 1300 094 262.

Goulburn Broken

The first half of 2018 has been very busy with some great sustainable farming events held. More than 40 landholders attended a workshop on farm water requirements and the use of technology to make delivery systems more efficient.

With thanks to the groups and networks of the region we have managed to generate another impressive Community NRM Report Card that demonstrates the great work being done in the region. Go to www.gbcma.vic.gov.au and search under report card. The report shows that for every \$1 invested our groups and networks are returning \$2.19 in on-ground works, in-kind contributions and cash.

The CMA recently partnered with Justice Connect to deliver organisational governance health checks for volunteers. It was great to see groups from the North Central and North East CMA regions attending, as well as locals.



The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Landcare Network Leaders Forum held in November 2017.

Landcare Coordinators

Implementation of the 2017/18 Victorian Landcare Grants is in full swing with many great initiatives including Kids Teaching Kids, Brush'em off Blackberries, Bush Kinder and Living the Good Life community projects.

For further information visit
www.gbcma.vic.gov.au (Community natural resource management) or contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

North East

The region's Landcare and community groups have been busy submitting project applications for the 2018/19 Victorian Landcare Grants. Many groups are preparing for major activities in spring and summer to implement their 2017/18 Victorian Landcare Grants projects.

The Mitta 2 Murray Blackberry Action Group recently achieved a great result with their partnership program in biological controls for blackberry. The Group has been working with Dr Raelene Kwong, Senior Research Scientist with DEDJTR, to try to source more biocontrol agents, with additional support gained from the CSIRO to enable Dr Kwong to travel to France for further research on priority agents.

Over 80 people from across the region attended the North East Water Forum in Wodonga in March. The forum covered the future of water in a changing climate, with a broad range of speakers providing localised information.

For more information visit
www.necma.vic.gov.au (Landcare and community groups) or contact Tom Croft on 02 6043 7648.

East Gippsland

Drier weather conditions early in the season have challenged many Landcare projects. Groups have risen to the occasion and are adapting projects to the changing conditions, including spending additional hours hand watering plants to ensure their survival.

An online mapping tool has been developed to assist groups with project management. The tool will allow the groups to map their planned works at the application stage of the project as well as at completion. A training session will be held to explain this easy-to-use and timesaving tool.

Social media training sessions were run recently to teach volunteers tips and

strategies for generating attention through using different social media platforms.

For further information visit
www.egcma.com.au (What we do/Landcare) or contact Carolyn Cameron on 5150 3582.

Wimmera

Landcarers gathered at Horsham Town Hall in March for the second annual Celebrating Landcare and National Harmony Day. This year featured the award-winning nature writer Tim Low as well as nature sound recordist Andrew Skeoch, and wildlife art by the late Sue McInnes.

Harmony Day is quickly establishing itself as a showcase event on the Wimmera Landcare calendar.

Hindmarsh Landcare Network has released a short film celebrating 20 years of Project Hindmarsh community tree planting events. This year's event will take place from 6–8 July at Kaniva. Go to the Wimmera CMA's website to view the film and find out about the next planting event.

A short film has also been produced recently celebrating community connections to Lake Albacutya. The Friends of Lake Albacutya hosted a screening of the film on the edge of the lake. Thanks to everyone who was involved in making the film, as well as the broader Rainbow community for its ongoing efforts in protecting this important lake.

For further information visit
www.wcma.vic.gov.au (Get involved/Landcare) or contact Joel Boyd on 5382 9919.

Corangamite

2018 brought some challenges for Landcare in the Heytesbury community, with many landholders impacted by the severe bush fires across the south west in March. The resilience, courage and commitment of the landholders impacted by the fires and their ability to pull together in time of need is admirable.

The Heytesbury Landcare Network has been coordinating support and on-farm educational events to help with fire recovery, in partnership with local shires, state government and the CMA.

The Landcare Victoria Inc. forum held on the Bellarine Peninsula in May saw 50 delegates from across the state come together to learn from and with their peers. Thanks to the Bellarine Landcare and

Coastcare community for supporting the forum.

A heartfelt farewell to Regional Landcare Coordinator, Tracey McRae. Please see the story on page 24.

For further information visit
www.ccma.vic.gov.au (What we do/Community/Landcare) or contact Bret Ryan on 0433 569 972.

Glenelg Hopkins

The region's Landcare groups have commissioned, sponsored or conducted many innovative projects. Some of the recent activities include biochar trials being undertaken by the Tarragal Landcare Group. Biochar is showing promise as a soil conditioner.

The Upper Hopkins Land Management Group has been promoting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) trials in the Willaura area. IPM uses biological trials to control pests in pasture and crops, which reduces the use of chemicals.

The Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Groups have successfully applied for a grant to survey landholders in their area to inform their strategic plan.

For more information visit
www.ghcma.vic.gov.au (Get involved/Landcare) or contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

Mallee

Interest in Landcare is growing once again in the Sunraysia region with a number of communities enquiring about forming new groups.

Local waterways and the impacts of invasive species such as feral cats and foxes have been hot topics. Many people are concerned with the high levels of destruction of fresh water turtle nests and the numbers of cats and foxes seen in the region.

Revegetation projects in the dryland regions had to be monitored closely over summer for moisture stress as sub soil moisture levels were low. A wet winter will take the pressure off and help set us up for what we hope will be a good spring.

Kevin Chaplin has sadly left the role of Regional Landcare Coordinator for the Mallee. Please see the story on page 24.

For further information visit
www.malleecma.vic.gov.au (Get Involved/Landcare) or contact Marissa Shean on 0409 615 846.

In brief

Farewell to two coordinators

Two esteemed Regional Landcare Coordinators, Kevin Chaplin from the Mallee and Tracey McRae from Corangamite, have recently left their positions.

Born and bred in the Mallee, Kevin Chaplin was a founding member of Murrayville Landcare Group and has been involved in Landcare for more than 25 years.

Kevin's understanding of the challenges and benefits of land management practice change and his advocacy for Landcare have been a great asset in the region. His tireless efforts to encourage collaboration and widespread participation in Landcare, and his care and concern for the local community will be truly missed.

According to his colleague, Tess Grieves from the North Central CMA, Kevin has also been a great mentor.

"Kevin is passionate, dedicated and incredibly knowledgeable. Having him at the other end of the phone with his experience in farming and working with rural communities has been invaluable. Thank you Kevin!" Tess said.

Tracey McRae has given ten years of excellent service to Landcare in the Corangamite region. Her community



Tracey McRae at a tree planting day with students from Alvie Primary School celebrating 25 years of Landcare in 2012.

spirit, can-do attitude, knowledge, commitment to Landcare and her positive nature will be sorely missed.

Tracey's Landcare journey began at the age of 16 when she volunteered with the Maffra Landcare Network.

Tracey said she had enjoyed her Landcare journey immensely and gave thanks to the inspiring colleagues and volunteers she has worked alongside.

"To all the people who continue to fly the flag high for this amazing volunteer movement – it's your knowledge and wisdom that has enabled me to develop my skills working in this field of which I am so grateful," she said.



Kevin Chaplin (right) at a Mallee Trees for Mum event in 2014.

The *Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management* magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and distributed in partnership with Landcare Victoria Incorporated and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



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Next issue

The next issue of the Landcare magazine, to be published in spring 2018, will feature stories on managing soil. Stories on soil research and innovation, soil management, communicating about soils, and soil related projects and activities are sought.

Our readers are keen to learn about the successes of different soil projects, as well as what hasn't worked, and the reflections and insights of your group or network along the way. Please contact the editor with your story ideas.

Contributions should be sent to the editor by Friday 13 July 2018.

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