

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Spring/Summer 2013 Issue 59

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE AWARDS FEATURE

Peter Forster – carbon farmer

The Davis family – sustainable dairy farmers

Pentland Hills – an innovative community group



Landcare
Victoria



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

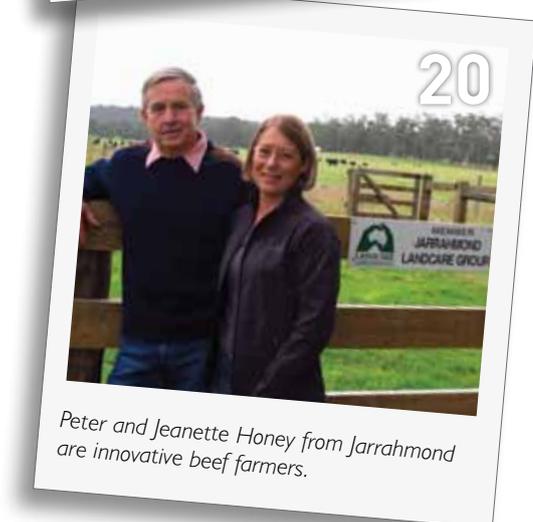
SPRING/SUMMER 2013 ISSUE 59



Friends of the Bluff has developed a marine conservation app for smartphones and tablets on the Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary.



Ammie Jackson has been recognised for her leadership and commitment to the Stony Rises Land Management Network.



Peter and Jeanette Honey from Jarrahmond are innovative beef farmers.

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Cover photograph

(From left) Andrea Savage, Holly Stephenson,
Rebecca Adams, Marcus Savage, Bailley Websdale,
Laura Szabo and Jacinta Preston from Nagle College
with their Junior Landcare Team Award at Government
House in August. Photograph by Tracey Koper.

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From the Minister

It is a great honour to dedicate this issue of the magazine to the wonderful recipients of Victoria's 2013 Landcare Awards, held in August at Government House in Melbourne.

Congratulations to our 20 winners and to those who were highly commended for awards. I also congratulate the quiet achievers working hard behind the scenes to deliver amazing wins for our environment – all your efforts are greatly appreciated.

The awards are a celebration of individuals and community volunteer projects across Victoria that have significantly contributed to the protection of their local environments.

In the pages that follow, you will all have a chance to get to know the winners and to gain an insight into our diverse and dedicated Landcare community.

While all nominations were winners for being involved, there were some projects that stood out, particularly the Pentland Hills Landcare Group's Myrning and Korkuperrimul Biolink initiative for turning 33 kilometres of bare soil into beautiful vegetation. I look forward to seeing the final result of their hard work.

The work done by the students of Nagle College to restore previously existing warm temperate rainforest vegetation was another standout, but I'll let the stories speak for themselves!

Volunteers play a vital role in restoring and preserving our natural environment and the Landcare Awards provide state and national recognition for the nominees and winners as well as highlighting the achievements of the wider Landcare community.

Without the enduring commitment and efforts of volunteers, Landcare would not exist today, nor would so many of the wonderful natural resources we boast in Victoria.

Winners of the nine national categories go through as finalists for their respective categories to the 2014 National Landcare Awards. I wish them the best of luck.

Thank you to all those involved in Landcare, for your amazing contributions to our land, wetlands, parks, coasts and so much more.

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



The winners of the 2013 Victorian Landcare Awards.

Top Landcarers honoured

Victorian environmental volunteers, community groups, farmers and junior Landcarers have been recognised for their tireless environmental efforts at the 2013 Victorian Landcare Awards.

More than 300 people attended the ceremony at Government House on 28 August 2013. The Landcarers filled the grand ballroom and admired the historic silver Hanslow soil conservation cups before taking their seats for the announcement of the awards.

Wearing her possum skin cloak, Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Di Kerr gave the welcome to country. Aunty Di said she had recently been planting trees and shrubs along the Merri Creek and that it produced a special feeling to care for country.

"We get that special feeling caring for country and with Landcare we get to do it together. We need to work together, to respect each other, to talk to each other about caring for country. Through talking to each other we can learn to live in harmony.

"From the tops of the trees to the roots in the ground if we care for this country it will look after us," she said.

The Hon. Alex Chernov, Governor of Victoria, welcomed the Landcare community to Government House and

assured Landcarers that their work does not go unnoticed.

"I extend my thanks and congratulations to all those involved in Landcare. Your work has created a legacy of sustainability that can be passed on to future generations."

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith and Minister for Agriculture and Water Peter Walsh were on hand to present the awards, which celebrate the efforts of Landcare's 60,000 members.

Minister Smith said he was honoured to meet the award winners.

"It is great to be able to celebrate the individuals, groups, networks and organisations undertaking projects across Victoria that have made significant contributions to the sustainable care of their local environments.

"I am continually inspired by Victoria's community groups and networks who dedicate their time and energy into giving back to our environment," Minister Smith said.



Tanya and Craig Davis from Tesbury were awarded both the Corangamite region and State DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Awards.

After the announcements of the awards the guests mingled and enjoyed refreshments in the grand apartments and gardens of Government House.

More than 90 nominations were received across the 12 different award categories. Winners in the nine national categories go through as finalists to the 2014 National Landcare Awards.



Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Di Kerr gave the welcome to country.



Minister Smith (left) and Governor Chernov (far right) present the Partnerships with Landcare Award to Geoff Park and Beth Mellick from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation.



Members of the Pentland Hills Landcare Group, winners of the Qantas Landcare Innovative Community Group Award, celebrate with Anthony Dufty (fourth from left), group president and also winner of the VFF/FTLA Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship.



Ken Stewart (at left) and Grant Brooks inspect a new regulator that has been installed for the RAMSAR environmental watering program at Hattah Lakes.



A lot of people think Aboriginal stuff is just about sticks and bones – but it's not just about cultural heritage, it's about the landscape. It's about the environment, the trees, the water, even the weeds because not all weeds are weeds to us.



Indigenous Land Management Award Ken Stewart

In North West Victoria, Wamba Wamba descendant Ken Stewart has been working in the field of cultural heritage for more than 20 years. He is currently the Indigenous Facilitator at the Mallee CMA.

Ken is professionally and personally committed to protecting sensitive Indigenous sites and building understanding of cultural heritage in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. He has been a key figure in the repatriation of Aboriginal remains held in museums across Australia and England. This was exemplified in the repatriation of the Jaara Baby, near Charlton in 2003.

The Jaara Baby was found wrapped in a possum-skin cloak in the hollow trunk of a tree in 1904. Her remains were held by the Museum of Victoria for 99 years, before they were handed back to her people, the Dja Dja Wurrung. Ken identified a suitable site for the repatriation of the Jaara Baby, and reached a successful agreement with the landholder for the repatriation to occur on his property.

Ken attributes the time he spent with Elders as key to gaining knowledge about the customs and traditions of his people.

“The passion is there because of what I've been allowed to do with the blessing of Elders. They have passed on information and trusted me to do the right thing with it. It's an honour to have that. When it's time, I'll pass it on to someone else, but I'll make sure they will use it in the right way.”

Ken was appointed supervisor on a cultural heritage program involving a group of young, unemployed Indigenous trainees conducting protection work for sensitive sites. Many participants had never been involved in natural resource management works previously, but Ken was able to build their understanding, with three of the original participants moving to full-time employment.

Ken's philosophy is that good decisions will be made by building understanding about Aboriginal culture. He believes an appreciation of traditional knowledge and learnings will inform decision-making.

“A lot of people think Aboriginal stuff is just about sticks and bones – but it's not just about cultural heritage, it's about the landscape. It's about the environment, the trees, the water, even the weeds because not all weeds are weeds to us.”

In the past decade, Ken helped to establish the North West Cultural Heritage employment program for Indigenous people. He also developed and delivers a cross-cultural training program specifically for North West Victoria – one of very few cultural heritage training packages provided in the region. The training is offered to Indigenous youth, Landcare groups, departmental staff and workers on large construction jobs. It covers history and identification of scar trees, artefacts and human remains. For most participants in the cross-cultural training, it is the first time they have been exposed to Indigenous culture.

Ken's passion and collaboration at all levels has allowed him to broker successful, respectful working partnerships between government departments, Indigenous people and land managers.

His commitment to honest dealing, building trust and sharing insight has won him widespread respect, and he continues to achieve workable outcomes that permanently protect important sites.



In recent years Peter has been a pioneer carbon farmer demonstrating to other landholders the potential for income by growing trees on marginal country.



Peter Forster planting trees with students from Maroona Primary School.

Individual Landcarer Award Peter Forster

Since returning to his family farm in 1982, Peter Forster has been a passionate advocate for Landcare, particularly in the protection of waterways, encouraging sustainable farming and improving biodiversity.

With his partner Christine, Peter has transformed his property near Ararat into a showcase with indigenous plantings along watercourses providing shade and shelter for stock. He set aside large areas for indigenous trees and shrubs, including a major project renovating the Bullock Hills, which took them from a degraded state with rabbit issues, to their current well-grassed and vegetated state.

In recent years Peter has been a pioneer carbon farmer demonstrating to other landholders the potential for income by growing trees on marginal country. The Forsters have worked hard to plant trees as carbon offsets, starting with voluntary offsets and more recently with regulated offset programs. Peter is happy to share their experiences so that others may learn from their mistakes and success.

“Carbon farming will transform how we farm on many levels,” Peter said.

“Our granite country was cleared of very large redgums. These will be re-established along with other native species to provide a range of environmental services that will

improve biodiversity values and change the micro climate of the farm for farm animals.”

Peter has been the driving force behind the major changes in the operation of the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group (UHLMG) where he took on the role of secretary a few years after its formation.

“My motivation is working with farming groups to determine what projects they want to undertake and then combining suitable projects into an application that targets the activity,” Peter said.

“We can deliver funded projects on time with outcomes that benefit the farmers and the wider community.”

He assisted in establishing saline discharge treatment demonstration sites and won Australian Government funding for a major waterways rehabilitation project called Corridors of Green. This project allowed UHLMG to expand its role to catchment level activity, addressing the causes of negative environmental impacts on downstream farms.

“Corridors of Green was the first landscape scale project in our region,” Peter said.

“It attracted the interest of many local farmers who went on to establish major projects on their farms and encouraged adjoining Landcare groups to plan and work together.”

Peter’s leadership at the Ararat Landcare Group (ALCG) led to ALCG playing a major role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment of Ararat. The group has done extensive works to develop an important biolink and walking track along Cemetery Creek.

Peter was recently honoured with life membership of ALCG at a dinner attended by members of ALCG and other Landcare colleagues in recognition of his huge contribution to Landcare.

His encouragement and support of other landholders in their Landcare projects and leadership has resulted in many hectares of marginal farm land and many kilometres of waterways being fenced off and allocated for indigenous trees and shrubs. It has also encouraged a greater understanding of Landcare work being carried out in the region.

Junior Landcare Team Award Nagle College

Next to the Mitchell River, on a 40-hectare site, sits Nagle College. The Bairnsdale college exemplifies how Landcare can be integrated into curriculum.

Led by science teacher and Landcare Coordinator Andrea Savage, the Nagle College Landcare Group was established in 2000 and actively strives to promote the Landcare message, raise awareness of local environmental issues and participate in practical activities both in the school and the local community.

In 2010 Andrea identified an opportunity to maximise the use of the Mitchell River and the land surrounding the college. The Nagle College Rainforest Project aimed to restore previously existing warm temperate rainforest vegetation at the neglected site and make use of the space for a range of integrated learning activities. Students were encouraged to get involved across a range of study areas including arts, cultural heritage, science and agriculture.

A hothouse was constructed on the school's grounds, which is now used to propagate seedlings planted on site and supplied to other Landcare projects.

"Projects like this are so important for young adults. At a time when teenagers can be sedentary and often isolated, good mental and physical health is important and occurs through involvement in Landcare projects," Andrea said.

"By connecting students with their local environment, they get a better

understanding of the mistakes made in the past with mass land clearing, displacement of the Indigenous population, habitat destruction, pest animals and species loss.

"Students reinstate depleted, threatened vegetation zones and create habitat through nest box construction, propagation of indigenous species and monitoring of pest animals. They really feel that they can directly and personally make a difference."

The Mitchell River Eco Warriors is an elective subject for Year 9 students. The subject has an emphasis on ecology studies, and aims to increase the students' awareness of issues such as nutrient runoff and management, erosion, deforestation, wildfire, and native and pest plant and animal management.

"The things we have learnt and the places we have visited have expanded our knowledge of environmental issues and places that are working towards improving them," Year 9 student Laura said.

"We learnt about dung beetles and were allowed to find them on a property in East Bairnsdale. We also had a guided tour of the local pump station and water treatment plant and we worked on a site at Newlands Arm, which will be monitored over three years to reproduce native flora and fauna and see the impact of cows."



Woodwork students have constructed viewing huts and nest boxes along the rainforest walk to observe local fauna and create valuable habitat for existing species.

Art students created installations and visual graphics that are used throughout the project site, including interpretive signage and the installation of a totem of botanical etchings. Other students use the site as inspiration for written, artistic, musical and drama work themes.

"It really is an initiative that has seen the whole school get involved," Andrea said.

"I hope what we teach these students will have a lasting impact and future generations can benefit from their knowledge and passion."



The Mitchell River Eco Warriors project aims to increase Nagle College students' awareness of nutrient runoff, erosion, deforestation, wildfire and native and pest plant and animal management.

Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator Award

Mandy Coulson

The Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network (SCIPN) has grown from strength to strength since Mandy Coulson came on board as coordinator three years ago.

She has not only been able to gain the respect and support of her community but also build an organisation to a standard that offers professional extension and engagement in all aspects of natural resource management.

Mandy has a natural ability to consistently share information in a clear, concise and easy manner and initiates engagement and extension activities to support local Landcarers.

"I was fortunate enough to grow up on a dairy and mixed farming property near Moriac, Geelong," Mandy said.

"I was also blessed to have a great teacher, my grandfather Eric, who was a strong advocate for community programs and the natural environment. In the late 1980s the family began addressing salinity on the farm and I followed Pa around (probably to his distraction) when he was fencing, planting native plants or even sowing a paddock.

"Over the years I became interested in linking the work on our family property to the broader catchment area which



As Landcare Coordinator for the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network Mandy Coulson has gained the respect and support of her community and helped to build an organisation that offers professional extension and engagement in all aspects of natural resource management.

led to tertiary studies in the field. My lecturer introduced me to a relatively new concept called Landcare and I can actually recall the exact time and location when thinking, this concept has legs!"

Mandy's contribution at a regional level stems from her in-depth knowledge of serrated tussock and a passion to tackle this insidious pest plant problem. She has raised awareness of the problem with other networks, allowing for joint control strategies and funding applications to be developed.

Mandy played a pivotal role in developing a coordinated rabbit control program this year for SCIPN, bringing together private, public and community land managers to create a coordinated and streamlined region-wide effort.

Her understanding of the issues in the rural community is demonstrated through her everyday tasks in Landcare. She has the ability to relate to and understand farmer needs and wants, piecing together their desires to attract funds and convey critical information to high level management.

Over the last year, Mandy has made a substantial contribution to SCIPN's

support and delivery of natural resource management programs across the network's area. As a result, the network, operating on limited funds, has been invigorated and transformed into an active and respected organisation since her involvement.

"SCIPN will continue to aspire to provide high-level service by offering resources and expertise for land and water management projects in the Thompson Creek catchment," Mandy said.

"We will be encouraging local group membership by providing education on coastal rehabilitation and protection, soil health, biodiversity, pest plant and animal control and catchment and waterway health. This will be achieved through field days, community workshops, on-ground works and property management planning.

"Two things ultimately drive my passion for Landcare: meeting and working with local people and seeing the local landscape benefit from our efforts."

Mandy's position with SCIPN is funded through the Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative.

“

Mandy's contribution at a regional level stems from her in-depth knowledge of serrated tussock and a passion to tackle this insidious pest plant problem.

”

Coastcare Award Friends of the Bluff

Since 1994, coastal volunteer group Friends of the Bluff has been supporting, educating and raising awareness to regenerate and protect the Barwon Bluff area.



Mark Rodrigue and Rhonda Coffey running the Friends of the Bluff stand at the Barwon Heads Festival of the Sea.

Friends of the Bluff is known for developing innovative technologies to increase community awareness and promote the environmental significance of the Barwon Heads Bluff and the Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary.

Through a Coastcare Victoria grant, the group recently developed a marine conservation app for smartphones and tablets on the Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary.

The app contains an interactive walking map as well as a field guide to flora and fauna, relevant visitor information, historical and cultural information, and positive conservation aspirations.

Project coordinator Rhonda Coffey helped to develop the app and believes it will provide a one-stop shop for information about the bluff.

"We aimed to give the community a brilliant insight into the beauty and diversity of life on and around the bluff. We want to encourage everyone to protect our wonderful coast, particularly in light of pressures from increasing population and climate change," Rhonda said.

"We believe that the use of modern technology and social media will appeal to a younger audience. It will allow us to get important conservation messages to the next generation – our future custodians of the bluff."

The free resource has been adopted in various Victorian primary schools across the state. The group hopes that its use in schools will increase and eventually be included in the curriculum.

"The app has been enthusiastically embraced by local agencies including Parks Victoria, Barwon Coast Committee of Management, as well as schools, community groups and visitors. It has already been included on reference and resource lists by government agencies," Rhonda said.

Development of the app is the latest in a list of interactive and educational resources produced by Friends of the Bluff over the past 10 years.

"Alongside the app we have started to develop stunning videos highlighting the beauty of the areas above and below the bluff. As always, our resources provide the opportunity for locals, photographers, experts, agencies and community groups to share ideas on interpretation and resources."

The support of the group has been crucial to Barwon Coast Committee of Management, DEPI and Parks Victoria in advocating environmental messages to a broad range of people. The innovative approach to educating and informing the community means that a broader audience is engaged in efforts to protect Barwon Bluff.

In future, Friends of the Bluff hopes to create stronger networks and opportunities for other groups along the Victorian coast to develop similar innovations. The team would also like to expand the focus of the app to include all flora and fauna in the Barwon Bluff precinct, assist other community groups to develop similar resources and create greater awareness and understanding of marine habitats in the wider community.

"The Barwon Bluff app project is ongoing," Rhonda said.

"We are committed to utilising modern technologies to engage and inform our local community of the wonders of our unique coastal home."



Friends of the Bluff president, Jon Duthie, conducting an evening rockpool ramble for local families.

“

Norman Wettenhall was a great lover of the Australian bush and the birds that inhabit it. The current board of trustees is working in Norman's name to support projects that strive to conserve biodiversity and restore degraded landscapes.

”



Beth Mellick (left) and Helga Binder at the Jack and Albert Rivers Blueprint Workshop.

Partnerships with Landcare Award Norman Wettenhall Foundation

For the past 16 years, the Norman Wettenhall Foundation (NWF) has been dedicated to supporting projects that enhance or maintain the vitality and diversity of Australia's natural environment.

Based in Castlemaine but supporting projects Australia-wide, the environmental organisation and philanthropic trust is named in honour of Norman Wettenhall, a lifelong bird lover and conservationist whose treasured natural history book collection helped to fund the foundation.

The foundation provides funding through programs such as the Small Environmental Grants Scheme, Leadership Development Grants and the Landscape Restoration Program.

Executive Director Beth Mellick said the foundation's philanthropic work aims to improve the degraded state of the land and the decline of Australian flora and fauna.

"Norman Wettenhall was a great lover of the Australian bush and the birds that inhabit it. The current board of trustees is working in Norman's name to support projects that strive to conserve biodiversity and restore degraded landscapes," Beth said.

"We fund research and science that is essential for protecting the land and its flora and fauna, as well as individuals who are leaders in their field or working in landscape restoration projects."

The first grant the NWF provided was to the Regent Honeyeater Project, back in 1997. Since then, the foundation has supported the capacity of the group to run its project for the past 16 years.

"Our support is not just about grants, but working in partnership with our foundation. We are helping groups to share knowledge with one another and develop action plans for their future," Beth said.

"The NWF is a wonderful organisation that I feel extremely privileged to work for. The trustees really care about people, and what they are doing to conserve biodiversity and restore the health of our land."

The strength of NWF's commitment to creating partnerships with Landcare communities is shown by the extent of their funded network.

Nominated by Helga Binder, chair of the Jack and Albert Rivers Project, the foundation has provided invaluable support to their project.

"From the very beginning of our association with the foundation, they have been available to discuss ideas, suggest alternative strategies and attend important community events," Helga said.

"We were encouraged when we despaired, assisted when we needed help and provided resources to facilitate our endeavours.

"Their unique approach, trust and the commitment that has been built within the local community will see permanent positive change for our particular patch of dirt."

Qantas Landcare Innovative Community Group Award

Pentland Hills



The Pentland Hills Landcare Group (PHLG) is a long-established group located west of Bacchus Marsh, encompassing the Pentland Hills, Myrniong, Greendale and surrounding areas.

Under a dynamic leadership team, PHLG has captured the imagination of local landholders since 1988 and the group has shown great initiative with their innovative approach to achieve large scale community-led landscape change.

In 2010, the group took a lead role in the Myrniong and Korkuperrimul Biolink Project, along the middle Korkuperrimul and upper Myrniong Creeks. They formed a sub-committee of community members and employed a local landholder to engage and recruit local farmers on the project.

"We put our hands up to take the lead in this major environmental project which was pretty daunting, but our implementation committee has proven that we are more than capable of doing the job," said biolink extension officer Emma Muir.

"The biolink already spans 30 properties, with native vegetation planted in the degraded areas beyond the waterway. This significantly improved plant biodiversity, enhanced existing remnants, reduced soil degradation and helped to reduce silt in the waterway."

The revegetation corridor along the Myrniong Creek is due to be completed by October 2013 and long-term results will improve the health of the stream, maintain biodiversity and increase the protection and value of habitats.

PHLG seeks widespread input on their plans. They sought input from post-graduate research students, foresters



Members of the Pentland Hills Landcare Group accept the 2012 Port Phillip and Westernport Community Group Caring for Private Land Award.

and property management planning experts to identify key remnant habitat and a baseline assessment of vegetation, water quality and wildlife in the area.

"A key strength of our group is our communication and community engagement in projects," Emma said.

"Through our connection and engagement with the community, the number of local landholders engaged in PHLG projects has grown steadily."

PHLG also gathers flora and fauna data, including motion sensing camera photos, so the positive impact of the revegetation project can be assessed. Landholders and the environment have benefited with a total area of approximately 110 hectares preserved for the biolink.

The extension officer working with the PHLG team has brought together parents and students from the Myrniong Primary School, local playgroup, Myrniong Hall Committee and local community groups to run a yearly expo on natural resource management issues.

With the assistance of the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, the group created the Moorabool Landcare Network, bringing together eight Landcare groups and Friends of groups.

Projects can now be undertaken on a larger scale, covering the multiple catchments within the Moorabool Shire. The group has also developed a weed strategy that takes into account the micro-climates and special needs of the different areas within its boundaries.

With the knowledge and skills of each committee member, together with support from the local community, PHLG will continue to lead further conservation projects.

"We are close to completing the 33-kilometre biolink and now we'll turn our attention to the future of local farms and the sustainability of commercial agriculture in the district," Emma said.

"We will continue to build greater productivity in the landscape to provide a future for the next generation of farmers."

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award Brad Costin

Brad Costin brings more than 14 years experience in repairing land degradation. In his current role at DEPI Brad provides advice to farmers on soil conservation, salinity and catchment management. He has assisted hundreds of farmers in the Goulburn Broken catchment in extension programs to encourage



Brad Costin has encouraged hundreds of farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices and improve their land condition.

sustainable agricultural practices and improve land condition.

Brad's role is to work alongside farmers to encourage and help them adopt practices that improve land health and also advise on actions to rehabilitate land degradation.

Results to date include on-ground remedial works such as erosion control, vegetation management and organising and contributing to field days. Brad also provides support to Landcare and farmer groups with input into projects, technical advice and providing them with a link to government. His work has helped farmers address serious physical impacts to their farming enterprises, as well as ensuring their farms have minimal impact on community assets such as waterways and indigenous vegetation.

"It's a great feeling helping farmers and landholders achieve their goals of land stewardship. I'm keen to increase my understanding of how landscapes work, and the interaction of soil, water and land use," Brad said.

"Landscapes, farms and paddocks vary immensely and understanding them is a constant challenge."

With the Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award Brad plans to explore the importance of retaining soil conservation skills.

"My study goal is to investigate and understand the methods employed by farmers and soil conservation practitioners in other states. I'm particularly interested in using engineering, catchment and agronomic based approaches," Brad said.

"I would like to see how these have been employed in farms in Queensland – in the Toowoomba, Bundaberg and Brisbane regions, and also visit staff and sites in NSW in the Henty to Armidale districts.

"I want to ensure that the historical knowledge built up by practitioners and farmers isn't lost and the mistakes of the past aren't repeated."

VFF/FTLA Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship Anthony Dufty



In the past 12 years, Anthony Dufty has been a busy man in his local Landcare group. Since establishing an organic farm when moving into the Myrniong area, Anthony became involved in the Pentland Hills Landcare Group, was elected vice-president, then President of the group and in 2012 became the founding President of the Moorabool Landcare Network.

During his tenure, membership of the group has tripled to more than 100 members.

Anthony has successfully sourced funding for many projects run in the past five years involving monitoring the range and distribution of small possums and gliders on the upper Myrniong and Korkuperrimul creeks.

Anthony involved the local Myrniong Primary School, where students could build nest boxes for local fauna that were numbered and placed in the biolink to be mapped and monitored over the years.



Anthony's vision is for landholders to incorporate biodiversity onto their farms, particularly through a technique known as analogue forestry.

"Analogue forestry uses the blueprint of the natural forest to design a forestry or agricultural system that provide services like clean water, nutrient cycling or energy flow while providing economic products like food, fibre and medicinal products," Anthony said

"A recent visit to two sites in Sri Lanka along with previous research convinced me that this form of innovative agriculture is the best model for the conservation of biodiversity within a sustainable productive farming landscape."

Anthony plans to use the Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship to continue his investigations into analogue forestry with a site visit to Costa Rica – home to some of



Anthony Dufty getting involved in local Landcare group events.

the oldest established demonstration sites. The tour would also include two sites in North America.

"The Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship gives me a greater understanding of the possible applications of analogue forestry in temperate agricultural systems. It will provide new insights into agriculture greatly needed in the region for farms to become sustainable and productive."



As secretary of the Stony Rises Land Management Network Ammie Jackson has contributed to the growth of Landcare in the Corangamite region, sharing innovative ideas and strategies.

“My motivation is to bring not only environmental benefits, but also social benefits to our small community.”

Westpac Agribusiness Innovative Young Landcare Leader Award Ammie Jackson Agribusiness

Ammie Jackson has been involved with the Stony Rises Land Management Network since its formation in 2011. As secretary, Ammie has contributed significantly to the growth of Landcare in the Corangamite region, sharing innovative ideas and strategies.

Ammie has been instrumental in organising and implementing multiple fauna surveys, leading a bushfire recovery program installing nesting boxes on both public and private land, facilitating weed control actions in a significant flora and fauna reserve, organising and undertaking large-scale planting days and organising a Clean Up Australia Day event.

Stony Rises Land Management Network was the amalgamation of two groups operating in the area – one which had a predominantly agricultural focus and the other a strong biodiversity interest.

Ammie developed a strong rapport with members of both groups, recognising and building on their individual strengths and interests, to establish a network with a shared vision of enhancing the Stony Rises.

“I’ve lived in the Stony Rises for seven years, but always had an appreciation for the uniqueness of the area. Through my conservation work with Greening Australia, I’ve had the opportunity to meet many locals and work on different properties,” Ammie said.

“I was aware of the assets and risks to the natural environment within the Stony Rises, so it was a natural progression to become involved in the network.

“My motivation is to bring not only environmental benefits, but also social benefits to our small community,” Ammie said.

Ammie added that the group hopes to get more members of the community involved and help to make positive changes to their surrounds.

“As we are a relatively new group, we’re keen to attract more members. Through community events and information nights we can talk to people about what we do, how they can get involved, and the benefits of giving back to their local environment,” Ammie said.

“We’d also like to collaborate with other small Landcare groups in our area who, like us, are run solely by volunteers.”

Ammie represents the network at numerous meetings and has built relationships with organisations such as Parks Victoria, Corangamite Shire, International Conservation Volunteers, Greening Australia, Camperdown College Environment Group and the Geelong Field Naturalists.

Ammie’s leadership and commitment to the network was recently recognised when she was awarded the 2013 Corangamite Young Landcare Leader Award.

Ammie has trained members of the network in weed control techniques utilising various methods, plant identification, revegetation of native habitat and workplace safety.

“I enjoy contributing to the community, learning from others but also passing on my own knowledge of conservation and land management and hopefully inspiring people to care for the environment,” Ammie said.

Landcare Network Award Woody Yaloak Catchment Group

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group has 170 landholders who bring their knowledge, commitment and experience to create farming land management solutions.

The group has four objectives: sustain viable businesses, build strong communities capable of managing change, maintain a natural environment that nurtures business viability within the capacity of the catchment and protect and enhance the flora and fauna.

They are an example of productive catchment management, balancing productivity with environmental restoration.

Chairperson Daniel Laffan believes the great strength of the group is its focus on people.

"We pride ourselves on our engagement with the community and key stakeholders. Annual planning and review meetings take place with the seven member Landcare groups, all stakeholders are consulted in five-year planning and results are shared through annual reports and the 10-year audit," Daniel said.

"We are constantly trying new initiatives and have formed many and varied partnerships with the private sector, agricultural corporations, non-government organisations, task groups and the education sector.

"Our group has been proactive in sharing achievements, participating in events beyond the catchment and contributing to the wider Landcare movement.

"Over 150 catchment tours and 94 information sessions have been conducted. We also host university undergraduate and post-graduate projects, and present to local groups and at regional, state and national conferences," Daniel said.

The work of the group has resulted in impressive outcomes. Since 1993 this has included approximately \$9.8 million directly invested in on-ground works, the doubling of native vegetation on private land (800,000 trees), 530 kilometres of fencing built for landclass, revegetation,

protection of waterways and construction of 15 waterway crossings.

"Our commitment and leadership in community engagement, both within our catchment and beyond, is unquestionable," Daniel says.

"We reflect the views of our members and engage in discussions at all levels, active in the development of the new Regional Catchment Strategy.

"In our experience, once people are lost from Landcare they are difficult to get back. So we have strategies to overcome this challenge which include diversifying our support base and maintaining regular engagement with the community."

The result of this approach is evident, with participation remaining above 50 per cent of membership in years when there was no money for grants. People remained engaged because of community and the effort undertaken by the group.



The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group is an example of productive catchment management and balancing productivity with environmental restoration.



The Davis family from Tesbury (left to right), Craig, Chloe, Tanya, Lachie, Ebony and Haylee.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Awards State and Corangamite Craig and Tanya Davis



Craig and Tanya Davis run 600 cows in a split calving herd at Tesbury, near Cobden, with their children Haylee, Lachlan, Ebony and Chloe. Five years ago Craig took stock of the property and was concerned things were going down a bad line.

"The soils on the farm were in poor condition – we had a lot of weeds and a lot of bugs, but it seemed to me using more chemicals wasn't the answer. Chemical use has an impact on the food we eat and on our health. It was a matter of learning how to get things back in balance."

Craig contacted soil experts and participated in training courses in Australia and New Zealand to learn about alternative farming methods.

"It's been a process of sieving through the knowledge and marrying it with what's affordable at a farm level. The basic principle is that if you keep correcting your soil and getting it right you can grow more grass and better quality grass."

Craig and Tanya have since renovated the pastures on the farm and developed

a dairy effluent management system with solid wastes used for composting and liquid waste used in irrigation.

Shifting to the dairy effluent management system has produced a 40 per cent saving in phosphorus and potassium fertiliser inputs and a 70 per cent saving in nitrogen fertiliser use. It has also reduced water use, promoted the recovery of clover content in pasture, increased worm numbers, raised soil carbon, reduced pests and improved the health of the dairy herd.

They have removed willows from their waterways and revegetated 500 metres of riparian land with native species. Seedlings are potted and then planted in autumn to increase establishment rates. The works have reduced nutrient run-off into the Curdies River, increased pasture growth and reduced greenhouse emissions.

Deep-rooted pasture species have improved the grazing regimes on the farm and ensured that the grazing biomass endured through the long dry period between October 2012 and May 2013. Pastures are planted according to land class, which hasn't been a common practice in the south-west.

Craig and Tanya have shared their knowledge of sustainable farm practices at field days and conferences and they are active members of the Heytesbury District Landcare Network.

Craig says there is always more to learn about managing the farm. He is motivated by the desire to produce a healthy product.

"The personal satisfaction I get from producing a healthy product keeps me going."



Steven Hobbs grows and processes his own biofuel on his property at Kaniva.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award Wimmera Steven Hobbs



In 1996 the Kaniva district experienced a once-in-a-100-years frost. Farmers in the area were hit hard with some losing up to 80 per cent of their annual crops.

When the frosts returned for the following two years Steven Hobbs started to question how he could minimise risks on his mixed farming property and plan for a future of constant change. Steven has gone on to develop an innovative process for growing and processing his own biofuel.

Steven describes the biofuels project as simply applying an old idea in a new way.

"After grandpa died, mum was sorting through his things and found pictures of him with his Clydesdale teams pulling wagons loaded with hay. It dawned on me that grandpa had grown fuel for his organic tractors – hay for his horses – in much the same way that I'm now growing fuel for my iron horses."

By sowing and harvesting different varieties of rotational crops within his cropping system (mustard, juncea canola and camelina) Steven is able to 'grow' enough fuel to run his farm machinery for an entire year, without compromising the production of food crops.

Not only has Steven been able to reduce his fuel operating costs by approximately 30 per cent, he has significantly reduced machinery emissions in striving towards environmentally sustainable crop production.

Steven describes the systems as being a closed loop.

"Because my fuel is grown in rotation as a portion of the annual crops, it is essentially carbon neutral. I harvest enough oil-seed to produce the fuel I need, keeping the fossil fuel I need to buy to a minimum. I'm also able to feed my livestock by mixing high protein presscake with low-value or non-saleable grain."

The vegetable oil is extracted from the seed using efficient oil-seed expellers. Ultrasonic transesterification of the vegetable oil into biodiesel has reduced chemical inputs by 20 per cent, but has significantly reduced electricity consumption by 90 per cent.

Traditionally, contaminants are washed from the biodiesel using water at a 1:1

ratio. But, Steven uses an innovative dry washing technique that doesn't consume any water and can be composted once exhausted. The presscake meal can be sold or used as a stock feed supplement, composted or used as a source of heating (firewood fuel alternative).

Steven's ultimate aim is to serve the regional community through setting up a biodiesel distribution co-operative for like-minded farmers. He has held many trials and field days on his property and is hosting a site for Hindmarsh Landcare Network's Biochar Trials.

Steven believes his product is now close to meeting the stringent Australian Standard for biodiesel.

"I'm working on the finer points – this involves eliminating trace contaminants such as calcium, potassium and magnesium in the biodiesel that contribute to engine coking. There's still some work to be done, but we are not far off meeting the standard entirely," he said.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award North East Chips Boucher



Chips Boucher is a beef producer from Lucyvale in the upper Murray. Chips and his wife Gracie moved to the area after farming at Swifts Creek and Chips has also worked as a shearer for many years. Over the past 15 years Chips has pioneered innovative dung beetle research on the farm and has been promoting the value of the beetles across the region.

According to Chips, dung beetles increase soil and fertiliser nutrient cycling, improve soil structure; reduce nutrient loss to waterways and increase pasture growth and ground cover.

"We know from looking at soil cores that dung beetles can really speed up the production of good quality soil. The challenge is to get people involved so we can extend the range of species operating in the region which will increase the time period of beetle activity," Chips said.

Chips has worked with scientists to



Chips Boucher's shade-cloth beetle tents have provided important insights into the seasonal activity and life cycles of numerous dung beetle species.

determine the suitability of species for potential release in the north east. His shade-cloth beetle tents have provided important insights into the seasonal activity and life cycles of numerous dung beetle species.

Trial plots set up by Chips in 2011 using the *Geotrupes spiniger* beetle species showed a

17 per cent increase in organic soil carbon at 10–30 cm depths in plots with beetle activity, compared with control plots. The results also showed that dung beetle activity raised pH, reduced aluminium levels and increased phosphorus availability.

Chips is working with Landcare groups, the North East CMA, DEPI, soil scientists, entomologists and researchers from across Australia to ensure that the data from his trials is made widely available. The results of these trials have the potential to significantly improve the productivity and sustainability of grazing in the region.

He is a founding member of the Lucyvale Better Beef Group and was a driving force behind the Do it with Dung Project hosted by Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups. This project engaged more than 100 farmers in the largest dung beetle monitoring and release program done in south-eastern Australia.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award Port Philip and Westernport Trevor and Annemarie Mills

Trevor and Annemarie Mills and their two children run a 122-hectare dairy farm at Drouin South. Trevor's parents purchased the farm in the 1950s and Trevor has worked on the property since he finished school. In 1997 Trevor purchased the farm and started to make some improvements.

The farm was lacking trees, fences, laneways, drainage lines, water troughs and enough paddocks. Using an aerial photograph and a computer program Trevor completely redesigned the property. He improved the farm layout, while increasing productivity and making management easier.

Originally the farm had 25 paddocks; there are now 50 paddocks used for rotational grazing. Through increasing his knowledge of the principles of pasture growth Trevor has been able to increase his stocking rate by 50 per cent without additional inputs.

Soil fertility is now at, or above, recommended levels in many of the farm's paddocks. A dairy effluent system with direct application to the paddocks further improves pastures, maximises summer crop production and reduces the need for bought fertilisers. A large dam is used to irrigate summer crops and helps to prevent nutrients and sediment from entering the Minnieburn Creek which enters Western Port.

Trevor believes that understanding the link between good soil and good pasture really pays off.

"Improved pasture cover reduces pugging in wetter months and reduces evaporation in the summer. I graze at the three-leaf stage to maximise pasture growth. Any less can damage pasture cover and cause soil erosion. However, I'm also happy to see longer pasture during the summer months to reduce evaporation and to put organic matter back into the soil," Trevor said.



Through increasing his knowledge of the principles of pasture growth Trevor Mills has been able to increase his stocking rate on his Drouin South dairy farm by 50 per cent without additional inputs.

Trevor has established about 30,000 trees and plants on the farm. All of the remnant vegetation, wetlands and creeks have been protected and linked. Native animals now move freely around the property and more than 80 species of birds have been recorded.

Trevor said he gets a lot of satisfaction from seeing the farm improve.



So we decided to try to use the poor country to keep our grazing operation going. Saltbush is one of the few things that we were actually able to grow.



Grazing sheep on saltbush has helped John and Debra Arentz to manage mixed farming in marginal and salt-prone country on their property near Manangatang.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award Mallee John and Debra Arentz



John and Debra Arentz are cereal and sheep farmers on a 3300-hectare property near Manangatang. Their challenge is to manage mixed farming in marginal and salt-prone country with an average 275mm rainfall in a sustainable way.

The soil types on the property are sand, sandy-loam flats and some marginal soils with subsoil constraints prone to salinity. Poor returns on some of the marginal cropping soils, and a commitment to keeping livestock as part of the farming mix, led them to investigate permanent fodder options for the farm.

According to John, they started looking at growing saltbush around eight years ago.

"We've got a mix of good country and poor country. On the poor country returns were really dropping off due to the subsoil constraints and dryland salinity. We'd also been experiencing feed shortages for our livestock just prior to harvest. So we decided to try to use the poor country to keep our grazing operation going. Saltbush is one of the few things that we were actually able to grow," John said.

Consultation with local Landcare co-ordinators led to trial plantings of Eyres Green saltbush and old man saltbush. Eyres Green is a vigorous hybrid variety, maturing over about three years and growing to a height of two metres.

The initial plantings were four metres apart with row spacings of four metres. This was later modified to plantings six metres apart in row spacings of 10 metres. This allowed for the growth of volunteer species and is convenient for cropping the row spaces with medics and pasture for an additional fodder source.

A 140-hectare paddock area of marginally productive land was set aside for the saltbush block. It was subdivided into seven cell-grazing areas, with each 20-hectare cell-grazing block having its own water source.

The operation now allows sheep to be rotated through, receiving adequate nutrition from available grazing, but without placing undue pressure on the landscape.

As a permanent source of feed the saltbush paddocks allow the retention of ewes and the production of lambs

in marginal country, even during poor seasons. Saltbush complements the cropping enterprise by allowing reliable income streams from wool and lamb production during both good and poor years. It also provides flexibility for seasonal opportunities including buying and finishing wether lambs late in the season when other properties are running out of feed.

John credits some really proactive local Landcare facilitators and co-ordinators with promoting new ideas in the area and keeping farmers motivated.

"As a farmer you are always interested in the challenge of seeing what you can grow on your country, but having some support makes all the difference. The uptake of saltbush has been strong in the area and this is largely due to the work of Landcare."

In 2005 John took part in the Mallee Environmental Management Action Planning program to increase his skills and knowledge in environmental management and agriculture. He hosts a site for an advanced trial that is evaluating the six top-performing species of forage shrub varieties with potential for the Mallee.



Bill Twigg on an old Sunshine harvester at a natural farming field day on his Loddon Plains property.

“

I love to get up every morning. Farming is the best life. You get to have your family around you and be part of the environment. Farmers aren't trained, farmers are born, but it's an occupation that gives so much joy.

”

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award North Central Bill and Gwen Twigg



Forty years ago Bill and Gwen Twigg inherited a stressed and treeless farm with declining productivity on the Loddon Plains. They set about improving productivity and profitability using what Bill calls a natural farming system. The farm is a mixed enterprise with lucerne, sheep and grains.

Bill has been a pioneer of perennial pastures; around 80 per cent of the farm is now lucerne-based pasture, mixed with other exotic pastures such as rye and sub-clover, a variety of other palatable weeds and native grasses.

Perennial pastures, combined with relatively high stocking rates and rotational grazing, have proved successful, with consistently high productivity, reliable fodder in dry times, lower water tables, and improved ground cover and soil structure.

Paddock trees and the remaining patches of remnant vegetation on the property are valued for shade and shelter and dead trees for their contribution to biodiversity. Remnant patches have been fenced to protect them from grazing. Bill has also established forage plots of acacias and saltbushes, which provide biodiversity

and land condition gains, as well as an alternative fodder source.

Bill isn't hesitant in singing the praises of the farming life.

“I love to get up every morning. Farming is the best life. You get to have your family around you and be part of the environment. Farmers aren't trained, farmers are born, but it's an occupation that gives so much joy.”

Bill has established wide plantations of native vegetation along the farm's drainage lines and returned his Loddon River frontage to its pre-settlement condition.

“Fencing off the river made sense. My sheep used to camp along the riverbanks. They destroyed all the native grasses and ground cover and their droppings washed into the river as soon as a rain shower came, or even with the wind. My fertility

was being washed away rather than staying on the farm where it was needed.”

Bill has been involved in the Loddon Stressed River project for eight years and steady improvements in the health of the river are now being recorded. He is a former president and committee member of the Jarklin Landcare Group, a member of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network Committee of Management and has recently helped to bring the East Loddon Landcare Group out of recess.

According to Bill improving the farm and the local environment has brought financial gains as well as a great deal of personal satisfaction.

“The environment is much softer than it used to be. If you have a harsh environment you become a harsh person. We are part of the environment and this is the sort of landscape where I want to be.”

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award East Gippsland Peter and Jeanette Honey



Peter and Jeanette Honey have built up their 330-hectare beef property at Jarrahmond over the past 26 years. The couple are using estimated breeding values and advanced breeding technology to develop a beef cattle herd that is lower maintenance, has easier calving, can store body fat reserves in times of low fodder availability and is profitable.

Peter's training and experience as a veterinarian has been put into practice on the property with trials on disease, dietary deficiency and parasites in cattle. In a study funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, Peter was able to show that there is a genetic component to internal parasite resistance in beef cattle.

"With this approach we know that it's possible to breed animals that have enhanced natural resistance, and that these cattle cause lower pasture contamination with worm eggs. Pastures are safer for the cattle and there is decreased reliance on chemical control of internal parasites. In addition, there are positive spin offs for animal welfare and environmental stewardship," Peter said.

In 2011 Peter and Jeanette started a visionary grazing trial on the property.

In conjunction with Far East Victoria Landcare and the Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group the Honey's property will be used to gather environmental, agronomic, and economic data to identify how different grazing management systems impact on soil and pasture assets, productivity, and maintaining high ground cover.

The Honeys have also been active in the Jarrahmond Landcare Group's Linkages Project since it started in 2003. The project aims to link the Yalmy State Forest with the Snowy River.

Peter and Jeanette have erected more than 6.5 kilometres of fencing and established 6200 native plants on their property. They have also protected several kilometres of waterways and installed off-stream and off-storage watering systems to help repair and protect riparian zones.

According to Peter the revegetation hasn't caused any loss in production.

"Our carrying capacity hasn't gone down at all and there's a lot to be gained from the windbreaks and better temperature gradients the trees provide."

Jeanette has been secretary of Jarrahmond Landcare Group for the 20 years of its operation and Peter is currently a member of the Far East Victoria Landcare Network Committee of Management.

Peter says the many projects that are underway on the property don't feel like work.

"We enjoy being part of the landscape and the world of plants and animals. There's a great deal of satisfaction in seeing the property improve."

“

Peter and Jeanette Honey are using estimated breeding values and advanced breeding technology to develop a beef cattle herd that is lower maintenance, has easier calving, can store body fat reserves in times of low fodder availability and is profitable.

”



Peter and Jeanette Honey's beef cattle property at Jarrahmond is hosting a major trial on how different grazing management systems impact on soil and pasture assets and productivity.



Tom and Olivia Lawson's business aims to produce profitable livestock genetics for Australian red meat producers in the most sustainable way.

DEPI Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award Goulburn Broken Tom and Olivia Lawson



A passion for sustainability runs through the operation of Tom and Olivia Lawson's livestock genetics business at Yea. Tom and Olivia own and operate 200 hectares in the Murrindindi Valley along with 1820 hectares of leasehold country in the area. The Lawsons test all of their livestock for feed efficiency.

Tom and Olivia moved their business to a biological farming system in 2003 – reducing chemical use, banning conventional fertiliser and following strict rotational grazing practices with the aim of keeping 100 per cent ground cover at all times.

According to Olivia, applying biological practices has improved soil biology and increased topsoil and soil carbon in a relatively short time.

“The program is more about unlocking the available nutrients, not about short-term increase in grass growth. We have minimised chemical use, used direct drill to sow new seed and have aimed at perennial grasses with a diverse mixture of other species such as chicory, phalaris, sub-clovers and rye grasses.”

All permanent water courses on the properties are fenced and revegetated,

keeping stock off fragile land and protecting the banks from erosion. Along with dry gullies and stands of older native trees, the Lawsons have fenced out and replanted understorey species to enable recovery of vulnerable natives. Thousands of trees have been planted every year on hilltop country and along roadsides and riparian areas.

Water troughs have been installed as alternative water sources to protect dams, watercourses and areas sensitive to erosion.

Olivia says applying biological farming practices has brought many improvements.

“We are seeing improved animal health, healthier soil, less reliance on artificial inputs and reduced pests and diseases. The clover has naturally returned and there is greater nutrient availability to grazing animals,” she said.

Tom, a second generation cattle farmer from Yea, and Olivia, from a family focused on self-sufficiency in South Gippsland, have a commitment to sustainability that began at home. They built a home based on sustainable principles 11 years ago using recycled materials and rammed earth with passive solar design. The house is solar powered, with a recycled septic system, solar hot water and sustainable hydronic wood-fired heating.

The business has a local community focus, along with partnerships Tom and Olivia have developed with like-minded livestock producers in the USA and New Zealand. The Lawsons are committed to educating the future generation of farmers in Australia. Each year they host groups of students from Marcus Oldham College and the University of Melbourne.

Around the State – News from the

West Gippsland

The Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network Board held a pizza night in Traralgon recently to brainstorm and discuss its annual strategic plan. The night provided plenty of options and ideas which will be incorporated into the draft strategic plan to be tabled at the network's AGM in Moe in October.

The network's healthy soils program has produced a lot of activity with workshops, forums and field days. The Tanjil Valley Landcare Group has been monitoring birds at Blue Rock Lake, Yinnar Yinnar Landcare Group is planning its maple massacre at Budgerie reserve on Melbourne Cup Day as well as a broom pull, Springsure Hill Landcare Group is using the network's wildlife camera to monitor feral and pest animals, Boolarra South Landcare Group has been busy hosting over 20 workshops and Flynn Farm Discussion and Landcare Group is examining a new Trust for Nature project.

The Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network is just one of five active Landcare networks operating across the region.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

North East

The CMA training program for Landcare members and facilitators is well underway. The training was identified as a high priority in the North East Landcare Support Plan.

Indigenous Cultural Awareness training for facilitators and executives was held at Burrinja in Wodonga recently. The Burrinja Centre has produced a series of videos on Indigenous cultural practices, including traditional use of fire, stone and wood tools. The videos were developed with the CMA and can be viewed at www.burrinja.com

The Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups celebrated their 30th anniversary in August with a Big Tree Competition and barbecue. This makes them one of the oldest Landcare groups in Victoria.

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

East Gippsland

A significant rain event in June created soggy conditions, but Landcarers have been enthusiastically implementing their projects. Nicholson Landcare Group's rabbit control program is producing some good results, Deddick River Landcare



An owl by Maylee from Eagle Point Primary School.



A bee by Kim from Eagle Point Primary School.

Group is improving riverside camping sites in the Snowy River high country, while the Jarrahmond Landcare Group is working on their grazing management trial and have a field day planned for 23 October 2013.

Eagle Point Landcare Group has worked with the local primary school to promote the community reserve. The children drew pictures (see above) of indigenous flora and fauna to be used in signage, brochures and postcards for the reserve.

Welcome to our new groups – Paynesville Landcare Coastcare Group and Eastwood Landcare Group.

For further information contact Amanda Bartkowski on 5150 3851.

Port Phillip and Westernport

Landcarers joined a multinational force of 200 volunteers in July to plant a further 5500 trees and shrubs for Grow West. Grow West has a vision for a mosaic of nature links to connect the Brisbane Ranges, Werribee Gorge and Lerderderg Parks west of Melbourne. Its millionth tree was planted last winter.

The recently secured Caring for Our Country investment in the region will see the CMA ramp up its engagement with the farming and Indigenous sectors. Aligning Landcare projects and regional targets is now easier with the new internet-based Regional Catchment Strategy and its interactive map. Users can zoom in on their area to find local-scale projects. Go to www.ppwrcc.vic.gov.au

For further information contact Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

North Central

The Landcare team will be hosting native grass identification courses in October and November. This will be the third year the Landcare team has run the popular two-day course for landholders.

Local botanist and ecologist Paul Foreman, who has over 20 years experience in land management and nature conservation, will be taking the course. Participants will learn about the anatomy and structure of grasses, skills in identifying the features of grasses, the use of botanical keys and how to collect specimens for identification. The course involves lectures as well as practical work.

For further information contact Jodie Odgers on 5440 1883.

Wimmera

Crops are looking promising in many parts of the Wimmera and Landcarers have wrapped up another hectic tree planting season. Community planting weekends were again hosted by groups across the region and volunteers planted more than 50,000 trees, shrubs and grasses. Congratulations to everyone who contributed to these activities.

Welcome to Steve Hemphill, who has taken up a Victorian Local Landcare Facilitator Initiative-funded role with Hindmarsh Landcare Network.

The Wimmera region will play host to a Victorian Landcare Council Delegates Forum on 9 November 2013 at Little Desert Nature Lodge. Thank you to Ross McDonald for leading the organisation of this event.

For further information contact Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

Mallee

Landcare in the Mallee has formed a new partnership that should prove to be both productive and beneficial to the region.

Sunraysia Residential Services (SRS), a not-for-profit community organisation that provides individualised support for people with disabilities, has embarked on a sustainable farming project called Benetook Chooks. The project aims to provide

Regional Landcare Coordinators

a local clean and green egg production service while promoting environmental sustainability and helping people with disabilities to become more confident and independent.

Benetook Chooks has joined forces with Landcare to form the Benetook Chooks Landcare Group. The group will carry out practical projects at the farm and provide SRS clients with the chance to gain new skills and knowledge while at the same time promoting the Landcare ethic in their day-to-day activities.

For further information contact Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

Corangamite

The South West Soils Conference held at Warrnambool in early September was a huge success. Landholders, service providers and government personnel came together to lead the discussions in soil health and best practice. Well done to the Heytesbury Landcare Network and partners on another great event.

A regional sustainable agriculture information resource has been produced

to address farmers' needs for simple solutions to relevant problems in managing soils to enhance productivity. For more information on the Brown Book website and ute guide go to the Landcare gateway.

Landcare week in September included a photography exhibition, the launch of the Corangamite Landcare Support Plan and many activities for new volunteers to be involved in.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

Glenelg Hopkins

The 2013/14 Victorian Landcare Grants were oversubscribed with many high quality applications from across the region. It is pleasing to see the range of on-ground and educational activities that groups are planning. With some good winter rains groups are optimistic that revegetation projects will get off to a flying start this year.

The CMA is once again planning the region's annual Landcare gathering which will be held on 20 October in Hamilton. At last year's gathering Landcarers gained an understanding of how other groups

operate around the region. Social media will be one of the topics for this year.

For further information contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

Goulburn Broken

The Draft Community Natural Resources Action Plan is now out for community comment. We are planning on having the plan completed and into the full swing of implementation by October 2013.

Local Landcare groups have been successful in accessing the Caring for our Country Community Landcare Grants and Community Environment Grants.

Landcare networks and the CMA have banded together to help address the issue of firewood collection on roadsides that has become a concern in some areas. The region's biodiversity spring calendar of events has 34 activities planned from September to November 2013. Activities include spotlighting, Box-Ironbark Ecology course and a sustainable house day.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.



Laharum Primary students and members of the Laharum Landcare Group at a planting on National Schools Tree Day. Most of these students pass the planting site on the school bus every day so they will be able to watch the trees as they grow.

In brief

Highly commended

Qantas Landcare Innovative Community Group Award

Perennial Pasture Systems
Soil Health Group

Junior Landcare Team Award

Newham Primary School
Somerville Secondary College

Coastcare Award

French Island Landcare Group

Indigenous Land Management Award

Reg Abrahams
Gunditj Mirring Partnerships Project

Partnerships with Landcare Award

Barwon Water

Individual Landcarer Award

Ian Taylor
Marie Jones

Landcare Network Award

Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups

Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator Award

David Bateman

VFF/FTLA Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship

Penny Gray

Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award – State

Trevor Mills

Next issue – Landcare support

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on Landcare support. From working with facilitators and coordinators, to going it alone, we are interested in hearing the experiences of your groups and networks on how to get the best support.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by 7 February 2014.

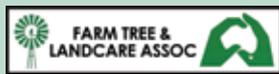
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Reg Abrahams, project coordinator for the Wathaurong Cooperative's WurdiYouang Project, was highly commended in the Indigenous Land Management Award.

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