

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Winter 2019 Issue 75

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE AND HEALTH

Social ties critical for bushfire recovery

Quad bike safety

Volunteering for well-being



Victorian
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Program



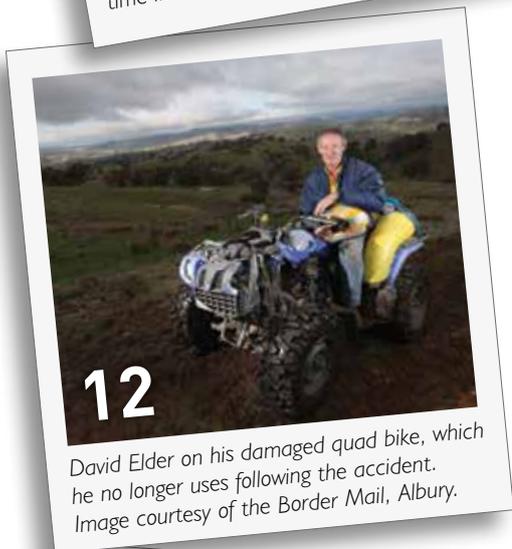
VICTORIA
State
Government

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

WINTER 2019 ISSUE 75

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Cover photograph

Ken Rendell propagating locally indigenous species in the Bayside Community Nursery. Photograph by Chris O'Neil from the City of Bayside.

From the Minister

While the benefits of a healthy environment to the natural world are widely recognised, there is a rapidly growing awareness that a thriving natural environment also sustains the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

Traditional Owners have long recognised the critical connection between Country and health, and now scientific research in Australia and internationally is revealing that nature-based solutions can help us address many of the health challenges we are facing.

In this issue of the magazine we look at the many positive ways in which Landcare impacts on health. You can read about research findings, farm safety advice and some heart-warming stories that demonstrate how the 'care' in Landcare is bringing people together and improving their social connections and sense of fulfillment.

The team from the University of Melbourne's Beyond Bushfires study reports on their ten-year project to understand the experiences of people and communities after the Black Saturday fires in February 2009. The study focused on community, resilience and recovery, as well as observations around the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities in fire-affected areas across Victoria.

The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group reports on the creative ways in



Paul Speirs, with Minister D'Ambrosio, Dave Bateman (Bass Coast Landcare Network), and Jordan Crugnale, Member for Bass, in the cool temperate rainforest that regenerated from plantings on Paul's property 28 years ago.

which they are encouraging more people to connect with their natural environment to improve community health and wellbeing. A family day at Paddock Creek Reserve in Gordon centered on the Aboriginal history of the area, with cultural stories, poems and songs. The event was described as "magical". The group also hosted Tai Chi and yoga classes at the reserve, with participants reporting they are likely to continue with the classes and were keen to be more involved in Landcare.

You can also read about forest therapy, which was first introduced in Japan in 1983. Since then, it has shown strong positive results for improving public health in those countries that have integrated it into their national health systems. Several dozen forest therapy guides are now being trained in Victoria, and programs are underway at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, at Trentham, and through Brimbank Council.

In early May I had the pleasure of opening the 2019/20 Victorian Landcare Grants at Paul Speirs' Archies Creek property, near Wonthaggi. Paul is a founding member of the Archies Creek Reforestation Group and he has worked cooperatively with neighbours to revegetate his property back to natural forest. It's wonderful to see first hand how the Victorian Landcare Grants are supporting the protection and restoration of farmlands and landscapes across the state.

I wish you all good health over the winter season.

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

2019 VICTORIAN LANDCARE AWARDS

NOMINATIONS OPEN NOW

NOMINATIONS CLOSE: SUNDAY 7 JULY 2019

LANDCAREAUSTRALIA.ORG.AU/LANDCAREAWARDS2019



2019 Victorian Landcare Awards

The 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards are now open for entries. The awards are an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the great work done by individuals, groups and networks to enhance, restore or protect our natural environment, and improve agricultural productivity.

If you or your group or network are involved in protecting or improving your local environment, farm, coastline, bushland, wetland, waterway, school, region or urban area, there is a Landcare awards category to suit you.

There are nine National Landcare Award categories. The winners will represent Victoria at the 2020 National Landcare Awards.

National Landcare Award categories:

- Individual Landcarer
- Innovation in Agriculture Land Management
- Landcare Farming
- Partnerships for Landcare
- Coastcare
- Junior Landcare Team
- Young Landcare Leadership
- Indigenous Land Management
- Landcare Community Group

The six Victorian Landcare award categories:

- Joan Kirner Landcare Award

- Landcare Network Award
- Urban Landcare Award
- Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award
- Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship
- Environmental Volunteer Award

A new Environmental Volunteer Award has been introduced this year. This award will showcase and promote the activities of Victorian environmental volunteer groups or individuals who work on either public or private land, and who have engaged community members who are not typically involved or engaged in environmental volunteering.

Winners of past awards have commented that winning a Landcare award has provided a welcome fillip for their group/network, and in some cases the award has enabled them to access other sources of funding, such as corporate sponsorship for Landcare projects.

The next edition of the magazine, to be published in spring, will feature stories on the winners of the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards.

Entries for the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards close on 7 July 2019. For selection criteria, entry guidelines, the Landcare awards terms and conditions, and to access the online application form for each awards category, go to <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcareawards2019>

Thriving wetland a

Where do people go when times are tough in a dryland farming community? The answer, for the people of the small Mallee town of Nullawil, is often their local wetland.

Uttiwillock wetland is on the Tyrrell Creek, about five kilometres east of Nullawil, which has a population of less than 100. According to Nullawil Landcare Group secretary-treasurer Donald Cooper, the community has been the driving force to fill the wetland with water and care for the site.

Community fundraising meant the wetland was linked with the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline in 2017 and pumped with an initial five megalitres of water. The community has maintained its commitment to keep the wetland flourishing by donating resources and paying for water to be pumped.

"We'd been trying for seven years to get this wetland established and get environmental water. It's so important to the community. When there's pretty hard drought times, it's somewhere to go that doesn't cost anything and when you meet others that are going through the same thing, you realise you're not in it alone," Donald said.



2019 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants

The Victorian Government is providing funding of up to \$410,000 for the 2019 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants.

Schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, Scouts, Girl Guides and youth groups are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for projects with a focus on:

- improving biodiversity through the development, improvement or restoration of habitat for Victoria's native plants and animals, and

- educating and engaging young people to value and actively care for Victoria's natural environment.

The grants are for either direct-action (i.e. projects with an on-ground component) or in-direct action (i.e. projects with an environmental education component), or a mixture of both.

Applications close: Friday 21 June 2019.

For more information: including the Guidelines and how to apply visit <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/victorian-junior-landcare-biodiversity-grants/>

community haven during drought

By Megan Frankel-Vaughan



From left, South East Mallee Landcare Facilitator Sue Pretty, wildlife ecologist Damien Cook and Nullawil Landcare Group secretary/treasurer Donald Cooper at Uttiwillock wetland.

A community refuge

Fellow Nullawil Landcare Group member and landholder Wade Humphreys said current drought conditions meant many local farmers were feeling down on their luck and the wetland had helped them reconnect with one another.

“You never know what you’re going to see when you go out there. Mobs of

kangaroos come bounding through, there’s birdlife, wildlife. Every time you go out there you see something different. We’ve had a few functions out there where we can sit around a fire, have a yarn or go for a swim. People have said it’s really helped them out. The kids love it. They go out looking at birds, climbing trees – it’s a big outdoor playground.

“The importance of getting water in, it’s crucial to the environment, to the community and their mindset in the tough years. Little towns are dying and it really does mean so much to us,” Wade said.

Ongoing care for Uttiwillock

Uttiwillock has benefited from recent works by the Mallee CMA with funding from the Victorian Government’s Our Catchments Our Community program. Works have included fixing potholes, maintaining tracks, removing old fencing, pest plant and animal control, including the eradication of boxthorn and prickly pear. The Mallee CMA has also provided a grant to the Nullawil Landcare Group for the installation of 25 new bird nest boxes at the site.

The group conducted a flora and fauna survey at the wetland in late 2018. Conducted by wildlife ecologist Damien Cook, the survey revealed 149 species of native fauna, including 131 species of birds, and 18 threatened species, along with 109 plant species. The results were released at a community wildlife event held at the wetland.

According to South East Mallee Landcare Facilitator Sue Pretty, the survey aimed to justify efforts to secure environmental flows into the wetland in the future.

“The survey results show the impact the community’s initiative has had on the environment. We wanted to hold a community event to publicise the findings and also to get people to recognise what they have here and why it’s important,” Sue said.

The event was enthusiastically supported by the local community.

Megan Frankel-Vaughan writes for the Mallee CMA. For more information email Sue Pretty at southeastmalleelandcare@gmail.com



Wildlife ecologist Damien Cook leads the community through Uttiwillock wetland on a native flora and fauna walk.

Landcare employment and human resources advice service

By Rosemary Scott-Thompson

Around 40 per cent of Landcare Victoria Inc. (LVI) member groups engage contractors (primarily to deliver on-ground projects), and one in seven employ staff. Landcare staff are vital to support the work of the Landcare community, however managing staff can sometimes be challenging for volunteer committees.

The Victorian Landcare Program Review Action Plan (2016) identified the need to better support Landcare employers and employees. LVI received funding from the Victorian Government, through the Victorian Landcare Program, to engage an independent third-party organisation to provide free employment and workplace-related advice, dispute resolution and referral services for Landcare staff/contractors and their employer organisations.

LVI has engaged Workplace Legal to provide advice on all Landcare employment-related matters until June 2020. In the first three months of calls, the service has advised on employment contracts, appropriate salary ranges, human resource policies and end of employment issues.

The calls have ranged from 10-minute queries to complex matters taking 10 hours. The distinction between contractors and employees (and volunteers) is one of the most common questions posed by Landcarers. The service has also helped groups get ready for new employees and review existing arrangements to ensure best practice.

Landcare staff/contractors and their employer organisations can access advice by calling Workplace Legal on 1300 302 232.

Research proves that Landcare is

In 1979 my husband and I purchased 17 acres of degraded farmland at Boonie Doon in north east Victoria, with a view to building a mud brick home. We were interested and involved in environmental issues, but had no building or land management experience.

We were fortunate to be befriended by a stalwart of the local Ancona Valley Landcare Group. Benefitting from his expertise in land management and also with tools, local community connections and technology, helped us to build our home and plant more than 1000 indigenous trees. The planting has completely eradicated land slippages and erosion problems and has brought back more than 36 species of birds and lots of other native wildlife to the property.

The health benefits of our mud brick home building and tree planting adventure were not limited to the environment. We gained high levels of physical fitness as we clambered over our steeply sloping block to plant the trees. The friends who came to help us had fun and benefitted from social connectedness – a key factor in human health. Our children became immersed in the outdoors – wandering the hillsides, visiting the creek and learning to know and love the environment.

Years later, as an academic in the School of Health and Social Development at Deakin University, I led a team collating evidence about the human health benefits of contact with nature for Parks Victoria. The research findings confirmed my intuitive understanding that human contact with nature is beneficial to health and well-being. In fact, when people work to sustain the natural environment they experience enhanced physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

Land management group members healthier than control

A 2005 study that I led in Victoria explored the health, well-being, and social capital benefits gained by community members who are involved in the management of land for conservation in six rural communities. A total of 102 people participated in the study (64 males and 38 females). The 51 members of a community-based land management



On top of the world and looking down at the trees we have planted at Boonie Doon.



The view from the mud brick house on our property at Bonnie Doon. Working on the land has given us feelings of satisfaction, pride and achievement.

group were matched (by age and gender) with 51 controls, many of whom were involved in volunteering but not in the natural environment.

The members of the land management groups rated their general health higher, reported visiting the doctor less often, felt safer in the local community, and utilised the skills that they had acquired in their lifetime more frequently than the control participants.

Boosted emotional states

Some UK research that I worked on studied 88 people volunteering regularly in a range of places from scenic natural landscapes to urban green spaces in northern England and southern Scotland. We used an Emotional State Scale to identify changes across twelve emotional parameters: happy/unhappy, bored/interested, worthy/worthless, helpless/in control, satisfied/dissatisfied, irritated/calm, incapable/skilful, withdrawn/talkative, in pain/pain free, worried/relaxed, healthy/unhealthy and trusting/cautious.

The volunteers recorded feeling more positive across all parameters except one – pain. Subsequent interviews found that, while some volunteers experienced aching muscles and potentially some stiffness after undertaking their activities, most stated that this was a positive rather than a negative issue as it reminded them that they had been physically active and gave them a sense of achievement.

Volunteering improves immediate well-being

A more recent study in the UK undertaken in 2014–2015 compared the well-being experienced by those involved in environmental volunteering with the well-being experienced by participants in other types of nature-based activities and volunteering. The study involved people participating in biodiversity monitoring, practical conservation volunteering, walking, and students conducting fieldwork as part of their university course.

A peer-reviewed journal article reporting on the research stated: “Environmental volunteering significantly improved positive elements and significantly decreased

negative elements of participants’ immediate well-being, and it did so more than walking or student fieldwork.”

Perhaps one of the reasons that environmental volunteering and involvement in environmental management through groups such as Landcare is more beneficial than simply being in nature is that the results of such activities are long lasting. We can keep returning to these places and see the results of our efforts, and so our feelings of satisfaction, delight and pride are re-experienced.

This is certainly true for my family. Each time we visit our country home we delight in the new self-sown native trees that are springing up. We celebrate the new species of birds that our bird-watching son identifies. We view the stability of our hillsides compared with those nearby with satisfaction.

In 2017 we were able to share the delight of seeing a koala in our trees for the first time with our grandchildren. Our Landcare friend’s legacy has been life changing. It has provided us, our children, grandchildren and the numerous friends who have visited our place with the opportunity to re-engage with nature in an active and constructive way. It has undoubtedly improved our health and the health of the land entrusted to our care.

Dr Mardie Townsend is part of the Health, Nature and Sustainability Research Group at Deakin University. For more information email mardie.townsend@deakin.edu.au



Mardie and Ron Townsend enjoy sharing time in the bush with their grandchildren.

Social ties matter for bushfire recovery

By Professor Lisa Gibbs

In the wake of the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009, the Victorian community was faced with the urgent need to learn more about how to support those affected so we can improve recovery processes in the event of another disaster.



Social ties and a connection to nature were important factors for recovery after the 2009 bushfires.

This was our motivation for conducting the *Beyond Bushfires* study, in which we investigated the experiences of those affected by the fires three to five years after they occurred. It was very much a team effort, with thoughtful and generous contributions from people living in towns across Victoria, community organisations, government and service providers, and a research team guided by experts in the field.

The findings from the original *Beyond Bushfires* study are being used to improve emergency recovery planning and services across Australia. Internationally, they have been shared by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

We know that 10 years on from the 2009 fires, the impacts continue to be felt by many. However, these long-term experiences are not as well-understood or as well-researched as short-term recovery.

In response to this gap in knowledge, the Victorian State Government and Australian Red Cross have provided funding for the *10 Years Beyond Bushfires* study, in which we will complete another round of surveys with the previous participants.

As we prepare for this next phase of the research and reflect on the past decade it's a good time to share some of the key lessons we have learnt so far.

Firstly, we learnt the difference that personal relationships and social networks make to recovery. The nature of the social influences on a person's recovery experience is complicated, but the over-riding finding was that social ties matter.

Belonging to local community groups was found to be such an important contributor to mental health and wellbeing outcomes that in communities where many people belonged to local groups the benefits

extended to other people living in that community. This is something that can be promoted as a way of building ongoing community resilience.

We also learnt how a large-scale and devastating event can affect how children learn and develop. The academic progress of many children in fire-affected areas was substantially impacted compared to their peers in unaffected areas. We are working with non-government partners to develop and test school-based programs that give children the knowledge, skills and support to be able to thrive in our disaster-prone Australian environments.

Distressingly, the study also found that four times as many women in regions affected by the Black Saturday bushfires reported violence than those in non-affected areas.

Critically, it was the increased financial stress that significantly increased the risk of post-disaster violence. This is the first time that we have had clear, controlled research comparing affected and unaffected areas in this way.

In our efforts to identify systems that support recovery we cannot overlook the strength people drew from the bush that surrounded them. Our research showed that people who were attached to the natural environment were more likely to report positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience three to five years after the fires.

Based on our findings, we released a set of recommendations at the individual, family, community, service, and public policy level. Now is the time to put this knowledge into practice for the wellbeing of those in disaster prone areas.

Professor Lisa Gibbs is a researcher at the University of Melbourne. For the recommendations and more information visit beyondbushfires.org.au or email info-beyondbushfires@unimelb.edu.au

“

The academic progress of many children in fire-affected areas was substantially impacted compared to their peers in unaffected areas.

”



Dhan Neopanay, originally from Nepal, harvests long melon and pumpkin from her family's plot in the community gardens.



Landcare activities also become catalysts for social and cultural exchange, places to express art, the means to excite the intellect and learn about scientific concepts from an early age, and an opportunity for physical exercise.



Urban Landcare fulfils critical community needs



By Anne Stelling

The umbrella provided by Landcare can reach far in an urban setting, where environmental restoration and renewal can also fulfil a variety of community needs.

The activities of the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network generate benefits beyond on-ground ecological improvements. Landcare activities also become catalysts for social and cultural exchange, places to express art, the means to excite the intellect and learn about scientific concepts from an early age, and an opportunity for physical exercise.

The Wodonga Urban Landcare Network has member groups that work with people of a wide variety of ages and diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Parklands Albury Wodonga offers ranger-led work experience programs, where volunteers undertake environmental restoration in regional parks and reserves, with training and supervision.

Volunteers are regularly invited to give feedback on the program. In 2017, over a three-month period, 209 volunteers said they learnt a new skill, 280 said they felt healthier and/or happier and 27 made

changes in their life as a result of their environmental volunteering experience.

In 2015 Parklands Albury Wodonga was approached by the Bhutanese Community Association in Albury Inc. for assistance with developing an organic community farm as a social enterprise for new migrants. The farm provides a safe place for people to learn about their new country, exchange skills and knowledge, improve language and employment skills, socialise, and share their culture while producing organic vegetables for sale to the local community.

Parklands Albury Wodonga has also been able to partner with other groups to employ three Bhutanese community members as part time farm rangers and develop a successful community garden and a catering enterprise. The farm rangers also work as leaders on Parklands Albury Wodonga's environmental projects, giving volunteers valuable employment skills in environmental restoration tasks.

The community farm has recently diversified to offer individual plots, resulting in families from diverse backgrounds including Congolese and Nepalese sharing knowledge and experience to produce healthy food.

Liviette Nakidi, originally from Congo, has been struggling with finding work, learning English and making contacts in the community. The garden has provided her with fresh food, social connections and a sense of confidence.

"I like all the different types of work in the gardening – I can do them all. It has improved my life," Liviette said.

Anne Stelling is Landcare Facilitator for Wodonga Urban Landcare Network and her position is funded through the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. For more information email wodongalandcare@gmail.com

Volunteering for the helmeted honeyeater



By *Mariea Pacheco*



A helmeted honeyeater at Yellingbo.

The helmeted honeyeater is the avifaunal emblem of Victoria. It is a critically endangered subspecies of the yellow-tufted honeyeater and is a flagship taxon for the health of swamp and streamside vegetation. Threats such as habitat loss and degradation, predation and competition of native and introduced species have resulted in significant declines in the population range and numbers of the species.

The Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Field Volunteer Program has been in operation since 1989. It is working to halt the decline of this bird and establish a sustainable wild population. Volunteers provide supplementary water and feed (wombaroo – a mix of nectar and mealworms) to pairs raising young and to reintroduced colonies of helmeted honeyeaters. Volunteers provide half the daily nectar requirements of the breeding populations.

Volunteers also observe, monitor and report on any health concerns of the birds to be followed up by management. They provide critical data on species flowering, weed and pest management issues. This is done daily at several sites throughout the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR) and generally takes several hours to complete. Several Landcare groups border Yellingbo, including the Monbulk Landcare Group, whose members are actively involved in the program.

Figures from 2018/2019 show this breeding season to be the most successful yet. We are seeing these tiny, rare birds being brought back from the precipice of extinction.

I've been volunteering in the program for a year. As well as doing the supplementary water and feed work I also work with the ornithologist banding new fledglings and recording data for later studies.

Here's what a day in the field looks like:

It's around 8am as I head to the old ranger's hut which stands in the reserve amongst scruffy banksias and, manna and swamp gums. I'm bleary eyed and waiting for my second coffee to kick in. The other volunteers who are already mixing,

measuring and decanting the life-saving wombaroo liquid into flasks greet me warmly.

We gather all our field equipment together – the buckets of wombaroo, flasks, bowls, cleaning sponges and measuring cup. An emergency transponder backpack, field map, binoculars and compass completes my field kit.

Then, with buckets loaded, we don helmets and hi-viz vests and head out on our different routes through the forest. We have all been expertly inducted and trained by volunteer coordinator, Sue Tardif.

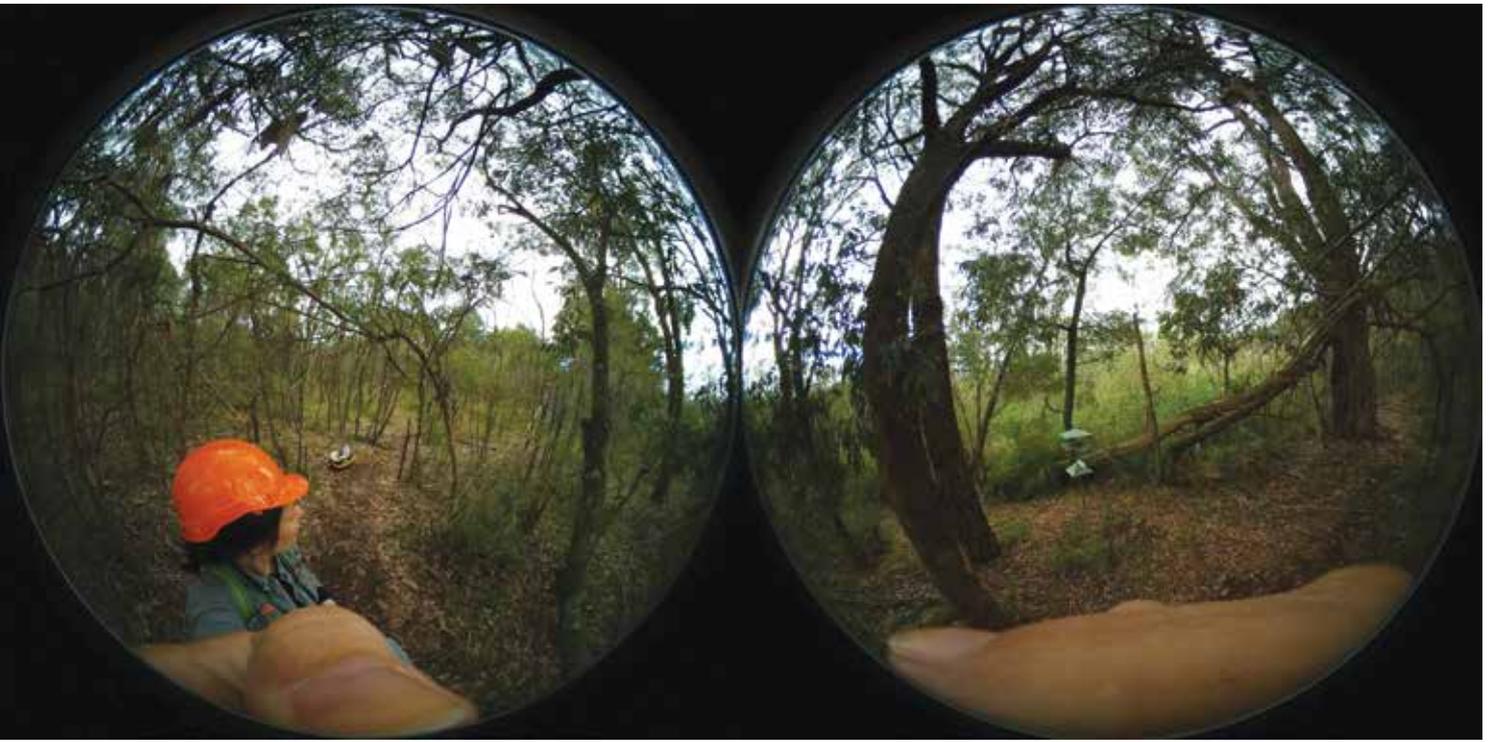
As I trek out to my site I reflect on what makes my fellow volunteers so committed to this work. Working outdoors in all weather can be a challenge. There's the risk of snakes, wasps and mosquitos. The wombaroo is messy and very sticky. There's all the paperwork to complete and the high level of fitness needed to scramble through the Yellingbo bush.



It seems to me that volunteers might be saving this special bird, but in many ways these birds are also saving us!



Volunteer Mariea Pacheco provides supplementary water and food to pairs of helmeted honeyeaters raising young.



A binocular image of the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. These images provide an important vegetation and habitat assessment tool.

But, as soon as I approach my first feeding station, I get my answer. I am thrilled to see these exquisite birds in their striking yellow and black livery enjoying breakfast. It's magical to see the honeyeaters flitting about in the tree canopy with the early morning sunlight filtering through.

As I'm pouring wombaroo into bowls I come across a very bold and determined agile antechinus in my bucket! He's after the sugary mixture of course and despite

being tipped out, hops straight back in as soon as I resume pouring. Several wallabies are watching this from nearby.

When I head back to the stony track I notice a bird foraging on the ground ahead. I lift my binoculars and realise it's a rare and beautiful blue winged parrot. I also spot a white-throated tree creeper. My twitcher skills are improving from working with keen birders and our Senior Scientist Ornithologist, Bruce Quin who oversees the field program.

After a few hours of work I walk out of the forest with a noticeably lighter bucket. The trees are bathed in a golden autumnal haze. It seems to me that volunteers might be saving this special bird, but in many ways these birds are also saving us!

Mariea Pacheco is an environmental consultant. For more information email mariea68pacheco@gmail.com

Volunteering – the facts

A 2019 survey of 61 volunteers conducted by the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater's Committee saw them list what they most enjoyed about the program. In order of enjoyment they were: being in a natural environment, feeling they are contributing to conservation, and social connections and friendship.

In 2016-2017 the UK Wildlife Trust and University of Essex undertook a study of the health and well-being impacts of volunteering for wildlife conservation. The study involved 139 individuals aged between 18-76. Changes in participants' attitudes,

behaviour and mental wellbeing were assessed over twelve weeks.

The results showed higher levels of physical activity as well as enhanced levels of positivity were recorded after the volunteering experience. Participants also maintained a much greater level of contact with woodlands, reserves and parks.

The qualitative findings asked people how the experience had changed their feelings about themselves. All of the participants reported a much-reduced sense of isolation and increased feelings of belonging and of being part of community.



Volunteers provide half the daily nectar requirements of the breeding populations.





Quad bike incidents are a leading cause of deaths and serious injuries on Australian farms.



David Elder on his damaged quad bike, which he no longer uses following the accident. Image courtesy of the Border Mail, Albury.

Bethanga farmer still recovering – six years after

Half of all Victorian workplace deaths in 2017-2018 occurred on farms. However, farms employ just three percent of working Victorians. The agricultural industry is a priority sector for WorkSafe with our vision of all Victorian workers returning home safe every day.

Quad bike incidents are a leading cause of deaths and serious injuries on Australian farms. In 2013 David Elder of Bethanga discovered that no two rides on a quad are the same. It was a regular day for the community-

minded farmer. He'd had ambulance duty the night before and was going to see his neighbour after spraying some blackberries. It was dark, the driveway was steep and he was tired, but he knew the terrain.

Suddenly David was on the ground. He wasn't found for several hours until a woman and her child saw him on their way back from basketball. It was a miracle he survived. He had extensive injuries including a fractured skull, jaw, shoulder, collarbone, ribs, and bleeding on the brain.

What followed was a farmer's worst nightmare. Five days in an induced coma, three months stuck in a Melbourne hospital and many more months of rehabilitation. David couldn't do anything on the farm – although he tried – and couldn't even drive a car to pick up groceries for 12 months.

David grew up on a farm in Benalla, worked as a jackaroo in WA and established a steel fabrication business before buying his farm in Bethanga. He's involved in the local Bethanga Landcare Group, volunteers for Ambulance Victoria and sits on another half a dozen committees that assist the community. His farm is typical of the land around Bethanga and many other parts of Victoria with a combination of rolling hills and pasture.



David Elder's side-by-side vehicle – a safer option for farm work.



A quad bike user wearing a helmet on a bike that has been fitted with an operator protective device.

quad bike accident

By Carly Britt and Tarnya Dalla

David was an experienced quad bike rider. He wasn't going fast at the time of the accident, but he wasn't wearing a helmet and had a tank on the back from spraying.

It's now six years since the accident and David is still recovering. He's back on the farm but struggles with balance issues and short-term memory loss. He's also aware of how his injury impacted others, particularly his family and the neighbours who found him.

David remains positive. He continues to pursue his Landcare and community work, and advocates strongly for farm safety.

"I learnt the wrong way and I want to change the culture of people taking shortcuts. It's not just people hooning around who have accidents; it's farmers moving around in the field by themselves and thinking about other things," David said.

David reviewed the best options for his farm work after the accident and now uses a side-by-side vehicle with a rollover protection system and seatbelt, along with his ute.

Tarnya Dalla is a Program Officer in the Agriculture Practice Team at WorkSafe Victoria. For more information go to www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or email tarnya_dalla@worksafe.vic.gov.au

Staying safe on your quad bike

WorkSafe Victoria has produced an online reference guide for quad bike safety. There is more information on all of the topics below at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/quadbikes

Choose the right vehicle for the task. Is a quad bike the most suitable vehicle for the task on your farm? In some cases a ute, tractor or side-by-side vehicle might be a better option.

Understand the hazards relating to task and terrain. What you're using the quad bike for, and where you're using it, can significantly impact your safety.

Always wear a helmet. A common complaint from farmers is that helmets are too hot, too heavy or they cannot hear when wearing them. There are options available that don't cover the ears and, in situations where quad bikes don't go over 30 kilometres per hour and operate only on the farm, there are lightweight options available with brims and flaps to protect the neck.

Do a pre-start check. Pre-start checks can prevent factors that contribute to accidents. Some key things to check include tyre pressure, steering and brakes.

Understand the impact of loads and towing. The size, weight and distribution of yourself, and what you carry on the quad bike pack rack, can affect your steering and centre of gravity. Ensure you're aware of the manufacturer's limits (check the decal on the quad bike) and account for the rider and load weight, including any towed loads.

Training, information and instruction. Everyone who uses a quad bike should understand the associated hazards and how to operate it for the task and terrain on your farm. Consider sending workers to a quad bike course with a registered training organisation. If a worker is an experienced rider, ask someone who understands quad bike operation to assess their skills and/or supervise them until you're confident they can complete the required tasks in the terrain.



Participants slow down by tuning their senses during a forest therapy walk at the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens early 2019.

Forest therapy has many public health benefits

By Dieter Kotte and Susan V Joachim

Forest therapy was first introduced as a preventative public health practice under the name of Shinrin-yoku (meaning immersion in the forest) in Japan in 1983. Since then it has shown remarkable results in improving public health in the countries that have integrated it into their national health systems.

On a forest therapy walk, participants are immersed in the healing properties of phytoncides, specific aerosols emitted from trees, which boost our immune systems.

According to Professor Qing Li from the International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA), a guided forest therapy walk should focus on all five senses.

"It should also involve some light physical activities, such as Qigong or gymnastics," Professor Li said.

Engaging the senses

A certified forest therapy guide typically offers a set of activities over a three-hour walk which allow participants to engage with nature through their senses. They slow down, tune out of stress and switch off from technology, allowing them to connect with nature. Guides are trained to help people with this act of slowing down and

giving their attention to the sights, sounds and aromas of the forest.

For most people it is almost impossible to slow down without a guide. The feedback from every walk supports this claim. This is no surprise. Many people live stressed and hectic lives, and have forgotten how to really relax, enjoy silence or experience nature. As a result, lifestyle diseases are the leading cause of ill health in Australia.

Forest therapy guides offer sensory and creative activities as well as gentle physical exercises within the structured sequence of the forest therapy session. These activities are derived from the forest therapy curriculum, which was evaluated and validated by more than 120 experts from 20 countries in 2017.

Forest therapy also provides an element of freedom to engage in what feels good for the participant – even if that means finding

a spot to relax and fall asleep for the rest of the session.

Most forest therapy sessions conclude with a Japanese inspired tea ceremony featuring Australian bush tea. Guides take pride in this ceremony – presenting it as an act of gratitude to nature and the participants.

Multiple direct and indirect health benefits

The direct benefits of forest therapy include reduced blood pressure, lowered pulse rate, reduced stress hormone (cortisol) levels, reduced anxiety and depression, increased happiness and positive mood, enhanced energy levels and better concentration. Forest therapy has been associated with a surge in the activity of cancer and tumor fighting blood cells. Positive effects are also seen from exposure to anti-bacterial, anti-microbial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory substances emitted by trees and plants.

The indirect effects of forest therapy include increased overall fitness levels, improved immune system, better and more regular sleep, weight loss and reduced risk of obesity, reduced risk of heart and lung diseases, decrease in anxiety and depression, less likelihood of feeling stressed in typical day-to-day situations, fewer mood-swings, enhanced ability to focus, higher self-confidence and a more stable personality.

As well as health benefits, forest therapy has significant economic benefits. Forest therapy now contributes more than \$US 2 billion per year to the GDP of South Korea. Significant investment into forest therapy infrastructure, training and research are being made in East Asia and Europe.

More trained guides are needed

Victoria has many locations that are well suited for forest therapy. The Domino Trail, a former rail track at Trentham, is being considered for conversion as a dedicated forest therapy trail by Hepburn Shire Council. In 2018 Brimbank Council conducted a free, three-hour forest therapy event for its community.

The Royal Botanic Gardens are offering regular forest therapy walks in the Melbourne and Cranbourne Botanic Gardens.

Several dozen INFTA-certified forest therapy guides are currently being trained in Victoria. Several hundred guides will be needed to implement the public health approach of forest therapy in Victoria.

Dieter Kotte is Secretary of INFTA.

Susan V Joachim is President of INFTA.

INFTA is registered in Victoria as a not-for-profit association. For more information email info@infata.net



A sit spot exercise during a forest therapy walk at Coolart Wetlands and Homestead, February 2017.

Nature's gym in the Yarra Valley

By Karen Garth



Who needs a gym membership when you can be a Landcare volunteer in the Yarra Valley?

My membership of the Mt Toolebewong and District Landcare Group has provided me with a wonderful variety of outdoor exercise in fresh air and peaceful locations since the group began in 1993.

I love working out in nature's gym for free, and each month I can choose which fitness program suits my needs. The activities my group provides in, and around, Healesville and the Yarra Valley enable me to improve my muscle tone, strength, heart and lung function, balance and spatial awareness, general and psychological well-being, brain function and health.

Landcare activities have improved my energy levels, endurance, motor and aerobic fitness, agility and flexibility. They assist me in managing my weight and have reduced my risk of developing chronic diseases (such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease). There's also the boost of a rich and varied social life and connection to my local community.

I can work at my own pace, and take a break when I wish – with no slave driving personal trainer to pressure me into going beyond my limits! I can meditate with the melodious sounds of the Badger Creek, Grace Burn Creek, Watts River and Yarra River trickling past, and the birds calling in the trees.

Nature's gym is fun. I spend time with like-minded individuals, and my sense of achievement is reinforced when I revisit sites and see our growing vegetation and the increase in biodiversity it supports.

My mind is also kept active by performing Waterwatch tests, invertebrate surveys, checking wildlife monitoring cameras and keeping abreast of innovations in digital communications. And there's no better sleep than after a good day's Landcare activity.

Karen Garth is treasurer of Mt Toolebewong and District Landcare Group. For more information email toolebewonglandcare@gmail.com



From left, Maureen Bond, Tessa Lockhart, Evelyn Feller, Karen Garth and Pat Schalken after a work-out on Clean Up Australia Day earlier this year.



Green Gym for Carers is a peer-support program that combines health and social interaction with conservation.



From left, Kylie Barlow, Rose Durkin and Jan Kotevski enjoy morning tea after a Green Gym session at Flat Rock Beach, Ballina NSW.

Green Gym improves the health of carers, and the environment

By Liz Hajenko

Green Gym is a program developed by The Conservation Volunteers in the UK and delivered locally by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). The program aims to get people outdoors and connecting with their local environment and community to encourage physical activity and help them to feel better.

A UK study completed by Oxford Brookes University showed that Green Gym had multiple benefits ranging from a measurable drop in participants' anxiety to significant

improvements in social and community connections.

CVA has been delivering a Green Gym for Carers program in the Northern Rivers region of NSW since September 2018. According to a Deakin University study, carers experience poor rates of physical and mental health compared to the general Australian population.

Many carers don't self-identify, but one in ten NSW residents could be defined as carers as they are providing support to a family member or friend. People who experience poor mental health, disability, chronic or terminal illness or drug or alcohol dependency often have someone in their lives who provides practical and emotional support – a carer.

Green Gym for Carers is a peer-support program that combines health and social interaction with conservation.

Carers engage in meaningful, nature-based activities with other carers, helping to build social connections between people who understand the challenges that caring presents.

This year the program has expanded to become a Wellbeing in Nature program, open for anyone to join and experience the benefits of caring for themselves and their local environment. The program is running in the Ballina/Byron Bay, Pottsville and Lismore areas of NSW. Each session begins with light warm up stretches, followed by fieldwork and ends with a healthy morning tea.

Kylie Barlow, who attends the Ballina and Pottsville sessions, joined in 2018 after being referred to the program by her local neighbourhood centre. She says it's been good for her to have something that she does on her own – that's just for her.



"It's the one thing in the week that I go to, and I love conservation, I'm a massive plant nerd. I haven't thought of doing anything like this before but it's really awesome as it's helping me with a purpose. I find it grounding and I'm enjoying identifying different weeds and removing them and finding out about native plants.

Kylie believes the program has also contributed to her feelings of improved wellbeing.

"I've been experiencing high anxiety so coming to a program where you can share with people – or not – and do something together has been really beneficial, as well as connecting back into the community and meeting new lovely people," she said.

Rose Durkin has also been participating in Green Gym since 2018. She volunteers on other CVA projects too.

"My husband and I moved to Ballina a year and couple of months ago, to be closer to one of our boys. I'm not working, which is why I'm doing volunteer work. I just like being outdoors. I have been previously involved in Landcare, controlling bitou bush. Here we're doing asparagus fern and bitou bush and I like it because sometimes we'll do that, and other times we'll go around and pick up rubbish near the park where we have our morning tea.

"I rode my bike here today, I try to ride every day, and I think getting out to do something with a purpose is really beneficial," Rose said.

According to CVA Team Leader Jan Kotevski, Green Gym has been successful in terms of conservation outcomes and providing social and mental health benefits for the participants.

"Participants tell me they have thoroughly enjoyed the social aspects – meeting new people, some in similar life circumstances as carers – and learning new skills like weed control methods and flora and fauna identification. The active outdoor engagement is a big drawcard and participants can see positive conservation outcomes," Jan said.

The program is hosted by CVA with funding from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services. Partner organisations include Ballina Shire Council, Tweed Shire Council, Lismore City Council, Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council and Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens.

Liz Hajenko is the Marketing and Communications Officer for CVA. If you are interested in supporting or being a part of a similar program in Victoria, please contact Mark Paganini at CVA Geelong at mapaganini@cva.org.au

Sunset Cove tracks well for locals and visitors

By Jess Shapiro

In 2013 the Paynesville Landcare Coastcare Group recognised an opportunity to transform a section of Sunset Cove in Paynesville with a walking track that hugs the coastline and captures picture postcard views.

The area was not in good shape at the time. It was overrun with exposed tree roots and garden escapees such as agapanthus and the beachfront that was disappearing under a carpet of kikuyu.

Six years later the 1.5-kilometre Sunset Cove Walking Track is used by locals and visitors alike and is currently rated the second most popular tourist attraction in East Gippsland on Trip Advisor.

Paynesville Landcare Coastcare Group member Jane Shaw says that walking the track is good for the soul.

"It's a very tangible connection to nature as you're taking the dog for a walk in the morning. You're walking through semi-native bush; you're right

on the edge of the water and it's well known that you can walk with the dolphins and they'll just travel along with you. It's pretty special," she said.

Group president Russell Peel believes the track is a way for the community to improve its health and well-being.

"It gets people out of their house, gets them active and it's a social thing. Visitors to the area swell in the summertime and where you just had the locals using the track, now they bring their family down and the tourists are using it too. It's a lovely area to walk along and make new friends."

Jessica Shapiro is Communications and Engagement Officer at East Gippsland CMA. For more information email jshapiro@egcma.com.au



From left, Jo Underwood, Russell Peel and Jane Shaw from Paynesville Landcare Coastcare Group on the Sunset Cove Walking Track.

River Garden feeds the community at Bass

By Peter Baird



In 2015 the Bass Coast Landcare Network leased a hectare of river flat located behind its office in Bass to create a garden. We wanted to create a site for trials, a community garden and education precinct, and a place to demonstrate alternative and innovative approaches to horticulture based on biological and regenerative principles.

The concept for the River Garden grew from a need to engage our changing demographic (traditional family farms are being replaced by tree changers and lifestyle farmers), encourage diverse land uses, and provide more fresh fruit and vegetables to our community.

There are only limited opportunities to buy fresh food in Bass and the east coast communities of Western Port so the garden was a way of helping to expand the local food economy, working alongside existing local food aggregators such as Grow Lightly and Udder and Hoe.

The River Garden seeks to improve human health by teaching chemical-free techniques of growing nutrient dense food and encouraging people to engage in the well documented health benefits of gardening. Soil and landscape health are improved by using chemical-free regenerative techniques that increase soil health and volume over time.

Community health is targeted by forming a creative community around healthy food growing. By stimulating the local food economy and encouraging a diversification of agricultural enterprises we are also improving regional economic health.

In consultation with the founders of the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) and other experts we created our first master plan in 2016. A framework of guiding principles and designated spaces was outlined so the site would develop in a flexible way to meet the needs and interests of those involved.

The River Garden was launched in December 2017. In 2018 funding from the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA enabled us to run a series of four workshops. Horticulture expert Jarrod Ruch (former head gardener at The Diggers Club) facilitated the series. Participants learned invaluable techniques and we established

plants and infrastructure while watching the garden take shape.

With the input of volunteers, Landcare staff and a Community Corrections Crew the River Garden now features:

- Established contour swale beds with espalier fruit trees, vegetables and berry trellises, which are so successful at holding water we haven't had to water through an almost rainless summer;
- A ten-bed comparative trial. The trial is testing combinations of soil treatments including rock-dust, bio-char, green manure and compost tea against a control;
- Hops and sweet potato trials;
- A nut tree orchard of 50 trees and an expanding fruit tree orchard of 15 trees;
- Drip irrigation;
- Beehives and a shelterbelt of indigenous native plants designed to attract beneficial insects;
- An independently run nursery on subleased land providing seedlings to the site and community.

The focus is now on establishing the site as a community and education hub with monthly master classes and volunteer days, and to continue establishing infrastructure, plantings and various other trial sites. Through partnerships with local health providers and other community organisations we plan to grow regional health through the creative co-design of programs and projects using the River Garden as a wonderful community education resource.

Peter Baird is Education Officer for Bass Coast Landcare Network. For more information go to www.basscoastlandcare.org.au or email Peter at peter.baird@basscoastlandcare.org.au



The River Garden in full summer growing glory in February 2019.



The launch of the River Garden at Bass in December 2017 with more than 60 people in attendance.

Friends of Bayside – healthy people, healthy parks

By Jill Robinson-Bird



The City of Bayside is a local government area in the southern suburbs of Melbourne that hugs Port Phillip Bay. It has a population of more than 97,000, many of whom are volunteers. Friends of Bayside is the council's largest and fastest growing volunteer program, with new members joining every week.

Individuals and groups generously volunteer their time for many different reasons. We've had university students that are motivated by career experience, but find friendships and social bonds become their reason to continue. New members to the community who were seeking connections have found meaning and purpose in the work as they have witnessed the regeneration of local bushland. Some long term residents with expert knowledge about environmental degradation have gone on to dedicate themselves to education and advocacy to protect precious remnant sites.

The daily grind of life in the city and suburbs can make nature feel remote and start to take a toll on our health. Urban nature-based volunteering like Friends of Bayside can help to bridge this gap. Many active Friends are in their 70s, 80s and even 90s and are still strong in both body and mind.

When I went to visit 86-year-old volunteer Ken Rendell at home recently, he was on his roof clearing leaf debris. Ken first joined the Friends when he moved to Beaumaris more than 50 years ago.

"As well as the Friends, I also joined the local bushwalking club in the 1960s because I missed being in the bush. After the children grew up we found we no longer went camping and into nature. More than five decades on, I still have these friendships and connections and we still go walking together regularly in the Dandenong Ranges."

Ken is the convenor of three Friends of Bayside groups and an active member of two others. He values exercise and walks for two hours every third day.

"I believe mental and physical health is connected. Apart from nourishing food and minimising alcohol, exercise is the best thing for your health. I volunteer to look after the bushlands because I enjoy being in the environment and I find it nourishing for the mind," Ken said.



Dedicated volunteer members of the Black Rock and Sandringham Conservation Association undertake delicate weed control in the coastal bushland along Black Rock foreshore.

Giving time to a meaningful and important cause can be health-giving for our minds, bodies and spirits. Betty Knight has been volunteering with Friends of Bayside for more than a decade. Betty says it's what keeps her going.

"By working towards preserving our last remaining bushland reserves we become interested in our history and which plants and animals belonged here. Their survival is connected to our own health and wellbeing – emotionally, psychologically and physically," Betty said.

According to Julie Valentine who works at the Bayside Community Nursery supervising volunteers and propagating plants, much vital environmental work simply would not get done without the dedicated efforts of the Friends.

"The positive flow-on effect to the broader Bayside community who maintain access to healthy local inland and coastal bushlands and greenspaces is immeasurable," Julie said.

"And, at a time when more and more people no longer have a backyard, they still need to be able to get out in nature and to garden. It's important to be able to fulfil that desire."

Volunteering in local nature and greenspaces such as parklands offers an important way for

people to connect with their environment – doing so is a very basic human need.

Jill Robinson-Bird is the Friends of Bayside Support Officer. For more information email friends@bayside.vic.gov.au



I believe mental and physical health is connected. Apart from nourishing food and minimising alcohol, exercise is the best thing for your health. I volunteer to look after the bushlands because I enjoy being in the environment and I find it nourishing for the mind.



Why parks are important for our health

By Tanya Smith

Traditional Owners have recognised the critical connection between Country and health for thousands of years. Scientific research in Australia and internationally is now also revealing that nature-based solutions can help us address many of the health challenges we are facing.

In 2015 a Deakin University review of international research found more than two hundred studies (mostly undertaken between 2008–2015) that showed contact with nature makes people physically and mentally healthier.

The findings revealed that access to safe, high-quality green space benefits people across every stage of life, enhancing their physical, mental, social and spiritual

health and wellbeing. Accessing parks and green spaces may be particularly beneficial for specific community groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities.

The evidence connecting parks and health is substantial and provides a strong justification for promoting and investing in parks as settings that enhance the health and wellbeing of community members at all ages.

According to Shauna Jones, Manager Health and Community Activation at Parks Victoria, the vision of *Healthy Parks Healthy People* is the foundation of how Victoria's parks are managed and planned.

"Simply spending time in safe, thriving parks can help us become more active, reduce our stress levels, recover faster from illness or injury, boost our immune system, and foster social connections that contribute to our wellbeing," Shauna said.

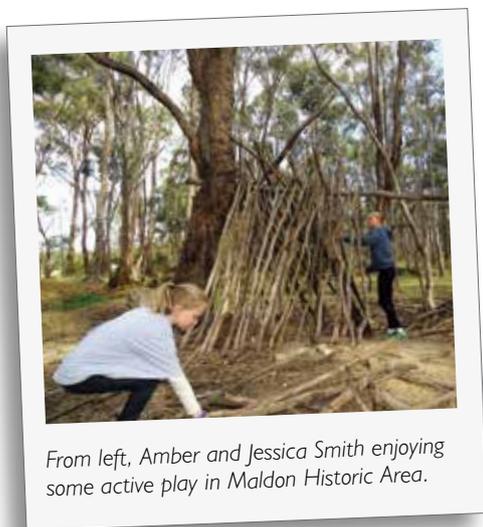
Health challenges on the rise

Unprecedented social, demographic and environmental changes pose a number of risks to our health and wellbeing,

creating an increasing economic burden to governments and communities.

Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, depression and anxiety are among the fastest growing health and cost burdens. Increasing urbanisation and changing lifestyles have resulted in people spending less time in nature, doing less physical activity, and becoming more stressed and socially isolated. As a result:

- More than half of the Australian population is either sedentary or has a low level of exercise, leading to an increased rate of obesity and overweight;
- Children are exercising less, with just one-third meeting the benchmark for good health of 60 minutes of physical activity per day;
- Around 1.7 million Australians have diabetes. It is the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia. More than 100,000 Australians have developed diabetes in the past year and the majority of these are preventable through improved lifestyle;



From left, Amber and Jessica Smith enjoying some active play in Maldon Historic Area.



We know that parks are important for the conservation of native plants and wildlife. Less understood are the numerous economic, social and environmental benefits that people and communities receive.



Heather Beever and Ib Smith visit one of the many huts in Victoria's Alpine National Park.



Ros Hart and David Stratton enjoy using a Parks Victoria beach wheelchair at Wilsons Promontory National Park.

- An estimated 45 per cent of Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. In any one year, around one million Australian adults have depression, and more than two million have anxiety;
- Social disengagement and isolation is an increasing concern for youth, new migrants and rural and remote populations.

Healthy parks mean healthy people

We know that parks are important for the conservation of native plants and wildlife. Less understood are the numerous economic, social and environmental benefits that people and communities receive. Parks provide essential services such as clean water and air, climate regulation, pollination of crops and coastal protection. Our parks are rich with biodiversity, containing many species of flora and fauna of cultural and scientific value to society.

Urban and national parks and waterways provide places for physical exercise, relaxation, play, learning and discovery. They enrich us with a sense of place and spiritual connections. They help children to form a lifelong relationship with nature.

Every year, millions Victorians visit parks to walk, exercise, play, cycle, enjoy nature and wildlife observation, camp, and socialise with family and friends. In providing these settings, parks are a highly cost-effective contributor to preventing and treating a variety of growing public health issues.

Tanya Smith works for Parks Victoria.
For more information email tanya.smith@parks.vic.gov.au

To find out about visiting parks go to www.parks.vic.gov.au

Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group runs health and well-being activities



By Jennifer Johnson

The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) has been using creative ways to connect more people to their natural environment. In September 2018 members of the Gordon community asked the MCLG if better use could be made of Paddock Creek Reserve in Gordon.

The group saw this as a great opportunity to work with the community and explore ways of connecting people to the environment with health and well-being activities. The community was keen to use local knowledge and local presenters and to make all the events free. The MCLG hosted two events in February 2019.

A family friendly event focusing on cultural stories, poems and songs about the Aboriginal history of Gordon was a great success. The aim was to help the community feel a stronger connection to Gordon and its history and appreciate the unique environment surrounding the small township.

Uncle Barry James Gilson, of the local Wathaurung, enthralled the 50 participants.

Sharron Gilson described the event as “magical.” Heatheranne Bullen said it was an excellent evening; “Gordon is a special creation place. I loved hearing

about the traditional stories of the area.”

Emotional and physical well-being was the focus of the second event which involved tai chi and yoga at the reserve. Heuy Tran, a local martial arts coach, guided the 15 community members through the session. The calming movements were accompanied by early morning birdcall. In discussion with the community after the event, many were keen to continue with tai chi classes. They reflected on the peacefulness of the activity, and were keen to be more involved in Landcare.

Further community events are planned including stargazing, night photography, cultural walks, basket weaving and other family friendly activities.

MCLG are also currently running a Gardens for Wildlife program in the urban and peri-urban areas of Gordon. This program aims to also encourage health and well-being through enhancing habitat for native wildlife in home gardens, providing advice about native plants and weed control, and encouraging better connections within the community.

Jennifer Johnson is the MCLG Landcare Coordinator. For further information email moorabool.landcare@gmail.com



Uncle Barry James Gilson singing an Indigenous story at Paddock Creek Reserve in Gordon.

Around the State – News from the Regional

Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

The Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) hosted a Cultural Awareness Educational Workshop in late May. The event was the result of a partnership between MCLG, DELWP's Victorian Landcare Program, Corangamite CMA and the Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation.

Workshop participants heard the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners speak on history, connection to Country and Aboriginal cultural heritage. The Corangamite CMA presented on their Aboriginal water projects and cultural burning activities. There were also workshops on bush tucker, native plants and their uses, and opportunities through the Yarns on Farms Program.

The workshop helped break down many barriers and debunk myths while building shared knowledge and trust between the Landcare community and the Wadawurrung People. The collaborative approach used to organise the event was a great example of how partnerships can deliver important outcomes for the community and the environment.

For more information and to enquire about hosting a cultural awareness event email Jackson.Chatfield@delwp.vic.gov.au or call Jackson on 0419 504 451.

Corangamite

The team has welcomed Sarah Holland Clift as the new Regional Landcare and Volunteer Coordinator. The recently completed Corangamite Landcare Review is shaping Sarah's work plan in partnership with Landcare and the CMA.

The Corangamite Rural Women's Network achieved a major milestone in March when more than 120 women from across the region came together at a forum

to connect, share, learn and inspire. Discussion topics included Traditional Owner conversations, ethical farming, social change and influence, mental and physical health, and refugees in rural communities.

In April the Otway Food and Fibre Showcase shone the spotlight on the skilled, passionate and diverse growers of the Otways region.

A Corangamite Regional Regenerative Farming Conference will be held in September. National and regional practitioners will discuss key technical, economic and social practices in improving soil health, biodiversity and other environmental outcomes.

For more information visit www.ccma.vic.gov.au (What we do/Community Landcare) or contact Sarah Holland Clift on 0428 343 728.

East Gippsland

The East Gippsland Women in Agriculture Network was launched in July 2017 and has now held nine events attracting more than 200 participants across multiple agricultural industries. The network aims to connect women through leadership and mentor-training. Events have ranged from shared learning experiences, succession planning and guest speakers.

Landcare facilitators from across the region undertook conflict and negotiation training with Maryanne Martin from People Pathways in March. The Landcare facilitators completed an assessment of how they manage conflict and then learnt about different methods of negotiation. Landcare facilitators also practiced using the different methods in a range of situations.

Landcare groups have been busy battling drought conditions. A significant amount

of time has been spent watering seedlings to ensure their survival. Volunteers are to be commended for their commitment to watering while balancing their own personal challenges with the drought.

For more information visit www.egcma.com.au (What we do/Landcare) or contact Carolyn Cameron on 5150 3682.

Glenelg Hopkins

Welcome to the new Upper Glenelg Landcare Facilitator Mirinda Thorpe. Mirinda has already attended a number of regional shows and field days to meet the local Landcare community and get to know the issues.

Spring has been the traditional planting time for most of the south west. Changing weather patterns are seeing an increasing number of autumn plantings. It will be interesting to see the outcome of this change over the next few years.

The Southwest Environment Alliance hosted a training session conducted by The Atlas of Living Australia at Portland.

Attendees at the Landcare Victoria Inc. forum at Halls Gap were treated to a bus tour of projects in the Upper Hopkins area. The tour features included Tucker farm's predator proof enclosure and discussion of their sustainable farming methods, Peter and Christine Forster's success in rehabilitating a difficult site, and the work of the Jallukar Landcare Group.

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

Goulburn Broken

Community natural resource management is strong and active in the region. Networks have been busy working with the CMA on the delivery of National Landcare Program Phase Two projects. There are also lots of smaller projects underway via programs, such as the 2018/19 Victorian Landcare Grants.

The region's 2017/18 *Community Natural Resource Management Action Plan* is now up on the CMA website. It highlights the great work of our groups and their ability to perform despite reducing budgets.

Landcare staff joined North Central and North East CMA regions at the Northern Rivers Roundup for joint training and peer learning. The workshops covered strategic planning, how to access corporate funding and how to write press releases. Peer learning sessions demonstrated the pitfalls that some Landcare facilitators have encountered in the delivery of projects. Feedback has been positive and we are planning a 2020 event in the North East region.



More than 120 women attended the Corangamite Rural Women's Forum at Barwon Park Mansion, Winchelsea, in March.

Landcare Coordinators

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

Mallee

Mallee CMA is pleased to announce James Walker as the new Regional Landcare Coordinator. James works out of the CMA's Irymple office.

Landcare facilitators in the Mallee have been working collaboratively to increase their knowledge of computer mapping skills in recent months. This work follows a training workshop held earlier in the year, and increases the capacity of Landcare facilitators to communicate visually with the CMA and external partners on their projects.

For more information visit www.malleecma.vic.gov.au (Get involved/Landcare) or contact James Walker on 5051 4559.

North Central

Participants at the 2019 Northern Rivers Roundup event held in March enjoyed interactive, training-based workshops that focused on revitalising groups, building strong and effective partnerships, and better telling Landcare's story through the media.

The very dry conditions across the region have seen extension activities focused on managing farms in dry conditions and drought support services. Landcare action over the summer concentrated on strategic planning and creating action plans for the coming year, as groups waited for suitable conditions to kick off on ground activity and community events.

Grant writing workshops were held throughout the region in April and May. Nominations for the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards are being drafted. The CMA is preparing to host the region's first Intrepid Landcare Leadership Retreat over the weekend of August 9-11 in partnership with Connecting Country.

For more information visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au (Landcare) or contact Tess Grieves on 5440 1893.

North East

The impact of localised floods in December and the continuing dry season conditions affected the activities of many groups in the region.

Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups have completed their expression of interest for the three-year Victorian Government Biodiversity Response Planning project in their area and are now developing management plans and agreements with landholders.

This project will assist landholders to protect and enhance native vegetation.

Landcare facilitators from the region joined with others from Goulburn Broken and North Central regions for the Northern Rivers Roundup. As well as training sessions the participants benefited from additional peer learning sessions led by Landcare facilitators on partnerships with local government and Traditional Owners, reviving Landcare, and nest box projects.

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

Port Phillip and Western Port

Threatening fires and dry and hot weather challenged the region over summer. At least one Victorian Landcare Grant recipient was unable to access their project site due to fire damage, while other events and activities were put aside as blazes such as the Bunyip fire prompted emergency warnings.

Closed roads and advice to stay at home due to bushfires limited attendees at former Yarra Ranges Landcare Facilitator Kimberley Boswell's innovative training workshop for Landcare facilitators on starting and revitalising groups. Those that made it participated enthusiastically. Further Landcare facilitator training on cultural awareness was provided by the Wurundjeri in April.

The CMA was able to support 19 Landcarers to attend the Celebrating Women in Conservation Breakfast, hosted by Trust for Nature and Bush Heritage Australia, in February.

The CMA is partnering with Intrepid Landcare and Yarra Ranges Landcare Network to run an Intrepid Landcare Leadership Retreat from May 31-June 2 in the Yarra Ranges. The retreat is targeting 16 to 35 year olds wanting to do their part for the environment. Search Intrepid Landcare on Facebook to find out more.

The CMA signed a partnership agreement with Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network at its February board meeting, the third Landcare network to co-sign such a commitment with our CMA.

For more information visit ppwcma.vic.gov.au (Landcare and Sustainable Agriculture) or contact Barry Kennedy on 9971 6506.

West Gippsland

Landcare Networks in West Gippsland spent the summer months supporting their Landcare volunteers and landholders through very dry conditions. Landcarers have been working tirelessly to water tube stock that was planted last season in order to keep plants alive.

Yarram Yarram Landcare Network has secured \$50,000 funding from the Victorian Government's 2018 Community and Volunteer Action Grants for a project to restore seagrass meadows in Nooramunga Marine Reserve. This project will allow for the collection and planting of seagrass fruit and seeds in restoration areas within Corner Inlet.

South Gippsland Landcare Network co-hosted a Prom Country picnic event in Meenyan late last year. The event was a great success with approximately 200 people attending.

Bass Coast Landcare Network recently met with Melina Bath, member of the Victorian Legislative Council for Eastern Victoria, and South Gippsland Water representatives to look at a Powlett Project site. The site was planted with 15,000 plants in 2015 and has seen outstanding growth and transformation since then.

Maffra and Districts and Latrobe Catchment Landcare Networks have been busy rolling out Landcare volunteer training including GIS training, governance training and water quality monitoring.

For more information visit wgcm.vic.gov.au (Getting involved/Landcare) or contact Kathleen Brack on 5613 5966.

Wimmera

A special thank you to all who helped recognise and celebrate the rich Landcare stories of the Grampians Gariwerd and surrounding areas at the Landcare Victoria Inc. Grampians Landcare Forum held in late March at Halls Gap. The event was supported by Wimmera and Glenelg Hopkins CMAs and local Landcare facilitators. Many connections were made at the event that are sure to produce some great outcomes for Landcare.

Congratulations to the finalists in this year's Wimmera Regional Landcare Awards. The awards ceremony was held at Horsham Town Hall on 18 May 2019.

Preparations are underway for this year's program of Wimmera Landcare community plant outs. A new HeartLand Horsham plant out concept is being trialled this year in partnership with the Centre for Participation, aimed at carrying on the tradition of Yarrilinks in building bridges and pathways to rural life, and employment for urban-based new migrant families through Landcare activities.

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

In brief

What is the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas?

The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) is the foundation dataset of Victorian native species.

The VBA includes a dynamic list of all species found in Victoria and provides information on conservation status, distribution and monitoring data. Currently there are nearly eight million records of species distribution and abundance collated from many different data providers.

The VBA species occurrence information is the primary dataset that feeds into the biodiversity tools – such as modelled distribution – used in DELWP's everyday decision making, showing where wildlife is now and how it has changed over time.

You can use the atlas to search and map species and check for threatened species in your area. Sharing your observations in the VBA helps us to measure progress towards meeting Biodiversity 2037's targets. Adding your records to the VBA is a way of influencing a range of government investment, regulation and management decisions on biodiversity.



Long-nosed Potoroo, recorded in 2018 by Jemma Cripps (DELWP) as part of a forest biodiversity program.

A mobile, simplified version of the atlas, called VBA Go, is available for recording general observations.

For more details, videos and help guides go to www.environment.vic.gov.au and search for Victorian Biodiversity Atlas or email vba.help@delwp.vic.gov.au

Celebrate 30 years of Landcare nationally by sharing your story

In 2019, Landcare and Landcare Australia are celebrating a national 30-year anniversary. Landcare has played a leading role in changing Australia's approach to sustainable agricultural practices, environmental protection, land and water conservation, biodiversity and landscape restoration, while connecting communities.

In recognition of the incredible work that has been achieved during the past three decades, Landcare Australia is collecting stories that demonstrate the Landcare ethos. These stories will be used in publications, social media and public relations to showcase and share how Landcare has shaped Australia and why it is integral to our country's future.

If you have a story about a Landcare project or person that has made – and continues to make – a difference to our natural environment and local community, we'd love to hear it!

Submissions close 21 June 2019. Go to www.landcareaustralia.org.au and search for 30-years anniversary story to submit.

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.



Mailing list enquiries and to receive your copy via email alert

Contact Landcare Victoria Incorporated
Phone: 9207 5527 Fax: 9207 5500 Email: info@lvi.org.au

Read the magazine online

To access the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine online (as web pages or pdfs) go to www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/
Back issues of the magazine can be accessed online as pdfs.

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine, to be published in Spring 2019, will feature stories on the winners of the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards.

Our Summer 2020 issue will be a feature on Landcare and community engagement. We are interested in hearing about the different strategies that groups and networks have used to reach out to their communities. Our readers are keen to learn about the successes of different projects, as well as what hasn't worked, and the insights and reflections of your group or network along the way.

The magazine fills up very quickly so please get in touch well before the contribution deadline.

Contributions for the Summer 2020 issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 8 November 2019.

Carrie Tiffany, editor

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine

Email: editorviclandcare@gmail.com



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