

VICTORIAN

# LANDCARE

Winter 2013 Issue 58

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



SUSTAINABLE FARMING FEATURE

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Holistic farming in central Victoria

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Building the best nest boxes

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Soil knowledge drives productivity gains



Landcare  
Victoria

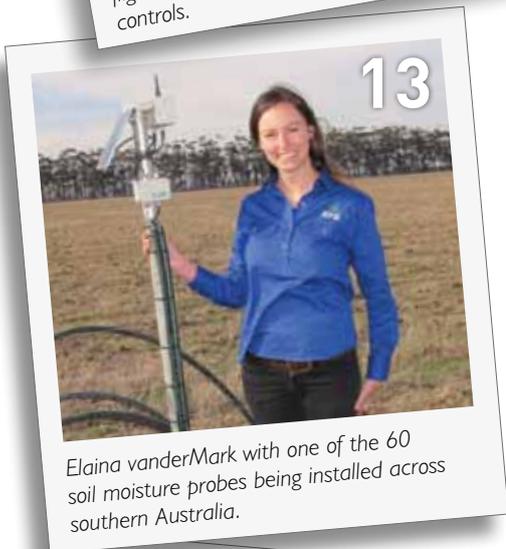


# Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

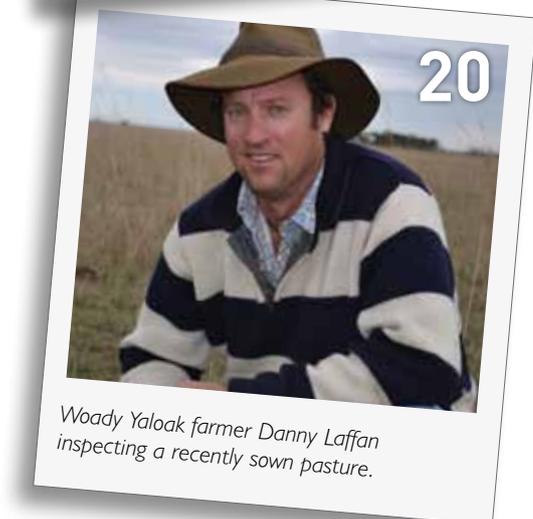
WINTER 2013 Issue 58



Corey Wood and flight instructor Janelle Wight at Warrambool Airport. This was Corey's first flight and on the return journey he took the controls.



Elaina vanderMark with one of the 60 soil moisture probes being installed across southern Australia.



Woody Yaloak farmer Danny Laffan inspecting a recently sown pasture.

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Winter landscape at Wonthaggi by Andrew Chapman.

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ISSN 1327 5496

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# From the Minister

Victoria is Australia's largest sustainable food and fibre exporting state. Our climate, high quality soils and clean water support our world-class agriculture industries and our outstanding producers. This issue looks at the Landcare farmers keeping us at the forefront of sustainable farming.

Reggie and Tania Davis share their mission to transform their dairy farm at Bostocks Creek, near Camperdown. Their five-year journey saw them replace conventional fertilisers with mainly home-made compost, control pest species, begin river restoration works, plant shelter belts and introduce a second pond effluent system. Reggie and Tania talk about the benefits to the environment, the farm, the livestock and their finances.

The Piper Biolink story demonstrates a plan for sustainability at a landscape scale. The South West Goulburn Landcare Network is developing the biolink at a crossroads site between northern, southern, eastern and western Victoria. The aim of the project is to establish a mosaic of bushland and farmland across the landscape. It will link the forests of Mount Disappointment and the Tallarook Ranges in the east with the Cobaw and Macedon Ranges to the west.

The case studies show us how Landcare is driving sustainability in Victoria's farming sector. Landcare groups continue to

support individual members to develop whole farm plans while also tackling sustainability across the wider landscape.

Sustainable farming goes hand in hand with sustainable communities. This issue also features stories on mentoring young people and getting sustainable agriculture into the classroom so we can educate and inspire the land managers of the future.

The Victorian Landcare Awards will be announced at a ceremony at Government House on 28 August 2013. Now in their 23rd year, the awards honour the invaluable work that is being done by the Landcare community, with the winners from the State and Territory Awards going forward as finalists to the prestigious National Landcare Awards in 2014.

My congratulations to all of the award entrants for their outstanding contribution to our environment. The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on the award winners.

The Hon. Ryan Smith M.P.  
Minister for Environment and  
Climate Change

## Introducing DEPI

The new Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) opened for business on 1 July 2013 bringing together all government environment, water and agricultural information.

DEPI is focused on boosting productivity in Victoria's world-class food and fibre sector, managing Victoria's natural resources, protecting the environment and responding to fire, flood and biosecurity emergencies.

The unified department will provide a better and more efficient management approach for public and private land and water for Victorians and streamline service delivery to regional areas.

**For more information about DEPI visit [www.depi.vic.gov.au](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au)**

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*As well as being of interest to the region's beef producers the project will provide valuable information for local dairy farmers and lifestyle farmers.*

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*Field day participants inspect a solar water pump on a dam at the Jarrahmond grazing trial site.*

# A visionary grazing trial at Jarrahmond

*By John Gallienne*

A farm trial at Jarrahmond, near Orbost, will provide far east Victoria Landcarers with a rare opportunity to gather data on the environmental, agronomic and economic impacts of different grazing management systems.

The trial started in August 2012 on the commercial beef property of Peter and Jeanette Honey. It will examine different grazing management regimes and identify which regimes best protect and enhance soil and pasture assets, improve productivity and maintain high ground cover. The financial viability for the different regimes will also be compared.

Field data is being collected by members of the local Sustainable Agriculture Group, providing them with a practical opportunity to learn about sampling and assessing project data.

Six trial paddocks have been created, allowing cow and calf grazing management regimes to be carried out on two adjacent blocks. This includes paddocks that are set stocked, rotationally grazed at moderate grazing pressure (long rotation) and rotationally grazed at higher grazing

pressure (shorter rotation). One block has been top-dressed according to soil test data and the other block is untreated.

Peter and Jeanette make all of the paddock grazing and stocking decisions. This requires almost daily monitoring of the stock groups, including assessing grazing intervals and pasture consumption.

According to Peter the ultimate data would have been the actual weight gain of the stock, but the property is not set up to yard and weigh groups of calves and cows.

“However, we've got real confidence in the pasture data we are collecting and its relationship to grazing pressure and pasture consumption,” Peter said.

Soil and pasture changes will also be assessed across the six paddocks. Extensive soil tests (at three different depths) and plant tissue tests have been taken so that measures of soil nutrient levels, including soil pH and soil carbon, can be monitored at set intervals over time. Pasture composition changes and feed quality testing are also underway. The trial will record what's happening both above and below ground under the different regimes for two years or more.



*Consultant agronomist John Gallienne takes a soil sample at the grazing trial site watched by landholder Jeanette Honey and Far East Victoria Landcare Co-ordinator Penny Gray.*

As well as being of interest to the region's beef producers the project will provide valuable information for local dairy farmers and lifestyle farmers.

The trial results will be distributed progressively by the Far East Victoria Landcare Group at field days, in Landcare newsletters and through the local newspaper. The next field day is planned for early September 2013.

**For more information contact Far East Victoria Landcare Co-ordinator Penny Gray on 5161 1222 or by email at [penny.gray@depi.vic.gov.au](mailto:penny.gray@depi.vic.gov.au) Penny's position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.**

# Partnerships bring improvements for Jindivick dairy farmers

By Bridget Sullivan

**Chris and Charmaine Bagot and their three children run a 350-head dairy property at Jindivick in south Gippsland. In the past seven years the Bagots have made many changes to the property.**

The journey began when they contacted the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network. A Landcare facilitator from the network visited the property and provided advice on the best source of funding for the projects they had in mind.

The Bagots' first project was to protect a stand of remnant trees by incorporating them into a shelterbelt. They have used aerial photos of their property to map out potential projects and the long-term plan

is to fence all of the waterways before developing internal shelterbelts. This will involve direct seeding one kilometre of shelterbelts each year. By being proactive and fencing all waterways they hope to prevent accidents with cows in waterways.

Over the past three years the main waterway that runs through the property has been protected with new stock-proof fencing, cleared of blackberry and hawthorn and revegetated with indigenous species.

The works were funded through the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management Program. Recently another waterway on the property was also approved for funding. Both waterways feed into the Tarago River, eventually reaching Western Port Bay.

Chris and Charmaine have different motivations for improving the farm. Chris says the works have improved management on the farm.

"It's much easier to run the farm and the stock. You can't drive a motorbike in a creek."

Charmaine has been motivated by wanting the farm to have a nicer ambience.

"It was important for me to put trees back on the property for environmental reasons. The property is much more calm and peaceful now and the children enjoy walking along and playing by the river," Charmaine said.

Chris and Charmaine have developed many positive relationships through their farm improvement projects. The Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Jindivick Landcare Group, National Australia Bank and Marist Sion College in Warragul have assisted the Bagots with funding and the planting of more than 10,000 native plants.

The couple joined the Jindivick Landcare Group before they moved onto the property. They had helped with six community plantings before doing their own.

The Bagots are also involved in the Targeted Land Stewardship Soil Health Improvements Project, Strzelecki Biolinks Project, and Linking Soil Carbon and Soil Acidification with Farm Management Practices Project.

**For further information contact Rachel Drew on 5941 8446 or by email at [rdrew\\_cec@dcsi.net.au](mailto:rdrew_cec@dcsi.net.au) Rachel's position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.**



Improving their waterways through fencing, weed control and revegetation has been a priority for Jindivick dairy farmers Chris and Charmaine Bagot.

# Sustainable farm management reclaims



Yaloak Estate joined first cross ewes ready for pregnancy testing. Dry ewes (around 4 per cent of the flock) are sold immediately to conserve pasture.

John Sheehan is a professional farm manager for an absentee land owner. He's been implementing sustainable farming practices on more than 6000 hectares of sheep and cropping country across several properties in the west of the state for the past 15 years.

One of the Rowsley Valley properties John manages, Yaloak Estate, has a long history of land management challenges. Relatively flat plains at the headwaters of the Parwan Creek give way sharply to steep escarpments and gullies. When John first took over the management of the property it was home to thousands of rabbits and covered with serrated tussock.

According to John, the property was hamstrung for many years by the need to spend large sums of money simply to comply with pest plant and animal control requirements.

"The solution came from a range of different practices. The high rainfall plains country was converted from grazing to raised-bed dryland cropping to reduce the risk of waterlogging. With the help of professional agronomists and the farmer self-help group, Southern Farming Systems, yields started to improve."

The cropping was carried out using the best available information – computerised yield mapping, minimum tillage, careful nutrient management, and controlled traffic.

"Yields were outstanding for a number of years but started to slip during the mid-2000s when late autumn breaks started to interfere with pre-sowing spraying and subsequent yields; this prompted research on deep-ripping and seeding the subsoil with poultry manure to again improve outputs."

## Pasture and paddocks renovated

The steep gullies on the property were ripped using excavators and dozers to destroy rabbit warrens and then sown down to deep-rooted perennial pastures.

The paddock layout has been totally revised according to land class, aspect and topography. This has allowed the hill pastures to be rotationally grazed using principles of cell-grazing and enabled laneways to be installed for easy movement of livestock.

John says he aims to build a wedge of grass ahead of the ewes for when they lamb in July. They are set-stocked at this time.

"Grass in the winter is scarce so the ewes are pregnancy tested 80 to 100 days after mating. Ewes with multiple embryos are drafted off to receive the best feed available. Late lambing ewes are also drafted for feeding according to their needs and dry ewes are culled. In this way the ewes get fed according to their needs, without wasting grass. It also means that supervision during lambing is focused, with 70 per cent of the ewes expected to lamb in the same fortnight."

## Thick pasture sward helps control serrated tussock

John has found that the best deterrent to serrated tussock is a thick pasture sward. Rotational grazing enables pastures to rest and remain vigorous.

"But I'm also quick to move stock off the property if feed becomes short as the cost of overgrazing is horrendous. Overgrazing means more problems with erosion, reinfestation of serrated tussock and poor stock performance."



John Sheehan takes a break from direct drilling of oats into a lucerne paddock. The tractor has auto-steer, full GIS/GPS capability and is pulling a variable rate seeder.

# Yaloak Estate

By Max Coster

The carrying capacity has improved eight-fold as a result of the pasture improvement work. The sheep flock is based on the Coopworth breed with a Dorset terminal sire. Store lambs are sent to an irrigation property for finishing.

More than 1000 hectares of the property has been planted to trees for forestry and biodiversity outcomes. The plantations provide shelter for ewes at lambing and reduce the stress caused by cold winds.

According to John having the support of the property owner has been vital.

"Farm managers must be able to identify the key drivers of sustainable productivity. Careful research and extensive monitoring is essential. It is important to be able to present a clear message to the owners of the business on how to best protect the environmental value of their asset and show how a sustainable income can be made."

John doesn't see his responsibilities as ending at the farm gate. He is president of the Rowsley Landcare Group, a board member of Southern Farming Systems and has hosted numerous field days and events at the property.

**Max Coster is the Landcare Facilitator for the Moorabool Landcare Network Inc. His position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative. For further information email [max\\_coster@live.com.au](mailto:max_coster@live.com.au)**



Extensive stream frontage works are underway at Yaloak Estate.



Corey Wood and flight instructor Janelle Wight at Warrnambool Airport. This was Corey's first flight and on the return journey he took the controls.

## Landcare mentoring helps Corey to fly

By Lisette Mill

In my work as a Landcare facilitator it is accepted knowledge that one landholder committed to Landcare principles can affect the actions of other landholders around them. Peer support and leadership underpins Landcare programs across Australia. But how can we spread the Landcare message more widely?

Over the past year I've been sharing my passion for Landcare with a student at Warrnambool College through the Standing Tall in Warrnambool (STiW) program. The experience has shown me that mentoring can be a valuable way of connecting with teenagers and getting them involved in Landcare. Mentoring has the potential to change lives; it's local and has multiple positive benefits for the community.

STiW co-ordinator Gary Parsons teamed me up with then year 7 student Corey Wood. Corey knew nothing about Landcare, but after several months of helping me with projects and field trips to a nearby reserve with the school chaplain, Jenny Greenberger, his curiosity was piqued. We were looking at aerial maps of some planned projects when Corey revealed his dream of becoming a pilot.

Within a few months Corey was accepted into the newly formed Warrnambool Airforce Cadets Program. To celebrate the first year of Corey

getting into cadets and working hard, Gary Parsons and I took him out to the local airport and he had his first training flight. The aerial maps Corey had been looking at from the ground suddenly took on a new meaning. It was a huge thrill for me to see a young person discover that their dream is actually attainable.

I'd like to encourage Landcarers to get involved in mentorship programs with young people. The results might not be immediate, but getting teenagers out into the environment and having some good times will produce positive memories and associations that may bring them back to Landcare in the future.

According to Corey the mentoring was a positive experience.

"Lisette and Gary helped me put myself together. Everything we did was fun. We went to Spring Flat Road and measured stuff and worked on it for a bit. We also went to the airport and they took me on a plane and I was flying over Warrnambool. It was a great experience."

**Lisette Mill works as a Landcare Network Facilitator covering Moyne Shire and Warrnambool City. Her position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative. For further information contact Lisette by email at [basalttobay@gmail.com](mailto:basalttobay@gmail.com)**

# Building the best nest boxes: a how-to guide

By Karen Brisbane



A nest box for ringtail possums. The box is high enough off the ground to protect it from cats and foxes.

**Nest boxes provide homes for native birds and mammals that are experiencing habitat loss due to the decline of mature trees with tree hollows and competition from introduced species. Most native mammals are nocturnal so their homes need good insulation and security from predators.**

Native bird nest sites need protection from introduced species of birds such as Indian mynas, sparrows and starlings.

The best advice for people when building nest boxes for a specific species is try to make them as close as possible to what they would normally use in the wild. The size of the entrance hole and height of the box is crucial. Research has shown that birds and mammals will only use nest boxes if the entrance hole is the right fit for them, and each species is different.

Some birds, including the shrike thrush, fly directly into the nest and a nest box will need to allow for this. Pardalotes prefer to go through a tunnel system with soil in the box.

## Building tips

- Build a box that will last at least 10 years
- Use screws and glue to construct the box
- Use thick timber or plywood (25 millimetres or thicker). Marine ply is great because it is waterproof and thick, but it is also comparatively expensive
- Paint your nest box with animal friendly paint suitable for the outdoors that blends in with the environment. Some animals chew and eat the timber around their entrance holes so avoid toxic paints
- Use a tin roof to help to protect the box and extend its life. Cockatoos and parrots can eat their nest boxes and start from the lid down



Native bird nest sites need protection from introduced species of birds such as Indian mynas, sparrows and starlings.



## A nestbox for rosellas

The flange for waterproofing. Pins can be removed for inspection.

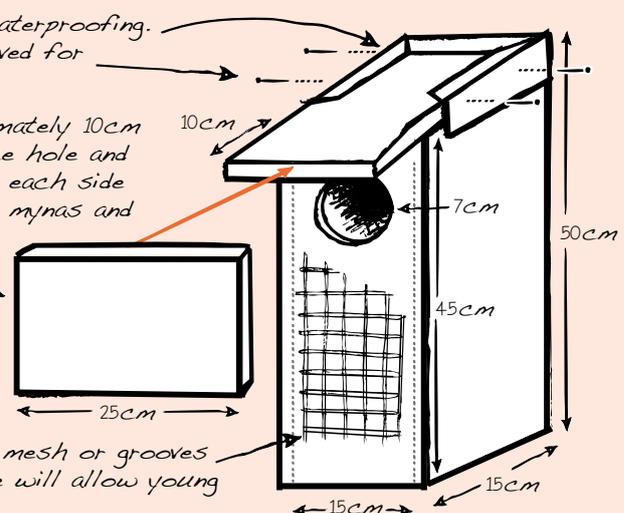
A baffle approximately 10cm from the entrance hole and extending 5cm on each side will help to keep mynas and starlings out of the box.

Place a layer of wood shavings in the bottom.

A ladder of wire mesh or grooves cut on the inside will allow young to climb out.

Drill three spaced drainage holes into the base.

NOT TO SCALE





Staff at Echuca Bunnings building sturdy, weatherproof nest boxes for galahs.

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*The entrance hole of the nest box should face away from prevailing winds and be well shaded in the hottest months.*

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- Try to build a box with no gaps at the joints. Gaps mean poor insulation for the animal. Non-toxic outdoor gap fillers can be used
- Several drainage holes 4-5 millimetres in diameter on the floor of the box will protect it from waterlogging
- Wire mesh should be placed in the box to prevent animals from becoming trapped inside. The wire (1 centimetre mesh) must sit flat against the inside of the box under the entrance hole. Bat boxes need grooves cut into all internal walls of the box as bat wings can easily tear on wire mesh

### **Siting nest boxes**

Choose a tree with a trunk diameter greater than 30 centimetres and 80 per cent canopy coverage. Placing two to three nest boxes in different trees and facing in different directions, but within a close radius (3 metres), can allow the animal to move nests depending on the season.

The entrance hole of the nest box should face away from prevailing winds and be well shaded in the hottest months. Boxes should be placed as high as possible in the tree, but they also need to be accessed safely for regular maintenance. Boxes placed too low are vulnerable to foxes and cats.

### **Attaching nest boxes to trees**

Placing the nest box in a tree fork will help with support and allow access for

the animal. The box will still need to be secured with screws into the tree limb, or with metal strapping.

Hose can also be used to connect the box to the tree. As hose can stretch, it allows the tree to grow and is less likely to cause damage.

Some groups secure boxes using platforms that are screwed into the tree or secured with strapping. Another option is to screw a piece of timber on the back of the nest box (making sure the lid can still be opened). The attached timber should be about 20 centimetres longer than the nest box to allow for easy access when attaching the timber to the tree.

When steel strapping is used to attach nest boxes, the strapping should not extend further than halfway around the tree trunk to allow for continued growth. Always test the nest boxes to ensure they are attached firmly enough to support the weight of the animal.

### **Maintaining nest boxes**

Nest boxes should be checked every 12 months. Try to avoid checking boxes during the breeding seasons to avoid unnecessary stress on young animals. Mapping the location of boxes using GPS will help with record keeping and research projects.

A maintenance check involves assessing the condition of the box and making repairs if necessary, recording if it is being used and sometimes removing pest animal nests from the box. Bees, sparrows, Indian

mynas and starlings are common users of nest boxes.

A baffle placed about 10 centimetres from the outside of the hole of the box and attached to the lid (refer to diagram) can help to keep Indian mynas and starlings out.

Bees like smooth surfaces for their hives. Placing carpet on the inside roof of the box reduces the chances of bees taking over the nest box. If bees need to be removed from a box contacting an experienced beekeeper to help with removal is the best option.

Many of Victoria's Landcare and community groups have experience in building and maintaining nest boxes. Asking around and getting some good local advice is a great place to start.

*Karen Brisbane is Victoria's Landcare Corporate Partnership Facilitator. Karen is based at Goulburn Broken CMA and can be contacted by email at [karenb@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:karenb@gbcma.vic.gov.au)*

*Further information on building nest boxes can be found at:*

[www.latrobe.edu.au/wildlife/nursery/nestboxes](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/wildlife/nursery/nestboxes)

[www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/about\\_ipswich/environment/wildlife/habitat\\_nest\\_boxes/](http://www.ipswich.qld.gov.au/about_ipswich/environment/wildlife/habitat_nest_boxes/)



One section of the planting crew from Glenaroua Land Management Group and Manningham Rotary Club at their annual planting day.

# The Piper Biolink – a biodiversity crossroads

Due north from Melbourne is an area of growing townships and open farmland sitting between the forests of the eastern and western ranges of Victoria. This distinct ecological space begins where the basalt hills and plains spill over the Great Divide at Kilmore Gap. From here, the tributaries of Sunday Creek and Sugarloaf Creek wind northward through hilly farmlands to the Goulburn River. At the centre of this catchment is Mount Piper, south of Broadford.

The South West Goulburn Landcare Network is developing the Piper Biolink at this crossroads between northern, southern, eastern and western Victoria. The biolink zone is an elevated area with moisture coming from south and north which makes it a potential climate change refuge.

The Goulburn Broken CMA's *Biodiversity Strategy* identifies the Piper Biolink zone as a very high priority for restoration and improved connectivity. The biolink aims to establish a mosaic of bushland and farmland across the landscape. It will link the forests of Mount Disappointment and the Tallarook Ranges in the east with the Cobaw and Macedon Ranges to the west.

## From salinity to biodiversity

Bushland protection and revegetation began in the area in response to salinity.

The Sunday Creek and Sugarloaf Creek catchments carry salt into the Goulburn Murray system. The focus has now shifted to biodiversity.

In 1998 the Glenaroua Land Management Group and Northcote Rotary Club (and now the Manningham Rotary Club) began a program to grow and plant 5000 trees and shrubs each year in the Broadford and Glenaroua areas of the biolink zone. Last year, 6500 plants were established on two adjoining properties north of Mount Piper and the seedlings will be ready again for planting this winter.

The Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group also began their Forest Link Project in the late 1990s, linking the Tooborac (box ironbark) Forests with the Cobaw Ranges across the heavily cleared granite country west of Pyalong. The 40-metre wide corridor is now complete, but it is continually being enhanced with larger nodes of revegetation and extensions linking to patches of bushland.

The Piper Biolink was first mooted in 2008, but the idea was set aside after the February 2009 bushfires.

Funding support through DPI and DSE (now DEPI), Goulburn Broken CMA and

Caring for our Country has also helped landholders from outside the fire area to work with government agencies to protect and enhance biodiversity on public land within the Piper Biolink zone. Sites include forests, crown frontages, local reserves and road reserves.

## Gathering momentum

The Piper Biolink has now been taken up by Landcare groups and networks, CMAs, Mitchell Shire Council and DEPI. Funding is being targeted towards key sites for protection and enhancement and several separate projects are already underway.

The Mount Piper to Monument Hill Habitat Highway was funded through the Goulburn Broken CMA in 2012. Major plantings in 2007 and 2008 provided a wide link along the joint boundary of two properties from the Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve to Dry Creek in Broadford.

Landholders upstream from Broadford have now been approached and most of the creek line will be protected over the next two years. Natural regeneration and some plantings will enhance the habitat highway, including a block of 29 hectares on two adjoining properties.



The view from Mount Piper to Dry Creek in Broadford showing the completed biolink.



*My grandfather cleared the land and got a lot from it, but we now have a lot of problems. I want to put a bit back into the place.*



## for Central Victoria

By Peter Mitchell,  
Sonia Sharkey and Elyse Kelly

Gorse and blackberries are an ongoing issue along Dry Creek. Funding provided to Sunday Creek/Sugarloaf Catchment Inc. from the Goulburn Broken CMA through the Victorian Landcare Program is helping landholders treat gorse on private land. DEPI is controlling weeds on crown frontages.

Welcome news of another part of the biolink was received this year. A key 700-hectare bushland property linking the forested hills to the farmlands along the Black Range at High Camp was purchased by Trust for Nature. The property will be covenanted and resold in the next couple of years.

This purchase has provided impetus for more links westward across Mount William to the Cobaw Ranges, working with the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network. The Newham and District Landcare Group, a member group of the network, is well underway with its Cobaw Biolink between the Cobaw Ranges, Hanging Rock and the Macedon Ranges.

### Links to the Melbourne Ark

The Piper Biolink fits into an even wider network of biolinks through central Victoria. The Central Victorian Biolinks is

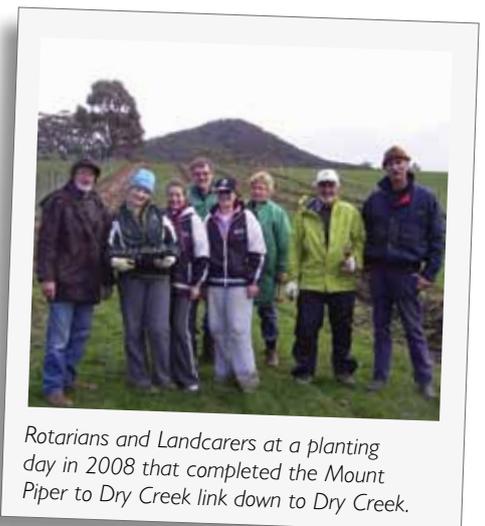
a project set up by Landcare networks to promote and enable large-scale landscape connectivity. A regional plan is currently being developed – the Melbourne Ark Project – that will link the Strathbogie Ranges and Eastern Ranges in a wide arc westwards, through the Piper Biolink zone, over Mount William and along the Great Dividing Range, to the Brisbane Ranges.

The Melbourne Ark Project will link up the wetter forests of central Victoria to provide a resilient landscape for biodiversity as global warming changes the distributions of plants and animals.

These are large-scale and long-term projects. They will gather momentum as Landcare and other community groups work together to promote biolinks in their local communities. The biodiversity benefits from these projects are broad, but they are also local, with landholders reaping the rewards of healthier ecosystems across the farming landscape.

Rod Caplehorn from Broadford worked with his neighbour to fence either side of their common boundary to create part of the Piper Biolink.

“My grandfather cleared the land and got a lot from it, but we now have a lot of



Rotarians and Landcarers at a planting day in 2008 that completed the Mount Piper to Dry Creek link down to Dry Creek.

problems. I want to put a bit back into the place. All the linking and other revegetation and erosion works that we have done will benefit me and future generations,” Rod said.

**Peter Mitchell is a Landcare Project Officer in Broadford, Elyse Kelly is secretary of the South West Goulburn Landcare Network and Sonia Sharkey is a Landcare Facilitator based at Mitchell Shire. Sonia’s position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.**

For more information, contact Sonia Sharkey on 5734 6312 or by email at [swg\\_landcare@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:swg_landcare@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au)

For more on the Central Victorian Biolinks go to [www.centralvicbiolinks.org.au](http://www.centralvicbiolinks.org.au)

# Carbon farming field trip inspires Landcarers in the west

By Katy Marriott, Bob Wallace and Bindy Lees

In early April 2013 more than 60 Landcarers visited farms near Hamilton and Ararat to see carbon farming in action.

The Wimmera Regional Landcare Facilitator team helped host the two-day trip, which was largely funded by the Australian Government as part of its Regional Landcare Facilitator Initiative.

On day one of the tour the participants split into two groups. One group visited Mark Wootton and Eve Kantor's property, Jigsaw Farms, north of Hamilton. The aim of Jigsaw Farms is to be a best-practice carbon-neutral business incorporating revegetation, agroforestry, prime lambs, beef cattle and several wetlands.

The wetlands were a highlight of the tour. Participants saw an abundance of birds on wetlands linked through the property, which provide biodiversity as well as water for stock. Mark and Eve spoke enthusiastically on the many benefits of incorporating sustainable farming techniques into their farming system.

The second group visited Graeme Hand's property, Inverary, at Branxholme. Inverary demonstrates effective techniques for achieving sustainable, productive pastures.

Graeme shared his knowledge of the potential for carefully planned grazing to take bare and weedy ground back to fully functioning native and introduced grassland. Graeme believes that the accumulation of pasture litter can provide many benefits to pasture.

On day two all of the participants visited Peter and Christine Forster's property, Bullock Hills, near Ararat. The property features biodiversity plantings that Peter and Christine have done through the Australian Government Carbon Farming Initiative. The plantings build on natural revegetation from remnant red gums that need minimal establishment costs. A second site has been direct seeded with a range of indigenous species.

Peter shared his knowledge of the benefits of getting involved in carbon farming. He was able to demonstrate how less productive land can be incorporated in a farm management system to provide sustainable benefits, including supplementary income.

The tour was a valuable opportunity to learn from landholders who had some inspiring stories to tell. Informal on-farm workshops explored topics including emissions reductions, biodiverse plantings and livestock management.



Field trip participants visit a best-practice carbon-neutral business at Jigsaw Farms, north of Hamilton.

Sharing information and promoting local discussion on sustainable farming techniques is a priority for the Wimmera Regional Landcare Facilitator team. The team works closely with local Landcare facilitators and the broader Wimmera Landcare team to support groups and individual landholders across a large geographic area.

**For further information contact Joel Boyd at the Wimmera CMA on 5382 1544 or by email at [BoydJ@wcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:BoydJ@wcma.vic.gov.au)**



*Informal on-farm workshops explored topics including emissions reductions, biodiverse plantings and livestock management.*



Peter Forster shares his experience of carbon farming on his property, Bullock Hills, near Ararat.



Elaina vanderMark with one of the 60 soil moisture probes being installed across southern Australia.



*Knowing the temperature and moisture content of the soil is critical to making good decisions about nitrogen application.*



# Soil moisture probes inform fertiliser decisions for Corangamite Landcarers

By Cam Nicholson

**A project aimed at reducing the losses of nitrous oxide from fertiliser applied to crops in late winter and early spring is being conducted by Southern Farming Systems and six Landcare networks in the Corangamite region.**

Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that has 310 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide.

According to Elaina vanderMark from Southern Farming Systems the project will be a win for farm productivity and a win for the environment.

"Knowing the temperature and moisture content of the soil is critical to making good decisions about nitrogen application. Nitrogen application in August and September is essential to optimise crop yields, but a lot of this fertiliser can be lost to the atmosphere under certain conditions. Not only does this add to global warming but it's a waste of money," Elaina said.

Funded through the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future program, the project involves demonstrating production efficiencies that can be achieved through decisions about the type of nitrogen fertiliser used and the timing of these applications.

Recent research from Rob Harris from DEPI shows that a combination of waterlogged soils and rising soil temperatures above critical levels will lead to significant losses of nitrous oxide if urea fertiliser is used.

Sixty soil moisture probes across the cropping areas of south west Victoria, Gippsland, Tasmania and South Australia will be installed for the project. The probes are buried in the soil and measure temperature and soil moisture every 10 centimetres to a depth of one metre. Measurements are automatically recorded every 15 minutes.

A website is being developed where farmers and advisors can access real time information from all the probes in the network. Seven demonstration sites have been established to build farmers' confidence that the information obtained from the probes is useful in informing their nitrogen fertiliser decisions.

The sites are also providing a way to test other forms of nitrogen fertiliser that may be less prone to loss.

According to Elaina the partnership between Southern Farming Systems and the Landcare networks is a critical part of the project.

"Each network receives funding to host events to discuss the trial results, run workshops on interpreting the moisture probe data and visit local research sites. Funds are also provided to promote the findings through existing newsletters and websites. Getting this research out to the community is really important and Landcare is so strong in the region it's the best way to make that happen."

**For more information contact Elaina vanderMark at Southern Farming Systems by email at [evandermark@sfs.org.au](mailto:evandermark@sfs.org.au)**

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*Yapunyah for us is all about balance – keeping our farming systems in balance with nature and improving the biological health of the soils.*

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*Darby and Bryce McClaren help to look after the chickens and happily share their knowledge of how food is grown with customers at farmers markets.*



*From left, Regenerative Farming Educator Darren Doherty, Yapunyah's Amanda McClaren with son Darby, Daniel Salatin from Polyface Farm and Ian McClaren with son Bryce.*

## Holistic farming – the

**Yapunyah is a 168-hectare property at Graytown, central Victoria that we bought eight years ago. It's a chicken, pig and beef business run as a family farm with my husband Ian and our two young sons Bryce and Darby.**

It's surrounded by the Heathcote-Graytown National Park and reminded me of the property I grew up on below the Kinglake Ranges.

We chose the name Yapunyah after a beautiful bronze-trunked eucalypt we saw on a friend's property in NSW. Yapunyah for us is all about balance – keeping our farming systems in balance with nature and improving the biological health of the soils.

Chickens are the main part of the business and are sold at farmers markets, to restaurants, small providores and select butchers.

### **Farm animals improve soil health, fertility and production**

The farm is managed according to the principles of prominent US farmer Joel Salatin. Salatin's Polyface Farm has featured in books and films as a holistic, natural farm that uses the nature and instincts of the animals to help improve soil health, fertility and production. The Polyface beef herd is

cell-grazed and then followed by egg-laying chickens in mobile tractors. Free-range pigs are used to plough the ground that needs aeration. Large cages moved daily across the paddocks grow broiler chickens and fertilise the pastures.

Our farm operates in much the same way. We cell-graze our cattle in wagon-wheel systems with two-hectare cells around a central water point. In the early years we fenced off both sides of the creek (two kilometres of fencing) to protect it from the cattle.

A small herd of Berkshire pigs is used to turn over the crusted soils that often form in paddocks surrounding box ironbark forests. After the pigs have moved through, the soils are aerated and have much better water holding capacity.

The broiler chickens are grown in a brooder shed until they are covered in feathers and big enough to cope outside.



Ian McClaren in a stand of native grasses that are thriving on the creek flats.

# Yapunyah story

By Amanda McClaren

## Grazing with chickens improves soil health

Ian and I believe soil health is integral to the production of good food. Shortly after buying Yapunyah in 2005 we tested the soils. The results led us to spread lime and trace elements at 1.75 tonnes per hectare across most of the 168 hectares.

We've also tried compost teas and other natural inputs, but it was the response we got from grazing and then moving our few egg-laying chickens around the orchard that started us on the journey with the broiler chickens.

As Ian explains, "The orchard just seemed to take off in terms of fertility after the chickens had been moved through. There was one phalaris plant that was nearly as tall as me. Even today, some 12 to 18 months after the laying chickens have been moved from the orchard, the soil is still spongy underfoot and has vastly improved water holding capacity."

We decided to take the chickens out into the paddocks and that's when our poultry business was born.

## The challenges of working with nature

Running a farm surrounded by national park has its challenges. There are hundreds

of kangaroos that graze on the pastures and wedge-tailed eagles, brown falcons and whistling kites ready to pick off our chickens and turkeys.

Electric fencing using low offset wires has helped to discourage the female kangaroos from coming under the fences into the paddocks. It's not 100 per cent effective, but it has greatly reduced the grazing pressure.

We love having the birds of prey around and Ian is a keen twitcher – he's identified 80 different bird species on the property – but our poultry need to be behind wire at all times to protect them.

We don't run our farm in isolation and love being involved in local environmental projects. We're involved in the Graytown-Costerfield Landcare Group and are supporters of the Whroo Goldfields Conservation Management Network.

Yapunyah is registered with Land for Wildlife and we have been happy to share our experiences with others. In 2011 we had a visit from Joel Salatin and in February this year we worked with Darren Doherty to hold a field day at Yapunyah with Joel's son and Polyface farm manager Daniel Salatin. Farmers from as far away as South Australia and Western

Australia came to see our operation and share their experiences.

For further information contact Amanda McClaren by email at [amanda\\_mcclaren@hotmail.com](mailto:amanda_mcclaren@hotmail.com)

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*Running a farm surrounded by national park has its challenges. There are hundreds of kangaroos that graze on the pastures and wedge-tailed eagles, brown falcons and whistling kites ready to pick off our chickens and turkeys.*

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# Soil knowledge the key to gains for south west dairy

**Environmental improvements have led to productivity gains and cost Tania Davis' farm at Bostocks Creek near Camperdown. Reggie and the 263-hectare farm. The dairy operation is supplemented by out**



Reggie Davis believes healthier soils have led to healthier grass which in turn means healthier cows and healthier milk on his Bostocks Creek dairy farm.

During the past five years, Reggie and Tania have replaced conventional fertilisers with mostly home-made compost, removed pest species, completed river restoration works, planted shelter belts and introduced a second pond effluent system.

A course on soil biology in New Zealand prompted Reggie to identify problems with the farm and make some changes. Reggie, a fourth generation dairy farmer, returned from the course with a plan to work intensively on the farm's soil biology, reducing the emphasis on nitrogen-based fertilisers and adopting a more biological approach.

"Learning about soil is really valuable. Compost has worked well for us but it's not the total answer. You need to research it if you're serious about it," Reggie said.

In the past five years the farm has reduced its nitrogen input from 300 to 50 units. Eighty per cent of the farm's compost system is now sourced from the property. Solid waste is used in compost and liquid waste in an irrigation system. The changes have paid off with increased grass growth, fewer pests and weeds, better root depth, a strong return of clover and generally healthier soils.

According to Reggie healthier soils have led to healthier grass, which in turn makes healthier cows and healthier milk.

"The clover is back and we've had an 80 per cent reduction in chemical use. We want to put out a good product and make it sustainable. The changes have been critical. If it hadn't worked out we would have quit," Reggie said.



*Learning about soil is really valuable. Compost has worked well for us but it's not the total answer. You need to research it if you're serious about it.*



Reggie Davis in front of a new shelterbelt that will improve shade and shelter on his farm.

# productivity farm

By Rick Bayne

savings on Reggie and Tania milk 630 cows on paddocks for calves and dry stock.

The Heytesbury District Landcare Network has also played a part in making improvements on the farm. The network has supported Reggie and Tania in removing willows, revegetation and river health works.

Several shelter belts have been planted on the farm and Reggie and Tania have more planned for the future.

"There are big benefits over summer for shade, and in winter for shelter," Reggie said.

Reggie and Tania Davis won the Glenelg Hopkins/Corangamite CMA Natural Resource and Sustainability Manager of the Year at the 2013 Great South West Dairy Awards. Their property will be showcased at the 2013 South West Soils Conference in September.



## Soils conference targets agricultural innovation

The second South West Soils Conference will be held at Warrnambool on 4–5 September 2013. The conference is aimed at farmers and advisors to support the adoption of management practices that improve soil condition and its productive capacity.

The conference has been organised by a consortium of organisations including Heytesbury District Landcare Network (HDLN), Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Corangamite CMA, Dairy Australia, DEPI and Camperdown Compost Company.

The conference will be opened by the Federal Government's Soil Advocate, Soils for Life Chairman, and former Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery. The speakers include grazier David Marsh, Cam Nicholson from Nicon Rural Services, DEPI productive soils specialist Declan McDonald and Dr Graham Lancaster from Southern Cross University.

The program features sessions on innovative practices for improved soil health, fertility management, nitrogen budgets and soil testing. Site visits to Reggie and Tania Davis' dairy farm and Brian and Sandra Wilson's mixed cropping operation are also planned.

According to HDLN Landcare Facilitator Geoff Rollinson the response to the inaugural conference held in 2012 was overwhelmingly positive.

"More than 92 per cent of attendees said they understood the key topics

and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about soil science and management. The whole conference is designed to provide useful and practical information for landholders."

With the theme of agricultural innovation, the conference recognises the growing importance placed on soil health within Landcare networks and the collaborative approach being taken by agencies to address soil management issues.

Geoff believes that soils underpin the prosperity and resilience of farming systems.

"Anyone who has farmed appreciates that we manage the soil not only for today but so it remains healthy and productive into the future. Farmers and land managers are custodians of a very precious resource. Increasing knowledge about soil management equips landowners with the ability to successfully manage our precious resource."

**For further information contact HDLN on 5598 3755 or visit the website at [www.swsc.com.au](http://www.swsc.com.au)**



Soil biologist Dr Mary Cole sharing her knowledge at the 2012 South West Soils Conference.

# Challenge and change underpin sustainable farming in the Mallee

By Kevin Chaplin

During its relatively short history of farming since European settlement, the Mallee has faced numerous obstacles – climatic, environmental, economic and social.



More than 130 farmers attended this no till field day held at Murrayville in 2004.

Long periods of drought have seen the landscape looking like the surface of the moon, while flooding events that cause short-term heartache can transform the country into an oasis of native wildflowers and grasses flowering in an explosive palette of colour.

To live and farm in these conditions requires resilience and resourcefulness and it's on these foundations that Landcare has been built in the Mallee.

The Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group, located at the very top north-west corner of Victoria, is the oldest group in the region. The group was formed in 1989 after local land managers recognised the importance of working together to manage the limited natural resources within the region rather than working in isolation.

Other Mallee Landcare groups soon followed and there is now an extensive network of groups and networks focusing

on sustainable farming, the protection of flora and fauna and the wellbeing of local communities.

## Soil loss drives need for change

Tackling soil erosion and nutrient loss has been a key driver for Mallee Landcare. The days of the blinding Mallee dust storms are in the past. Farmers have used Landcare to research, implement and disseminate new farming techniques.

The traditional approach to growing a cereal crop in the Mallee was an 18-month process. It started with the farmer preparing the seed bed by busting up the paddock using a full tillage scarifier or disk plough. Busting up served to remove all vegetation and to allow easy penetration of moisture when it rained.

Over the following 8 – 10 months the paddock would be worked again on multiple occasions to prevent any weed establishment. During this time the

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The days of the blinding Mallee dust storms are in the past.

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No till sowing in the Mallee.



A dust storm rolls over Griffith in 2002. The soil originated in the Mallee and blew as far as Sydney.

paddocks were in bare fallow and at risk of soil erosion and precious nutrient loss. The crop would be sown on the season's break or opening rains which traditionally occurred in late April. Harvest took place in October to December of the same year.

This method of cereal grain production is steeped in European tradition, but was unsuited to the Mallee environment. It was economically and ecologically unsustainable. Local farmers started looking for alternative practices. West Australian wheat belt farmers were tackling similar soil erosion problems (as well as increasing salinity) using minimum tillage farming methods.

#### **Minimum tillage – Mallee style**

The climates of the Mallee and the WA wheat belt are similar, but there are also many differences. From the early 2000s Mallee farmers worked in their Landcare groups through an extensive period of trial and error to refine the minimum tillage techniques for local conditions.

There were many late night Landcare meetings with hours of robust discussion on the finer points of row spacing, press wheels, seed and fertiliser placement, and tow-behind versus tow-between seeding systems.

Landcare groups acted as the conduit between individual farmers and leading agricultural experts and agronomists.

The groups ran paddock demonstrations, workshops and field days to reassure the wider farming community that this new way of farming was both achievable and profitable.

Minimum tillage is now a common practice across the Mallee. Farmers are currently working on refining minimum tillage techniques and using GPS precision farming technology to achieve sustainable agriculture in the region.

#### **Climate change – the new challenge**

In the past ten years the Mallee has experienced a period of low rainfall that has been attributed to ongoing climate change. Statistics from 1998 – 2007 show the average annual temperatures in the region were 0.4°C warmer than the 30-year (1961 – 1990) average. Average maximum temperatures increased nearly twice as much (0.7°C), while there was no overall change in the average daily minimum. (See Climate Change in the Mallee at [www.climatechange.vic.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au))

This trend towards hotter, dryer conditions produces a new set of challenges for farmers in the Mallee. The future will require farmers to maintain the productivity of the natural resource base while improving their capacity to cope with adversity, all the while maintaining or enhancing the natural environment.

The challenge continues for Mallee farmers to find new ways of working with, rather than against, the environment.

*Kevin Chaplin is the Mallee Regional Landcare Co-ordinator.*

*For further information contact Kevin on 5051 4344 or by email at [kevin.chaplin@depi.vic.gov.au](mailto:kevin.chaplin@depi.vic.gov.au)*



*The groups ran paddock demonstrations, workshops and field days to reassure the wider farming community that this new way of farming was both achievable and profitable.*



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*The most dramatic outcomes for the 106 farmers who contributed their results were improvements in soil phosphorus and a reduction in soil acidity.*

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Woody Yaloak farmer Danny Laffan inspecting a recently sown pasture.

# Soil tests reveal positive impact

The power of Landcare to change farming practices has been demonstrated in the results of a recent study into soil conditions in the Woody Yaloak catchment.

More than 1100 soil tests dating back to 1993 were collected and examined to determine changes in soil fertility, acidity, soil structure and organic carbon. The study was made possible through a Caring for our Country grant.

The most dramatic outcomes for the 106 farmers who contributed their results were improvements in soil phosphorus and a reduction in soil acidity. Pastures that were only capable of growing at 83 per cent of their potential because of limited phosphorus in 1993 were realising a potential production of 98 per cent by 2012.

Danny Laffan, Chairman of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group, believes the change came about by investing in skills through information sessions and farm walks, combined with targeted incentives.

## **Improved pastures flow from healthier soils**

“Sowing of deep-rooted perennial pastures was a key objective for the Woody Yaloak Project in 1993 and to do this successfully

we also needed to improve our soils,” Danny said.

Recent surveys have shown almost one-third of the land in the 120,000-hectare catchment has been sown to perennial species in the past two decades.

According to Danny the improvement in pastures, which is partly due to better soil conditions, means they remain productive, persist for longer and provide better groundcover.

“This was put to the test in the 2006 drought, where the paddocks didn’t blow like they did in the past,” Danny said.

The study also showed startling changes in soil pH. Testing showed soils in the catchment were already highly acidic and were continuing to acidify from 1993 to 1999. The decline was faster on lighter textured soils than heavy textured soils and by 1999 the average soil pH was at a value considered to affect pasture and crop growth.

## **Rapid lime uptake improves soil acidity**

Lime was not commonly used during this period as most farmers believed the lime had to be cultivated into the soil to be effective and they were reluctant to plough up good perennial pasture to apply lime.

In 1999 the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group joined with the Sustainable Grazing Systems Program to investigate soil response to surface applied lime. Eight farmer trials were established around Werneth which showed surface applied lime could greatly improve soil pH.

The response from the local farmers was swift and the extensive lime application brought a rapid decrease in soil acidity.

Fifty-eight per cent of all soil tested in the Woody Yaloak catchment has been limed since 1999 at an estimated cost of \$5.2 million.

The lime trials around Werneth were re-sampled in 2011 to work out how long the lime applied in 1999 had lasted and if there were any differences in lime sources from several local suppliers. The results suggested the lime was effective for at least a decade. The re-testing also showed the non-limed areas continued to acidify, demonstrating that farmers need to remain vigilant.

Danny believes farmers need to consider liming the same way they treat fertiliser.

“Liming has got to be built into our annual program and in some cases, where soil fertility is now high, we would be better spending money on lime.”



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*I believe that if we can get the soil pH right and grow strong pastures and crops through using the right nutrients and good management, then the soil biology will look after itself,*

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*Sound fertiliser use has lifted the productivity of farms and also improved soil conditions in the Woody Yaloak catchment.*

# of Landcare

*By Cam Nicholson*

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group is currently examining the response to lighter rates of lime being applied more often than the more traditional once-in-10-years application.

### **Fertilisers investigated**

The group has also examined alternative nutrient sources and biological products on crops and pastures. Results have been mixed, with very positive responses to pig and poultry manure and one biological product.

According to Danny the research is showing that soils farmed with common inorganic fertiliser and with herbicides applied were not as unhealthy as anticipated.

“Every farmer I know wants healthy soil, but I think we are being led to believe all our traditional practices are bad for the soil. Our results show this is not the case. The sites of lowest activity are native grasslands that have never been farmed and some of the healthiest soils have received large applications of traditional fertiliser.

“I believe that if we can get the soil pH right and grow strong pastures and crops through using the right nutrients and good management, then the soil biology will look after itself,” Danny said.

**For more information contact Cam Nicholson on 0417 311 098. Copies of the studies are available at [www.woodyyaloak.com.au](http://www.woodyyaloak.com.au)**



*The Woody Yaloak studies demonstrate that regular liming is essential to maintain good soil health.*

# Around the State – News from the

## Port Phillip and Westernport

The CMA board has signed off on the new Landcare Support Plan. The plan outlines how the CMA intends to provide Landcare support into the future.

The recent round of Catchment Action Round Tables brought together representatives of Landcare groups and networks, as well as local agency staff, to learn about the public draft version of the new Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy.

Local Landcare co-ordinators and facilitators have participated in training in the delivery of the Environmental Best Management Practice program and have further developed their peer learning skills with a focus on support networks.

**For further information contact**  
Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

## Glenelg Hopkins

The CMA has released a *History of Landcare* for the region. The booklet gives a brief outline of the formative years of the local Landcare movement. A number of long-serving community members recount some of their experiences over the past 25 years. Copies are available from the CMA.

Groups with 2012/2013 Victorian Landcare Grants projects are preparing for the winter – spring planting season. Rainfall has varied around the catchment but most areas have received enough rain to be confident to plant.

The State Government funded facilitators have attended two training workshops. The facilitators were joined by a number of community members and other agency staff to learn about action planning and facilitation skills.

**For further information contact**  
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

## East Gippsland

More than 90 Landcare volunteers from across the region joined to celebrate their achievements at the biennial Regional Landcare Awards held at Lakes Entrance in May.

The Community Group awards were won by Dargo Landcare, Lower Tambo Landcare, Tambo Bluff Landcare Coastcare and Snowy West Landcare.

The Individual Landcare award winners were Allen and Helen Sheridan, Paul and Trish Borondy and Cindy Robinson. The



Wilma Seymour, Ken and Kym Skews and Ian Seymour had their innovative efforts in sustainable agriculture recognised at the East Gippsland Regional Landcare Awards.

Innovation In Sustainable Agriculture award winners were Ian and Wilma Seymour, Ken and Kym Skews and Peter and Jeanette Honey.

Andrea Savage won the Junior Landcare Leader award for raising awareness, knowledge and understanding of Landcare with high school students.

**For further information contact Amanda Bartkowski on 5150 3851.**

## Wimmera

The Wimmera has experienced some very welcome rain. This has been a boon for local farmers and for this winter's community plant out season.

2013 is the 15th anniversary of the Yarrilinks plant out weekend and a big celebration is planned for 3 – 4 August in Warracknabeal. This annual event has a unique role in welcoming Melbourne-based refugee families to rural Australia and the Landcare movement. Tim Inkster, Yarrilinks local Landcare Facilitator, has been working hard supporting landholders and other volunteers in his region.

Local Landcare and environment groups will be crucial to the development of an effective Wimmera Waterway Strategy to guide investment over the next six years.

**For further information contact**  
Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

## Corangamite

The region's Landcarers were celebrated at the 2013 Corangamite Landcare Awards. The awards recognised the efforts of nine winners and two honour roll

inductees at Tarndwarncourt Homestead, Warncoort, in May.

Former Governor-General and Prime Minister's Advocate for Soil Health, Major General Michael Jeffery, visited the region in May. He was presented with the *South West Victorian Agricultural Soils Plan*, which identifies the needs and aspirations of a range of users striving for robust, resilient and productive soils that improve agricultural productivity and biodiversity and bolster landscapes to withstand the impact of climate change.

The South West Soils Conference will be held from 4 – 5 September at Warrnambool (see page 17 for further details).

The Corangamite Landcare Support Plan has been finalised and will be launched during Landcare Week, 2 – 8 September 2013. We welcome Elissa Ashton-Smith, the new Geelong Landcare Network Facilitator. Elissa's position is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.

**For further information contact**  
Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

## North East

The *North East Landcare Support Plan 2013 – 18* has been released. The plan outlines how the CMA will support Landcare over the next five years.

The 2013 North East Landcare Forum was held at Wodonga in June. The speakers included Alexandra Gartmann from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal and Ella Maesepp from the Australian Landcare Council.

# Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

Other presenters included Les Robinson from Enabling Change and Libby Riches from the Southern Otway Landcare Network who spoke on making social media work. Landcare Corporate Partnership Facilitator Karen Brisbane discussed alternative funding sources and local groups and networks outlined their successful projects and activities.

The forum was a partnership between the CMA and the Regional Landcare Facilitators project. The presentations are available on the CMA's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/northeastcma](http://www.youtube.com/northeastcma)

**For further information contact**  
**Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7648.**

## West Gippsland

The Tarwin Landcare Group, Tarwin Football/Netball Club and the South Gippsland Landcare Network came together in March 2013 to plant 500 trees at the Tarwin Recreation Reserve after being awarded the 2012 Inaugural Richmond Football Club (RFC) Landcare Grant.

The West Gippsland CMA developed the partnership with RFC in 2010. The partnership grew to include DEPI in 2012, and in 2013 the Corangamite, Goulburn Broken and North East CMA regions were also involved.

The partnership aims to increase participation in Landcare. It highlights the link between local Landcare groups and local football clubs as the foundations of local communities.

RFC has nominated Nathan Foley as its Landcare ambassador. Nathan was joined by his team-mate, Brad Helbig at the tree

planting day. More than 40 local school children were involved along with members of the local football and netball club, parents and relatives. The Richmond players were a big attraction and enjoyed getting their hands dirty.

**For further information contact**  
**Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.**

## Mallee

Landcare groups were busy over autumn supporting local pest plant and animal control as well as promoting the adoption of innovative and effective land management techniques.

With the completion of the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline, local communities in the southern Mallee were concerned with the loss of open water points (dams) and the impact on the native fauna. Landcare groups have been advocating for the creation of farm-based wetlands that use existing dam infrastructure.

Farmers and Landcare groups have worked together to develop a series of more than 30 artificial wetlands across the region. The work has been supported by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and the Mallee CMA. The project has had wide community support and will allow flora and fauna to continue to flourish in the region.

**For further information contact**  
**Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.**

## North Central

Groups across the region have been busy finalising their 2012/2013 Victorian Landcare Grant projects. The grants supported a variety of on-ground and capacity building projects and also enabled

the formation of two new groups and a Landcare network. We warmly welcome Friends of Smeaton, Glenloth East Landcare Group and Loddon Uplands and Avoca Landcare Network to the region.

The region's State-funded Landcare facilitators have completed two practical media training workshops with Sue Downie. The facilitators wrote press releases, produced event flyers and even tackled some mock TV and radio interviews.

Congratulations to Loddon Plains Landcare Facilitator Anthony Gallacher who was a runner-up in the Loddon Powercor Excellence Awards in the category of Employee of the Year.

**For further information contact**  
**Jodie Odgers on 5440 1883.**

## Goulburn Broken

The Landcare team have been busy organising the annual Community Natural Resource Management Awards that were held in June. The awards were a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the efforts of the region's many high achievers.

Groups and networks have fared well in the Caring for our Country Community Landcare Grants with 11 projects receiving funding.

The region's first climate change forum was held in Shepparton in June. The discussion was chaired by Victorian Sustainability Commissioner and former Goulburn Valley magistrate Kate Auty. More than 600 people attended the forum and heard speakers including Rob Gell, Anna Rose and Vena Sahajwalla.

**For further information contact**  
**Tony Kubiel on 5761 1619.**



The winners of the 2013 Corangamite Regional Landcare Awards at Tarnwarncoort Homestead, Warncoort, in May.

# In brief

## **Better Farming book for the north east**

The North East Ecological Farmers Group have published a farmer-friendly resource book to encourage farmers to move towards sustainable agriculture in the region.

*Better Farming* was produced to consolidate knowledge from a five-year soil health program run in the region. It includes case studies documenting best practice farming and articles on accumulating soil carbon, earthworms, the value of trees, long rotation grazing and working with nature.

The publication of the book has been supported through a Caring for our Country grant.

**Copies can be downloaded for free from [www.northeast.landcarevic.net.au/ecofarmers/projects/better-farming-project](http://www.northeast.landcarevic.net.au/ecofarmers/projects/better-farming-project)**

## **Sustainable farming on YouTube**

The North East CMA has been hosting annual soil forums since 2010 as part of a Caring for our Country Regional Soil Carbon Program project. The forums, run in partnership with the Murray CMA in NSW and the North East Regional Landcare Facilitators, have covered a range of topics on soil health and sustainable farming.

Topics on soil biology, grazing management, carbon trading, precision



*Landcare supporters from Gippsland at the MCG in May.*

agriculture and soil health have been videotaped and are now available on the North East CMA's YouTube channel.

The presenters include Dr Pauline Mele from DEPI, Professor Lyn Abbott from the University of Western Australia, Professor Snow Barlow from Melbourne University, Professor Allan Curtis from Charles Sturt University, Major General Michael Jeffery and Dr Elizabeth Stockdale from the University of Newcastle in the United Kingdom. Farmers, extension staff and other researchers are also featured.

**For further information visit [www.youtube.com/user/northeastcma](http://www.youtube.com/user/northeastcma)**

## **Tigers roar for Landcare**

More than 50 Landcarers walked on to the MCG during the Round 6 AFL game between Richmond and Geelong on 4 May 2013. The volunteers distributed 1200 miniature Landcare footballs to the crowd.

The game was the third Landcare branded AFL game since 2010 when the

Richmond Football Club (RFC) entered into its partnership with Landcare.

The Richmond players ran through a Tigers Roar for Landcare banner. The banner displayed the RFC and Landcare logos and the website details for the Victorian Landcare Gateway.

After the game the guidelines for the \$5000 2013 RFC Landcare Grant were announced. Landcare groups from across the state were eligible to apply.

**For further information visit [www.richmondafc.com.au](http://www.richmondafc.com.au) or [www.landcarevic.net.au](http://www.landcarevic.net.au)**

## **Next issue – Victorian Landcare Awards**

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on the Victorian Landcare Awards.

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The Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries and distributed in partnership with the Farm Tree & Landcare Association 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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Back issues of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine can be found at [www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/community-programs/landcare](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/community-programs/landcare)  
The print size of the magazine can be enlarged online for easier reading.