

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Winter 09 Issue 46

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

PLANNING FOR CHANGING TIMES

Landcare embraces sustainability

Top scores for Bass Coast

Knowledge brokers explained



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Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

WINTER 09 ISSUE 46

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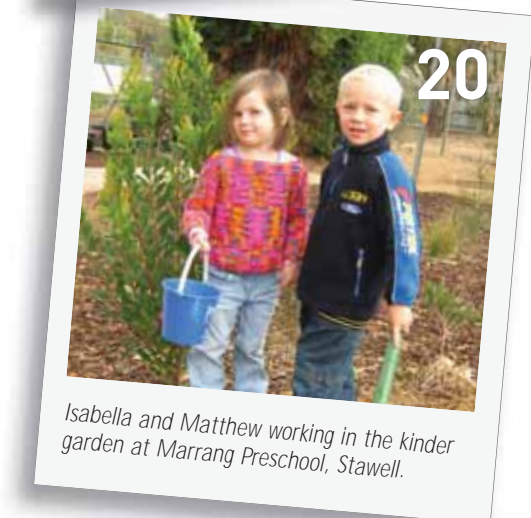
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A preserving morning held by Beechworth Sustainability attracted a great deal of interest.



Isabella and Matthew working in the kinder garden at Marrang Preschool, Stawell.

The Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment and distributed in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



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Cover photograph

Windmill at Byrneville, north of Horsham by Andrew Chapman.

Back issues of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine can be found at www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine

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Authorised by the Victorian Government, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne.

Printed by Bouquet Productions 9646 6071
Printed on 100% Recycled Paper
ISSN 1327 5496

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The Landcare expo was an opportunity for exchanging information between rural and urban folk.

Food drops for fire-affected wildlife

Wildlife Victoria has been working hard to arrange food drops to support native animals which have survived the fires but lost their natural food source. Wildlife Victoria has been providing the appropriate food free of charge to wildlife carers, community groups and volunteers interested in conducting food drops.

Wildlife Victoria has developed a set of guidelines to ensure the wellbeing of the animals and protection of the environment. The guidelines stress the risk of spreading weeds while feeding wildlife, the need to have permission when feeding on private land and the importance of cleaning up around feeding stations. There is also detailed information about the correct type of feed for different species.

In some areas feeding will need to be continued for some time. Regular evaluation of wildlife habitat is required to check on regeneration and food regrowth.

For copies of the guidelines and to register to assist with food drops contact Wildlife Victoria on 9445 0310 or go to www.wildlifevictoria.org.au.

This wallaby has been assisted by food drops from Wildlife Victoria while its habitat recovers from bushfire.



From the editor

This issue looks at Landcare in changing times. There are stories on new developments in Landcare – the rise of sustainability groups and the move to tendering for incentives, as well as the exciting local projects we are familiar with – the rehabilitation of a mountain at Derrinallum and a week-long trek through the Wimmera.

Many groups and networks are struggling with changes in funding levels under Caring for our Country. It is inspiring to read our regional roundup pages to see the determination groups are showing to keep implementing projects on the ground.

Drought, fire, disappearing funding and a global financial crisis – what will happen next? One of the world's leading financial commentators, Jim Rogers, says the next big thing is an age-of-agriculture.

In recent interviews in the US and Australia Rogers said that agriculture has been a terrible business for the past thirty years, but he expects the global financial crisis to change that.

Rogers predicts that investors will be turning away from financial commodities like stocks and bonds to real commodities – agriculture and primary production. Rogers has been backing his predictions with his own considerable wealth by buying up farms and investing in cotton.

Landcare expo

The country came to the city in April for the first ever major Landcare expo. More than 50 Landcare groups and partner groups gathered at Caulfield Racecourse to share stories, knowledge and information with Melbourne folk.

The expo was supported by the Victorian Landcare Program.

The Landcare breakfast was a huge hit. Joan Kirner and Shanaka Fernando gave rousing addresses and city people got to see how sustainable production really happens. One of the highlights of the day was the quality of the displays. The Landcare community clearly has a great imagination.

Reader survey

Please take a few minutes to complete the reader survey in this issue. Your comments on the magazine are important to help us keep improving it. And there's space for you to let us know what issues you'd like to see covered in upcoming issues.

Tear out the reader survey and post it back in the reply paid envelope or complete the survey online by logging on to www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine and clicking on the reader survey link.

All entries received by 1 September 2009 will go into the draw to win one of three great prizes.

Next issue – Victorian Landcare Awards

The next issue of the magazine will feature winners from the 2009 Victorian Landcare Awards. The winners will be announced at a ceremony at Government House on 8 September 2009.

We will also be running general Landcare news and views and reporting back on the results of the reader survey. Contributions to this issue should be sent to the editor by 11 September 2009.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
carrie65@optusnet.com.au

“

A carved message stick in the bag told of our intended trip and of the camps along the way.

”



Walkers make their way through long grass.

Walking Mt William Creek

Landcare groups in the upper Wimmera catchment in Stawell and Ararat districts were determined to prove that Landcare is about more than just planting trees. The groups came together in partnership with the Wimmera CMA to take part in a six-day, 90-kilometre community walk along Mt William Creek, a tributary of the Wimmera River system.



Annette May from Jallukar Landcare Group recorded her week-long walk through the Wimmera.

The walk, in the week leading into Easter, raised community awareness and provided an opportunity for people to share their knowledge about the creek environment, history and culture. The Northern Grampians, Moyston and Jallukar Landcare Groups and Project Platypus Landcare Network joined Wimmera CMA in the unique experience.

Jallukar Landcare member Annette May kept a diary of the walk. Here is what she saw and experienced.

Day one

A fresh and optimistic group gathered at Mt William picnic ground to be welcomed by Leigh Blackmore from Project Platypus and Max Skeen from the Wimmera CMA.

Stuart Harradine spoke on behalf of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Weraia and Jupagalk people – the traditional land

owners. Stuart introduced us to a possum-skin bag, affectionately named Basil. We carried the bag along the journey and presented it back at a commemoration ceremony at Dadswells Bridge. A carved message stick in the bag told of our intended trip and of the camps along the way.

A walk to Kalymna Falls raised heart rates. On arrival we found a trickle of water. Back at the picnic ground, the Project Platypus team provided us with a welcome barbecue lunch.

Mt William Creek identity Roy Pietsch entertained us with humorous yarns and snippets of information about the creek and our intended route.

Adam Merrick, accompanied by five-year-old Jarli Blackmore, led us to the Merrick property. We scrambled over fences, under fences, along thick acacia, through a calf

paddock and along roadways. A tour of Adam's native plant enterprise demonstrated his expertise in botany. Moyston Landcare Group catered the enjoyable evening campfire meal and a movie in a shed followed a beautiful sunset.

Day two

The generator for the coolroom provided us with a morning wake-up call. We loaded tents and gear for an 8am start. With Adam Merrick and Jarli Blackmore in the lead, 25 of us headed along the creek through open native grasslands. We reached Redmans Road before the mobile toilet, which arrived in a cloud of dust.

Bernie Rudolph took over the lead into Jallukar territory. We made our way through farmland and found the junction of Salt Creek and Mt William Creek. Michael McMurtrie told us some McMurtrie



A tired but inspired group of walkers take a break from the trail.

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To mark the end of the walk we buried a time capsule near the footbridge at Dadswells Bridge. When we open it in 25 years, we aim to reflect and relive our great experience.

”

– a Landcare experience

history as we made our way to Peel's for camp. Jallukar Landcare Group provided a barbecue tea with extra treats from generous cooks. Colin Driscoll, a talented bush poet, entertained us in the comfort of Peel's shearing shed.

Day three

David Peel joined us for the first few kilometres walk through his property, explaining changes and features of the creek. This section was very picturesque with majestic red gums along the banks. Again, although mostly dry, a few pools remained after rain. The botanists in the group became excited with the fantastic understorey of native grasses including wallaby grasses and spear grass on Margetson's property.

The walking pace quickened in the afternoon with the group covering 10 kilometres in three hours. Leading up to Bingham's Landing there was substantially more water in the creek. Mokepilly had the first permanent water in the area.

Rod Amistead and Elyse Furlan from CESAR Consulting gave a laptop presentation on platypus monitoring in the evening.

Day four

Walkers observed great contrasts in the landscape on this day. The first section was very picturesque with waterholes, cumbungi and even beautiful native waterlilies. The creek then flattened into

dry Lake Lonsdale – a huge expanse of dry grass and dead trees. A darkened base on the trees showed a watermark of four to five metres.

We clambered over the weir to Green Hole for lunch. Stuart Harradine pointed out a scar tree. Huge red gums lined the creek with Mt Dryden in the background. At camp on Jackman's property we were treated to Ewen Letts' interesting work of art – a bush shower. The shower involved a drum perched in a red gum and connected to a system of pipes. The pipes joined another drum of water heating over a fire. Those who braved the invention were thankful and refreshed.

The generator provided power for an open-air slide show and Gail Harradine spoke on behalf of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council, outlining the history of Indigenous people in the area.

Day five

We covered just 13 kilometres. Along the way, Peter Jackman pointed out the remains of an old threshing machine, an old steam engine, remnants of a sawmilling bench and a modern solar pump. This section of the creek was noted for its many springs that had at one time provided water for a lucrative vegetable garden.

Beautiful red and swamp gums lined the creek. Further along, rough-barked yellow

box trees were prominent. An Indigenous ceremony marked this leg of our journey. Auntie Lorraine Kennedy welcomed us on behalf of the Wotjobaluk people. Sonny Secombe played the didgeridoo and we all attempted to perform a traditional dance. A large gathering of walkers and wellwishers celebrated and joined us for a delicious meal organised by Northern Grampians Landcare Group.

Day six

On the final day a group of more than 30 walkers followed the active, but dry, Middle Creek to the Wimmera River. It was a family affair for some walkers. Many carried toddlers and lots of district people joined in too. A photo shoot marked the end of our triumphant journey and vehicles ferried tired but happy walkers back to camp. Everyone described the walk as a great experience – well organised, educational and friendly. It was also challenging. Several walkers completed the entire 80-kilometre journey; others set personal goals to complete a number of days or kilometres.

To mark the end of the walk we buried a time capsule near the footbridge at Dadswells Bridge. When we open it in 25 years, we aim to reflect and relive our great experience.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.



Land stewards being trained in assessing soil and pasture health.



Bass Coast landholders score their way

A land stewardship trial run by Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN) is extending the Network's focus beyond traditional tree planting to the broader issues of land management. It's also given its members confidence to step into the emerging

world of environmental investment where tendering for the environmental dollar is rapidly replacing the more familiar grants system.

Land stewardship is a concept that has become popular in the United Kingdom and Canada with landholders receiving funding for providing effective environmental management within a whole-of-farm approach.

BCLN was keen to trial land stewardship as a means of engaging farmers and achieving large-scale landscape change beyond individual revegetation projects. After much discussion with members, the trial was launched in 2007 with two key ingredients: an environmental scorecard to measure landholders' current level of land stewardship, and a tender process for landholders to tender for funds to carry out environmental projects. An environmental benefits index to quantify landholder actions was adopted using the Catchment Management Framework, developed by DSE.

The trial is now complete, and the results have been so encouraging that BCLN is developing a new project that will extend the land stewardship approach into two neighbouring Landcare networks. An ongoing monitoring program will continue

to capture results from the trial over the coming years.

Landholders sell ecosystem services

The new project targets land stewardship across the Western Port and Bunarong ecosystems. It involves a number of partners who will purchase ecosystem services from landholders to achieve the targets set out in their respective framework or business plan.

The partners include DSE, DPI, Caring for our Country, local government, and the Port Phillip & Western Port CMA.

Project co-ordinator Moragh Mackay says that it's an ambitious project that has enormous scope to achieve real and long-term change across the landscape.

"The trial showed that land stewardship was very successful at engaging farmers operating at each level of environmental management," she says.

"There were those who were just starting out, who realised through using the scorecard that there are many issues that they need to manage. There is a group in the middle who recognise that they can improve on what they're already doing, and finally, there's another group already addressing a wide range of issues that can add value by taking on a mentoring role."



The scorecard proved to be a particularly valuable tool for landholders, allowing them to benchmark their environmental management and form action plans to improve their performance.





Monitoring training for land stewards. The training was undertaken in vegetation quality assessment using the half-monty technique.

to stewardship

By Jillian Staton

The scorecard proved to be a particularly valuable tool for landholders, allowing them to benchmark their environmental management and form action plans to improve their performance.

The scorecard covers nine categories: planning, training, soil, pasture, vegetation/native habitat, water, pests, wastes and emissions and chemicals. Many of the landholders who completed the scorecard reported that it was a useful checklist that helped them reflect on their management and plan the way forward. It uses similar categories and terminology as the Environmental Best Management Practices on Farms and DairySAT workbooks.

More than 70 percent of the landholders in the trial developed bids to carry out environmental works after completing the scorecard. These were ranked using the environmental benefits index and a total of 52 projects received funding.

Great value for money

The bids fell into four broad groups: new vegetation, improved pastures and soil health, remnant protection and older revegetation maintenance. In total, more than 40,000 indigenous plants were established over 16 hectares of land. More than 100 hectares of remnants

and older revegetation were protected and managed and 413 hectares of pastures and soils were improved.

An investment of \$253,000 resulted in more than 560 hectares of land being directly protected or managed for biodiversity, salinity and water quality outcomes.

Moragh Mackay says it equates to great value for money for the entire community.

"The works were completed at a cost of \$452 per hectare. Landholders contributed a minimum of one dollar and a maximum of three dollars for every dollar invested."

While most landholders agreed that the tender process was the way of the future, there were some concerns that it promoted competition rather than collaboration. As a result, a new project will explore different types of market-based instrument approaches such as the community negotiated tender used by the Bega Cheese project.

"One thing we've learnt in this changing environment is that we need to remain open to every opportunity that comes our way," Moragh says.

For more information contact Moragh Mackay on 5678 2335 or 0438 702 240.

Chinese officials visit West Gippsland fairyland

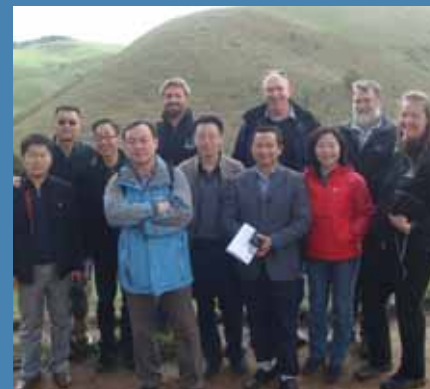
Twelve Chinese Government officials recently visited the Bass Coast Shire to see how Landcare works with farmers in the region. The delegates toured farms to look at sustainable farm management practices and the management of steep slopes prone to erosion.

The delegates also discussed the EcoTender program, in which farmers bid in a conservation tender and receive funding to provide environmental goods and services.

Dave Bateman, a Landcare Project Officer and Facilitator with the West Gippsland CMA, said the delegates were so enamoured with the shire they described it as a fairyland, with big green farms and large chalets.

"The average Chinese farm is only one hectare in size so they were amazed at how big our farms are. They were also lucky enough to spot a swamp wallaby and black snake while walking around Paul Spiers' property at Archies Creek," Dave said.

The delegates are hoping to take some Landcare values back to China to work with farmers to create a more environmentally friendly farming community.



Chinese Government officials visited Brian Enbom's farm at Jumbunna. The hill in the background is going to be revegetated through the land stewardship and EcoTender program.

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We need better ways of using and sharing the information we already have.

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The world is awash with knowledge and information about natural resource management. How do we make sure we are getting the right knowledge in the best format?

The knowledge – getting it, using it

If you wanted to learn more about how to tackle a particular land management issue or about the latest research relevant to your work, where would you go? Who would you ask? There's a good chance that you would begin by asking a person you know. In a world awash with information – the Internet, libraries, datasets, reports, information systems, computer models – evidence suggests that we still prefer to seek knowledge from a person rather than a black box, or the pages of a long report.

In a world where many of us are time poor, we tend to seek knowledge from someone who is easily accessible and trusted and wherever possible, face to face. We look for information that can be readily understood, rather than having to wade through references and reports.

Knowing that this is the way we prefer to seek knowledge, the challenge for research providers and policy-makers has been to rethink the ways in which they share knowledge. It is now recognised that communicating science and research is not just about packaging information – it is also about understanding the context in which the communication occurs.

This has involved a shift to information-sharing (rather than one-way delivery) and to new models of knowledge sharing. These principles will be familiar to many Landcare groups who are already directly engaged with researchers. But, at the regional and statewide level, it is not so straightforward.

The knowledge broker model

One model which has attracted interest is knowledge brokering. A knowledge broker was used to great effect at Victoria's Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology to help improve knowledge sharing on the environmental management of rivers and streams.

Many readers will know of Geoff Park from the North Central CMA. Geoff acts as a knowledge broker on biodiversity.

A knowledge broker is generally a specialist in a particular field who has good communication skills. Having learned the knowledge needs of land managers, the broker will identify what is available and, in turn, identify knowledge gaps needing more research. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as workshops, expert panels, face-to-face briefings, websites, synthesis reports and networks. The purpose is to find the right people to influence the use of research, to bring those people together, keep the



Members of the Victorian Catchment Management Council get some first-hand knowledge examining erosion works at a property on the Dundas Tablelands.

and passing it on

By Sarah Ewing

relationships going and help collaborative problem-solving.

From 2005-2008, the Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) managed a NAP-funded project to see whether knowledge brokers could play a greater role in knowledge sharing for catchment management.

There are people who already have this role in Victoria, though they are rarely called knowledge brokers. Much of what they do is informal and much of their effort is unrecognised. The project was not intended to create a new layer of knowledge brokering bureaucracy – but rather to support and promote existing efforts and to underscore the importance of new and continued investment in people with the experience and skills to act as brokers.

Soils targeted for knowledge project

The VCMC project involved a 12-month trial operation of a soils knowledge broker. The broker worked with staff, principally in CMAs, government departments and universities; to help create a community of interest around the theme of soil health. A workshop was held early on to help identify existing knowledge and knowledge

gaps and to identify knowledge networks already in place.

The broker put together an expert panel and a website and supported a wiki to promote sharing of information online. The trial had its limitations, but it did identify that the idea of theme-based knowledge brokering, on an as-needs-basis, would likely serve Victoria well.

Victoria is information rich. There has been a long-term investment in the development of knowledge and there is a wealth of tacit knowledge held by individuals, Landcare groups and communities. Despite this, significant gaps in our knowledge base remain. We need better ways of using and sharing the information we already have.

The VCMC would like to see a more purposeful and systematic approach to knowledge management for NRM in Victoria – one in which knowledge brokers play a pivotal role.

Sarah Ewing is a member of the Victorian Catchment Management Council. For more details about this project go to <http://www.vcmc.vic.gov.au> or contact Patricia Geraghty on 9637 8306.

Is your group network ready?

The Department of Sustainability and Environment's Victorian Landcare Program is funding a series of forums as part of the Landcare Network Readiness project. More than 40 people attended a recent forum in Castlemaine on starting a Landcare network. Participants shared experiences on the motivations and pathways for forming networks, the management structures that could be used and the ways to strike a balance between network management and local group ownership.

Participants felt that while the toil of a network is often messy and thankless, being in a network brings in expertise and increases influence.

A forum on setting up and managing big projects will be held in Bendigo on 6 July 2009.

Landscape-scale projects are a high priority for funders and a big opportunity for Landcare networks. The forum will look for some answers on setting up and managing big projects from networks that have run them, or put together successful bids.

A forum on new roles and funding options will be held on 25 September 2009 in Melbourne. Landcare is stepping into new roles – as a standard-setter in markets for ecosystems services and as a partner with industry groups and private philanthropy. This forum will bring together networks taking up these roles, as well as organisations helping Landcare to open up these new relationships.

For further information contact your Regional Landcare Co-ordinator or email forum facilitator Ross Colliver at colliver@ttdg.com.au or telephone 0411 226 519.

Information is also available on the Gateway at: <http://www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/conference/network-readiness-forums-2009>.

In brief

A framework for Australian Landcare

A cross-section of Landcarers met in Melbourne in April to talk about where community Landcare should be going over the next 20 years. People with grass-roots experience – from urban, regional, sustainable production and Indigenous groups – participated.

It was agreed that Landcarers will work together over the next 10 months to develop the first community driven framework for Landcare. The development of the framework will involve extensive consultation. Details about how to contribute will be available shortly.

The Australian Government is supporting the development of this framework through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. A National Landcare Forum will be held in Adelaide in March 2010 where the volunteer Landcare community will launch the framework.

For further information contact Coral Love on 5753 4557, or by email at national@landcarefacilitator.com.au.

FTLA reminder

All Farm-Tree & Landcare Association (FTLA) Group memberships are due on 1 July 2009. Please ensure that renewal paperwork is completed and returned as soon as possible to secure continuous insurance coverage.

For further information contact the FTLA Executive Officer, Susi Johnson, on 9207 5527, or by email at sjohnson@vff.org.au.

Landcare census

Professor Allan Curtis from Charles Sturt University is working with the Victorian State Landcare team to run a 2009 census of rural and urban Landcare groups. This follows surveys taken in 1991, 1998 and 2004 and will be important in documenting Landcare achievements, directing support and providing data about volunteering and membership. Surveys will reach groups in late July.

Reader survey – have your say

In 2001 and 2006 we asked readers to complete a survey to help us refine the magazine and make sure it is meeting the needs of the Landcare community.

The results told us that the magazine functions to provide practical, how-to advice and showcase case studies that readers can learn from.

We received a huge number of suggestions from readers about the stories and issues they wanted to see in the magazine and we have been working through these issue by issue.

It's time for a new survey. Please take a few minutes to tell us who you are and what you think of the magazine. We are really keen to get your feedback. Suggestions on topics that are interesting and relevant for us to follow up are very welcome.

If you complete the survey by 1 September 2009 you'll go into the draw to win one of the following prizes:

- \$500 from the DSE Victorian Landcare Program for your local group or other charity of choice.
 - A Sure Gro planting kit worth \$250 (including 150 sets of Sure Gro Treeguards, Weedmats, Sealol, Water Crystals and Fertilizer Tablets).
 - A copy of *Australian Bird Gardens, Creating Havens for Native Birds* by Graham Pizzey.
- Three winners will be randomly selected from the online and posted entries and will be offered their choice of prize in the order they are drawn.



Online survey is quick and easy

You have the choice of filling out the sheet opposite and using the reply paid envelope, or you can complete the survey online by logging on to www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine and clicking on the reader survey link.

Completing the survey online is the most cost-effective method of participating as it saves on postage and automatically collates the results.



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Sustainability groups in the North East are finding that support available through existing Landcare groups is helping them to gain momentum and focus on running activities.

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The food, water and localisation group of Beechworth Sustainability held their first event – a summer vegetable garden seed swap late last year.

Sustainability groups – a new direction for Landcare

By Mary-Anne Scully

Vegetable seed swaps, home energy audits and composting workshops are now part of an extended activity menu for some Landcare groups in the North East.

Newly formed sustainability groups in Beechworth, Wangaratta and Yackandandah reflect a growing interest in environmental issues in urban communities.

Sustainability groups in the North East are finding that support available through existing Landcare groups is helping them to gain momentum and focus on running activities.

Tom Croft, Landcare Team Leader with the North East CMA, says that groups that form on their own can face multiple risks, but Landcare can provide valuable support and guidance.

“New groups often find they have to learn to deal with governance and insurance, finding members and funding and dealing with accounts. This can be frustrating as it limits the capacity of members to work with the community and promote sustainable living,” Tom said.

According to Tom, some groups also run the risk of operating without insurance or become isolated from other community groups interested in similar issues.

Landcare groups act as hosts

Two of the sustainability groups in the North East have formed as part of their local Landcare group. Another is part of an existing community network.

Beechworth Sustainability is a sub-committee/group of the Beechworth Landcare Group, (<http://www.beechworthsustainability.org/>). It was formed in late 2008.

The Beechworth Landcare Group acts as host for the group, providing insurance, incorporation and accounts administration. Sustainability members join the Landcare group which then assists the group to gain more members and covers their insurance and other administration costs.

Joy Phillips, a member of the sustainability group, says the group is in the business of running events.

“Landcare is able to provide the necessary insurance and public liability cover for public events and activities and the structure to ensure good governance for a community organisation,” Joy said.

Beechworth Sustainability comprises four sub-groups, with two people acting as convenors for each. The groups are: food, water and relocalisation; energy machines; regulation and legislation; and home energy audits.

Wangaratta Sustainability also approached the Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group to act as its host. The group was able to get up and running quickly and host a local sustainability forum.

Yackandandah Sustainability works a little differently to the other two groups. It is a sub-committee of Yackandandah Community Education Network, which also provides the benefits of simple access to insurance, bank accounts and support.

Yackandandah Sustainability works with many local community groups, including Landcare, garden clubs, sports clubs, and rotary to help integrate sustainability information and promotion into their current activities.

Member Steve McInness said the group doesn't organise many events themselves, but works to support other groups to include sustainability as part of their general activities.

“Using this approach, we avoid competing with the many groups for membership in a small community and widen the number of people who hear the message,” Steve said.

For further information contact Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7600.



A group of international student volunteers helped to erect a rabbit proof fence on Mount Elephant last year.

Planning helps locals to

On 1 January 2000 a group of residents from Derrinallum and Lismore climbed Mount Elephant to see the sun rise on the first morning of the new millennium. For the fifty or so climbers it was the beginning of a new year and the beginning of a dream to purchase Mount Elephant for the community.



The management plan detailed the issues and provided a checklist of what needed to be done and when.



The dream was to rehabilitate the mountain and develop it as a tourist destination and a place of recreation.

Mount Elephant is also known as the Swagman's Lighthouse – it is an important landmark for all to navigate their way through the western district. Mount Elephant had been owned privately since European settlement. It had been heavily grazed, was infested with Paterson's Curse, thistles and rabbits and was ravaged by bushfires in 1944 and 1977. Despite this, Mount Elephant has always been loved by all who live in and visit the district.

The communities of Derrinallum and Lismore rallied together. The Derrinallum Lismore Community Association Incorporated (DLCA) formed a partnership with Trust for Nature to purchase the Mount. The family who owned the property fully supported the

community initiative and the property was purchased before auction in December 2000 for \$200,000. Trust for Nature provided half of the funds and the community raised the remaining \$100,000 in just five months of fundraising.

The management committee inherited many problems. Their first task was to develop a management plan to deal with the pests and the fire ravaged vegetation. Funding for the management plan was provided by Alcoa World Alumina, the then Department of Natural Resources and Environment and the Borbidge Fund.

The management plan detailed the issues and provided a checklist of what needed to be done and when. The management committee has used this plan over the last five years and has been able to successfully implement many of the recommendations.



The entrance to Mount Elephant demonstrates it is now cared for by the local community.

“

The results we have achieved to date have been excellent. After eight years of management we can see that we have made a real difference.

”

repair elephant

By Lesley Brown

Rabbit battles are rewarded

A specific plan was developed just to deal with the huge rabbit problem. The plan outlined the present threat, the biology of the rabbit (highlighting its weak points) and the strategies to cope with them.

A concerted program of 1080 poisoning, fumigating and excavation of warrens was used to bring the rabbit population to a manageable level. Now this has been achieved the next stage is to fence off the western side of the mountain from north to south to contain the rabbits in the least accessible area. Once this is completed we will be able to concentrate on more poisoning and warren destruction.

We have been regularly counting a set trail with a spotlight to assess the results. The rabbit population is certainly declining. We are starting to see the return of native grasses. We have also planted bare areas with native grasses and they are returning to their pre-European state. Controlling the rabbits has improved the effectiveness of our tree planting and we are seeing excellent results.

Weeds management plan

Weed control has been a major expense as well as being very labour intensive. A specific management plan was also developed to deal with weeds.

Each year we have sprayed for Paterson's Curse and thistles and we are now also seeing excellent results. In 2008 we sprayed only 65 hectares, in previous years we had sprayed 110 hectares.

As native vegetation is returning we are seeing a reduction in Paterson's Curse. It is now not growing, or greatly reduced, in vegetated areas. We will continue to monitor its growth and try to revegetate the bare areas to make sure that we do not have any further seeding.

Work is also underway to develop walking tracks for visitor access. There are also plans for an information education centre at the base of the Mount. The management plan identified these projects as high

priorities for future development and we will continue to work to put them in place.

The results we have achieved to date have been excellent. After eight years of management we can see that we have made a real difference. Mount Elephant is well on the way to being a pleasure rather than a headache. The management plan has been crucial in our success as it has given us a defined direction and detailed the steps to put it into place. We are looking forward to continuing our work and making Mount Elephant an example of what a determined community can achieve.

Lesley Brown is a member of the Mount Elephant Community Management Committee.

Mount Elephant is a perfect breached scoria cone that last erupted somewhere between 5000 and 20,000 years ago. It dominates the third largest volcanic basalt plain on Earth and can be seen from 60 kilometres in all directions.

Mount Elephant is one kilometre west of the township of Derrinallum, on the

Hamilton Highway. The Mount is open on the first Sunday of each month from 1–4pm. Visitors are always welcome at other times and access can be arranged by contacting the committee. Please phone 5597 0243 or 5597 6779 to make arrangements. Further information is on the website: www.mountelephant.com.au.

Around the State – News from the

North Central

A year of Landcare achievements was celebrated at the annual forum at Little Lake, Boort in March. Auntie Fay Carter, from the Dja Dja Wurrung, opened the forum with an inspiring Welcome to Country in which she talked about how Landcare and Indigenous communities have much in common. More than 90 people attended the forum. They enjoyed the regional produce from Boort, as well as networking and gaining plenty of information from the many agency displays.

The booklet, *Celebrating our Most Significant Change – Stories of Landcare in North Central Victoria*, was launched at the forum. The booklet is an inspiring collection of 20 Landcare stories and has been a great way to raise awareness of how valuable the contribution of Landcare is to caring for our environment.

For further information contact Jennelle Carlier on 5440 1814.

Glenelg Hopkins

The Hilgay-Tarrenlea Landcare Group has just completed a major project documenting and recording the condition of local soil conservation structures. This project was developed in response to a knowledge gap about erosion control structures. The group is based around Coleraine which lies in a valley of steep sided hill country with some soils that are prone to extreme tunnel erosion.

With assistance from the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, DPI and a Second Generation Landcare Grant, volunteers received training in GPS, photographic monitoring and landscape assessment to conduct the survey. The volunteers then spent three months contacting and visiting landholders to document sites and existing management regimes. The Landcare group is now engaged in local activity to fund repairs to priority structures.

Tony Lithgow is the new Regional Landcare Co-ordinator. Welcome Tony and many thanks to Dave Nichols who has been acting in the role for the past eight months.

For further information contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

Port Phillip and Westernport

The finalisation of funding proposals for the Victorian Investment Framework and Caring For Our Country (CFOC) has been a major focus of the CMA and our Landcare community. A proposal has also been prepared for the CFOC Bushfire Recovery funds.

Landholder information sessions have been organised by our CatchmentCare Co-ordinators to assist bushfire-affected landholders to better understand how they can help the recovery of natural assets on their property. The initial focus has been on pasture recovery and soil erosion, with biodiversity and waterway health now emerging.

Several Landcare groups in non-affected areas have offered their help to those affected by the fires through the Landcare Bushfire Buddies program being co-ordinated by the CMA. It was great to see the Friends of Yarra Flats Billabongs getting plenty of help with their clean up day held in April.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

North East

The CMA ran an expression of interest process for Landcare groups to participate in CFOC competitive proposals for woodlands and soils targets. This allowed Landcare projects and ideas to be included in these large bids. We are now waiting on the results of these proposals.

Fire recovery planning and activities have been going ahead in affected areas. The CMA has been supporting affected landholders with funding, and Landcare groups have been assisting with equipment and voluntary support.

Almost 90 landholders are monitoring 120 sites for dung beetle species and abundance under the *Doing it with dung – from the Mountains to the Murray* project. Landcare groups and networks have run a range of field days and workshops on pastures and soil management, fencing, energy efficient farming and wildlife, with many more planned over winter.

For further information contact Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7600.

East Gippsland Region

There have been lots of Landcare workshops, field days and training events in the region, including the pasture to pockets workshop held in April at Lakes Entrance, which the Marlo Plains Landcare Group ran with the assistance of a Second Generation Landcare Grant.

Volunteer recruitment has also been underway. Landcare members from Far East Victoria held a stall at the local Orbost agricultural show attracting lots of attention and seeking out some new members. The recent East Gippsland Field Days attracted 13 new members on the spot with 50

membership forms taken away for further consideration.

We are getting closer to the completion of our Regional Landcare Strategy 2009-2014 as well as gearing up for reporting time and the Second Generation Landcare Grants process.

For further information contact Becky Hemming on 5150 3577.

Corangamite

Congratulations to the ten winners of the Corangamite Regional Landcare Awards. The presentation dinner was a great opportunity for community members and partners to share stories and network. Congratulations also to the Bellarine Catchment Network who received a Victorian Coastal Award for their work on integrated coastal zone management.

Landcare networks in the region will be facing uncertain times over the next six months with funding limitations for on-ground projects and support staff. Planning for changing times is important to ensure our communities, groups and networks are supported in the future.

The Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network held a highly successful Landcare Festival weekend in Anglesea, looking at bioenergy developments, climate variability, soil health, carbon markets and sustainable water and home programs.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

Goulburn Broken

Thanks to all of the groups and networks that have got involved with fire recovery. The Upper Goulburn Landcare Network has been co-ordinating volunteers to help with the clean up of fences and the construction of new ones. All credit needs to go to the tireless work of facilitators Bridget Clark and Janet Hagan who have not had a weekend off for some time.

Networks and facilitators have been busy with CFOC applications and are working hard to secure the future of facilitator support into 2009/10.

After years of research and writing, a history of Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment has been produced. *Milestones, Memories & Messages* looks at Landcare's development, personalities and triumphs over the past 20 years.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

Regional Landcare Co-ordinators



Some of the Hindmarsh Landcare Network's volunteer group at Gawith's Farm near Jeparit.

Wimmera

Landcare groups organising this season's CFOC funded revegetation and community planting weekends are starting in early July. This year's locations include the Wimmera River near Horsham, the Upper Wimmera near Elmhurst, Yarriambiack Creek at Warracknabeal and Outlet Creek near Lake Albury.

These large-scale tree planting activities directly link our actions to an impressive region-wide network of connected landscapes, improved habitat, species survival, stable soils and healthier streams.

The planting weekends have been running for more than 10 years and have developed strong connections to many urban volunteer groups. We encourage anyone looking for a new experience to register their interest and come along.

For more information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

Mallee

The Mallee Landcare community is experiencing uncertain times with the forecast reduction in government funding likely to have a considerable impact at ground level. The region's groups are nevertheless determined to remain active and vibrant and have been busy with the implementation of a number of projects.

The group based Emap program is up and running again in new areas of the region, along with the new Graduate Emap.

Lots of works funded by Second Generation Landcare Grants are underway including fencing remnants for biodiversity, large plantings of saltbush to increase profitability of marginal cropping lands,

rabbit ripping and silverleaf nightshade and cactus control. Some of these projects have been assisted by the Mallee CMA Environmental Employment Program which employs drought-affected community members to conduct environmental works on both private and public land.

Kevin Chaplin replaces Brendon Thomas as the Regional Landcare Co-ordinator. Brendon's contribution was substantial and he will be sorely missed. We wish Brendon all the best for the future and welcome Kevin to the team.

For further information contact Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

West Gippsland

We had 11 exhibitors at the Landcare Expo at Caulfield Racecourse in April. A lot of interest was shown in the display trailers from Lake Wellington, Bass Coast and South Gippsland Landcare Networks.

Thanks to all of those dedicated Landcarers who were involved.

Eighty people attended the recent Yarram Yarram Landcare Network awards at the Ship Inn in Yarram recently – it was so well attended they ran out of chairs. The South Gippsland Landcare Network Awards at Stony Creek Racecourse was also a great night, kicking off with a fire recovery fundraiser for Strathewen Primary School.

Congratulations to John Tatman and Anne Davie who were recently awarded life memberships of Bass Coast Landcare Network for many years of service and commitment.

Lastly, the new Maffra & District Landcare Network trailer is now finished and is already in demand.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.



The Victorian State Landcare team visited Bronwyn and Dennis Staricks's cropping and grazing property on the Wimmera River near Antwerp during one of their regular team meetings. Bronwyn and Dennis manage the Saline Agriculture Project for Hindmarsh Landcare Network and are members of the Dimboola/Antwerp Landcare Group.

Corporate investment in Landcare

Landcare Australia Limited (LAL) is a not-for-profit company established by the Australian Government with responsibility for promotion and sponsorship of the Landcare movement. LAL's Victorian office is supported by the Victorian Government.

LAL has been very successful in obtaining corporate sponsorship for Landcare projects. During 2007-08 LAL supported 322 Victorian projects with over \$950,000 in corporate funding.

Landcare partners who have contributed to Victorian projects include Computershare (through eTree), Australia Post, Holden, Coles, Yates, Westpac, Spicers Paper, CitiPower/Powercor, Jemena, SP AusNet, International Power Mitsui, VicTrack and Melbourne Water.

LAL Victorian business development manager Alison Raymond explained that the LAL approach is about consultation.

"We are very conscious of managing expectations – both from groups and corporate sponsors. Groups need advanced notice of funding to fit in with existing plans, planting cycles and on-ground capacity. Sponsors want to know that their contribution is really making a difference."

LAL has a facilitation role in matching sponsors with projects and programs. They use the following principles to allocate funding:

- corporate interest and/or preference
- group capacity and willingness
- environmental priority – does the project meet program criteria, including regional plans?
- collaboration with other agencies where appropriate

The LAL team consults with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Regional Landcare Co-ordinators, CMAs, network co-ordinators, members of Landcare networks or groups, government agencies, farming organisations and schools, to help identify or develop suitable projects.

Alison Raymond is available to Landcare networks with business plans and a dedicated sponsorship or fundraising resource to talk through their strategies for securing sponsorship at the local level.

The LAL team also has a key role in raising the awareness and profile of Landcare at the state and national levels.

"Community awareness is critical in order to maintain sponsorship momentum,



Will and Tobia are keeping a close eye on their new plants and watching them grow.

attract new volunteers and explain the importance of Landcare to the urban population," Alison said.

Weed deck for GippsLandcare

A \$10,000 grant from SP AusNet together with \$3000 from GippsLandcare and the West Gippsland CMA has helped to get a major weed initiative underway in Gippsland.

GippsLandcare was formed in 2004 to carry out on-ground works and education on behalf of the six Landcare networks in the West Gippsland catchment. Weeds are a priority issue in the catchment. Gippslandcare devised a program to increase and enhance the ability of Landcare groups and landholders to be able to identify and manage a comprehensive range of local weed species.

The project was in line with the education strategies outlined in the Victorian Pest Management Framework. The group produced 630 weed identification decks with the sponsorship funds.

The weed decks will be distributed to Landcare groups and members within the catchment. Each deck contains identification details for 50 local weed species.

The SP Ausnet logo features prominently on the weed identification decks. Network newsletters have also contained articles about the weed decks and the support from SPAusNet to give further positive exposure to the partnership. Over twenty local weed identification field days are also planned.

A green and shady garden for Stawell toddlers

The Marrang Preschool at Stawell is a much greener and shadier place thanks to a \$770 Landcare Australia Junior Landcare Coles Garden Grant. One of the fathers at the preschool submitted the application to help combat the effects of drought in the local environment.

The project involved the development of a native garden, as well as highlighting the importance of local flora species to the wider community. Project Platypus-Upper Wimmera Landcare assisted the 48 children, parents and teachers to plant 60 native shrubs and trees to enhance biodiversity and help save water.

The preschool held the planting day during Arbor Week which attracted other community members keen to learn about local indigenous species.

The preschool also purchased a worm farm so food waste can be recycled and compost from the worm castings used on the new garden. The four and five year olds were delighted and fascinated by the worms. For many of the preschool children, it was the first time that they had planted a tree, and they are looking forward to seeing them grow.

More than 240 projects have been supported through the Junior Landcare Coles Garden Grant Program.

For more information on Junior Landcare go to please visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au or contact Sarah Harris on 9662 9977.



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