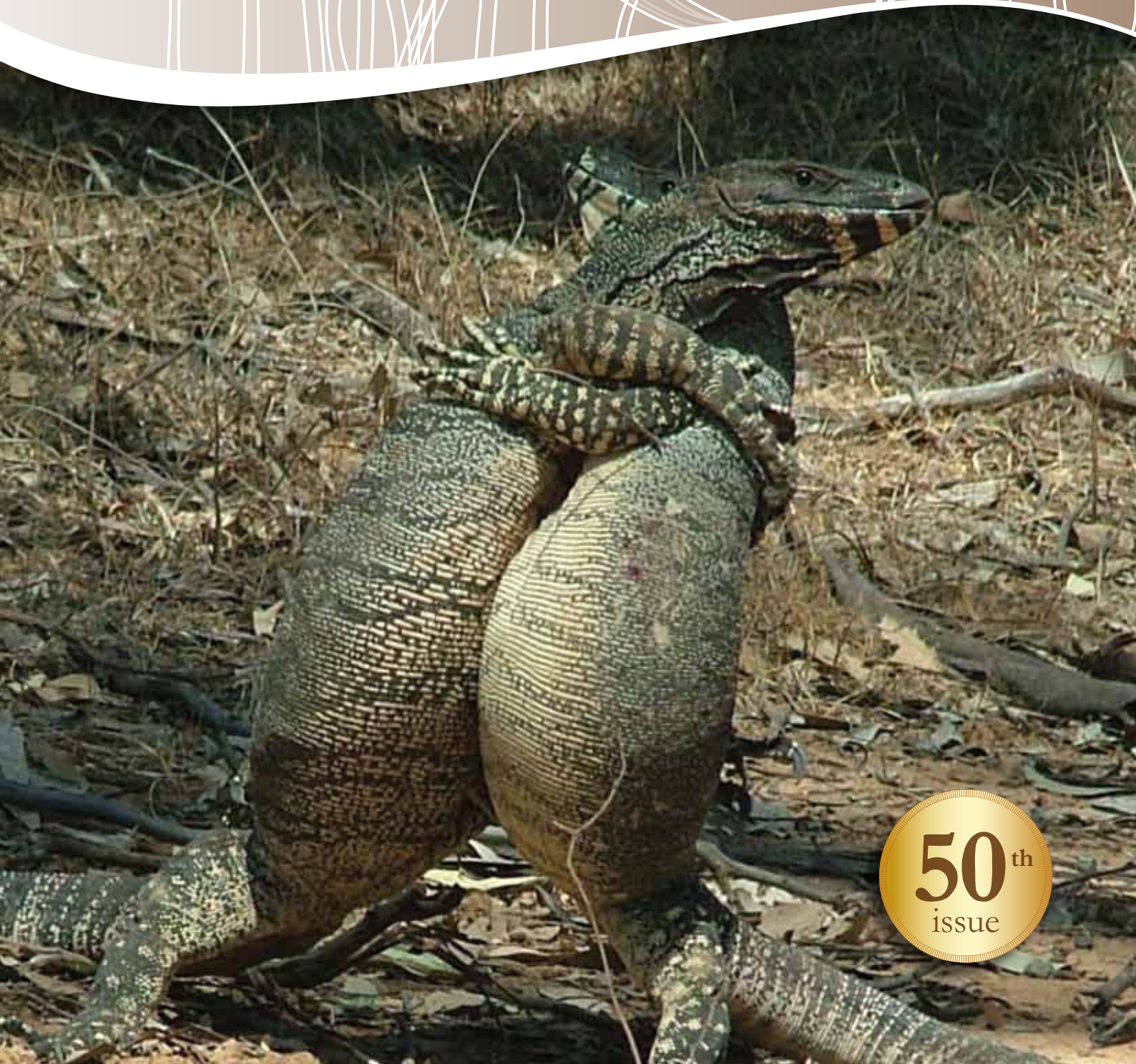


VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Summer 10 Issue 50

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



BIODIVERSITY AND BIOLINKS FEATURE

Spotlight on South Gippsland

Biodiversity on the farm

Linking the irrigated landscape



Landcare
Victoria

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SUMMER 10 ISSUE 50

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Cover photograph

"I was giving my son driving lessons on a dirt road when we saw these two goannas fighting. Goannas are at the top of the food chain in our local ecosystems and are often an indicator of healthy woodland. Finding these two animals behaving like this is extremely rare. What stunned me most was that this battle was silent. You might expect lots of hissing and scratching, but it was very quiet. The two lizards tried to wrestle each other to the ground for several minutes. Suddenly it was over and they both ran their separate ways." Dirk Spennemann.

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From the editor

Welcome to the 50th issue of the Victorian Landcare Magazine. This issue features stories from Landcare groups and networks about biodiversity and biolinks.

2010 is the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity. Over the last 200 years Australia has suffered the largest decline in biodiversity of any continent. The stories in this issue demonstrate the range of biodiversity projects that Landcare groups and networks are undertaking – from local projects aimed at saving a single species to large-scale biolinks aimed at reconnecting the landscape.

Biodiversity snapshots

An exhibition of photographs highlighting the rich biodiversity of the Riverina region is now on tour after a successful showing at the Albury Library-Museum. Many of the photographs were taken by members of the Institute for Land, Water and Society at Charles Sturt University.

The photographs (featured on page 10) illustrate biodiversity at its best. The alpine trees recovering from fire featured on this

page are a fine example. Thanks to the photographers for allowing us to use these images throughout the magazine.

Fire readiness

We had a very positive response from readers to the last issue of the magazine – a feature on fire recovery. Many of the stories stressed the importance of addressing fire readiness throughout the year. We are now on the cusp of another fire season and it is a good time to make sure you are up to date with all of the new knowledge and information.

The CFA website has a fires and warnings section that lists current CFA and DSE fire and incident details, fire warnings and days of total fire ban. Go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au. Familiarise yourself with the nine new fire districts across the state and spend some time looking at the fire danger ratings.



The fire danger ratings are your trigger to act. The fire ready section of the CFA website has a fire ready kit, a household bushfire self-assessment tool and details of community meetings, neighbourhood safer places and how to book a site assessment.

DSE manages fire on Victoria's 7.6 million hectares of public land. The DSE website is the place to go for information on planned burns. Go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/fires. The website also has a current incident summary and updates on significant fires. If you are concerned about smoke it is a good idea to check the DSE website. Smoke can travel considerable distances and it may be coming from a planned burn.

To have another look at the fire recovery issue of the Landcare magazine go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine. There are a number of fire survival and recovery stories as well as practical information on erosion control after bushfire, managing pest plants and animals, and shelterbelts for fire protection.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
carrie65@optusnet.com.au



"This photograph was taken after the 2006/07 bushfires that ravaged much of our region. I was driving around the alpine area looking at the burnt trees. Then I went for a walk near a sphagnum bog and took this photograph. The contrast of the moisture on the trees in a burnt landscape provides a stunning contrast." Jake Pollard.

“

The chain of ponds are an important refuge for the temperate eucalypt woodland birds that are disappearing across south-east Australia, as they provide a permanent water source even in drought.

”



Romawi Landcare Group president Michelle Judd stands in the eroding gully head on Forge Creek. Repair works are now underway.

Partners protect rare chain of ponds

By Trish Fox

The Gippsland Plains Conservation Management Network (GPCMN) became interested in the Forge Creek Water Reserve, south of Bairnsdale, when they learnt of the unique nature of its chain of ponds.

Dr Ian Rutherford, Director of Integrated River Health with DSE, told GPCMN members that the chain of ponds in the Perry River and Forge Creek areas were some of the last intact systems in south-east Australia. Highly vulnerable to disturbance, the chain of ponds also discharges into the internationally important Gippsland Lakes and are significant biolinks.

The GPCMN responded by supporting a Caring for our Country application for two of the groups that cover Forge Creek – Romawi and Cobblers Creek Landcare Groups.

Funds were received to fence off large old red gums in adjacent paddocks on private land beside the Forge Creek Water Reserve. These giant old gums are remnants of the once widespread, but now critically endangered, Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodlands. They offer vital nesting sites for threatened bird species such as the White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Peregrine Falcon.

The chain of ponds are an important refuge for the temperate eucalypt

woodland birds that are disappearing across south-east Australia, as they provide a permanent water source even in drought. Research has demonstrated that Forge Creek supported 32 bird species identified as in decline by researchers in 2005.

Within the reserve, the Landcare groups are focusing volunteer activity with monthly working bees to remove rubbish and deal with the many environmental weeds that have invaded the grassy woodland. The Landcare groups are also talking to residents' groups who are interested in restoring areas along the southern reach of the creek system where it enters the Gippsland Lakes.

The Landcare groups also received funding to repair an eroding gully head which was moving upstream. The community interest shown in the proposal so impressed the East Gippsland CMA that they then applied for state funding to support the work. Restoration of the chain of ponds with small engineering structures and vegetation is now underway.

Although the chain of ponds are unique, they have not been considered to be priorities for funding. This project demonstrates that there are considerable

ecological gains to be made from managing them well. The project also shows the benefits of a partnership approach.

The GPCMN does not have a volunteer base for on-ground projects, but by working alongside Landcare volunteers some much-needed attention has been brought to the beautiful chain of ponds and their surrounding woodlands.

Trish Fox is the Gippsland Plains Conservation Management Network Facilitator.

For further information email Trish at facilitator@gippslandplainscmn.org.au

Conservation management networks

Conservation management networks address one of Australia's major environmental challenges: managing bush in fragmented landscapes across land tenures. Conservation management networks usually focus on one vegetation type – it doesn't matter if it is public or private land – with the aim of managing the vegetation at a landscape level.

DSE staff get down and dirty during Landcare Week

By John Robinson

The DSE Community Engagement and Landcare Unit organised three planting days for staff during Landcare week. Staff helped to plant and guard 2450 plants.

Working under the shadow of the Westgate Bridge in Port Melbourne, staff helped members of the Friends of Westgate Park plant 1 000 indigenous plants and spread 40 cubic metres of mulch. The Friends of Westgate Park won the 2010 National Urban Landcare Award for a decade of work transforming an urban wasteland into a biodiversity oasis.

At the planting day in Newham, near Woodend, staff planted 900 understorey plants with members of the Newham and District Landcare Group. This planting, on private land along the upper reaches of Deep Creek, is part of the group's larger vision to create a biolink from Macedon Regional Park to the Cobaw Ranges.

The third planting day at Strathewen went ahead despite very wet and muddy conditions. Staff planted and guarded 550 native grasses and sedges with members of Strathewen Landcare Group and Nillumbik Shire's Environmental Co-ordinator. Spirits were high and some brand new gumboots got a good workout. The wet conditions also meant the plants didn't need to be watered in.

Although some DSE staff had never done this type of work before they appreciated the opportunity to play a part

in the recovery efforts of the Strathewen community which was severely affected by the Black Saturday bushfires.



John Robinson, Lindsey Brown and Jess Hasker from the Community Engagement and Landcare team at DSE plant native grasses and sedges at Strathewen.

Goulburn Broken Strategy launched

Victoria's Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Dr Kate Auty, officially launched the Biodiversity Strategy for the Goulburn Broken catchment for 2010-2015 in June.

According to Goulburn Broken CMA Chair Peter Ryan the directions for biodiversity conservation have been updated to reflect the new challenges

ahead; most importantly, climate change.

"The new strategy focuses on building resilience of ecosystems rather than on specific species. It also acknowledges that the achievement of biodiversity outcomes relies on the strong partnerships with programs, agencies, and traditional owners on both private and public land," said Peter Ryan.

The strategy has identified five key areas for action over the next five years: adapting to change; nurturing partnerships; investing more wisely; building on the ecological infrastructure; and legitimising biodiversity conservation.

The strategy is available to download from www.gbcma.vic.gov.au

Biodiversity on the farm – is it worth the effort?

By Ray Thomas

There's a lot of talk about biodiversity and ecology these days. Governments are producing strategies, teams of scientists are assisting the recovery of endangered species and there are grants to help plant extra habitat. That's a lot of public money and you may be wondering if it's really worth it.

Much of the habitat that needs restoration is on private land, so the buck stops with farmers. In these tough economic times when farmers are struggling to make ends meet does it really matter if biodiversity declines and if we lose a few species?

I think the answer is a very big yes. The push for biodiversity is more than a museum mentality. Diverse ecosystems are healthy, self-sustaining ecosystems. When there are many plant and animal species living together, there are built-in checks and balances to keep the system operating for the benefit of all. Plants, insects, birds, predators, birth, death, decay, nutrient cycling, shelter and habitat – everyone's catered for.

Rebalancing the ecosystem

Simplified ecosystems don't have it so good. Take for example the rural scene we've come to accept as normal – scattered trees, grazing land and no shrubs. When insect populations increase due to boosted

nutrient levels in pastures, they attack the trees more voraciously than they do in natural forest. And here's the rub – with no shrubs present, there are fewer birds and wasps to pull the insects back into line. The ecosystem has lost its capacity for self-regulation; it's out of balance.

Trees are under constant stress and there is extra mortality in tougher summers. As more trees die, the remaining trees are even more isolated and have to cope with more and more hungry insects. It's a downhill, one-way process. Eventually the ecosystem crashes into severe dieback. It has been said that the loss of wattles is the start of an ecological cascade – a tumbling down of ecosystem health as species after species drops out and the system becomes less resilient, less self-regulating.

Our endangered species, like the Regent Honeyeater, are really indicator species which show how tough the going is. With

scarce resources and brutal competition some species lose out. We call them endangered and almost accuse them of having some kind of problem when we really need to be looking at the problems of the ecosystem itself.

Taking advantage of natural biological controls

By re-establishing the ecosystem balance farmers can have the natural biological controls working for them. Planting Silver Wattle, Golden Wattle or late Black Wattle under old trees will attract glider possums in search of the sugary wattle sap. Then just watch those gliders eat their own body weight in Christmas beetles in a night. Gliders are like vacuum cleaners in the tree tops. They clean up the insects that would otherwise chew the tree to death.

Birds will be attracted to the wattles for nesting and shelter. Birds eat up to 60% of the available insects in a healthy woodland. Planting the right shrubs will help put an end to the relentless insect attacks that lead to dieback of valuable old trees.

Nectar-rich shrubs like Sweet Bursaria, Tea Trees, Rice Flowers and Everlasting Daisies also attract a range of parasitic wasps and flies that are very helpful to the farmer. With nectar as their energy source, these wasps will hunt all day for insect pests like Cockchafer grubs and Christmas beetle larvae that destroy the roots of pastures.

Mistletoe proliferation and the rise of Noisy Miners are two more symptoms of ecosystem imbalance. They both lead to serious woodland degradation if not addressed. The natural control agents for mistletoe include certain butterfly larvae and possums (both of which eat the leaves) and a host of birds that eat mistletoe fruit without spreading seeds around the trees.



A typical case of tree dieback in the rural landscape. The branches of the trees are dying and there is a huge reduction in leaf cover. Replanting the missing shrubs around these trees will attract birds, gliders and wasps. The natural insect control will help restore the health of the trees.



A tree planting weekend for the Regent Honeyeater project in September 2010. More than 100 people planted 4600 seedlings – creating more than five hectares of new habitat.

But without a shrub understorey there is no habitat for possums and butterflies and the control mechanism breaks down. Mistletoebirds, on the other hand, are quite at home in the more open habitat. They enjoy the freedom of the trees and spread mistletoe seeds as fast as they like. The parasitic load can eventually kill the trees.

Noisy Miners have gained a similar supremacy in rural habitats. Clearing and grazing have left many districts with little more than narrow tree lines along the roads and scattered paddock trees. Gone are the hordes of woodland birds that once scoured the bush for insects. The Miners defend their territory aggressively. Without protective shrubs for cover, the smaller birds are easily excluded and the leaf-eating insects multiply rapidly.

A balanced ecosystem looks after its own health

The message is simple; balanced ecosystems look after their own health. Restoring bushland on your farm by planting understorey under the old trees will allow the bushland creatures to help look after your farm.

To get the ecosystem as fully operational as possible, it's obvious that we need to restore as much of the original vegetation as possible. Local species are critical. As well as providing long-term habitat for wildlife, and biological pest control for your pastures, these local plants are

well adapted for survival in the local soil and climate. They will even replace themselves by natural regeneration over time so that the trees won't have to be replanted.

Learning how we can protect and restore biodiversity in our rural landscapes has

benefits for farmers and the environment. Landcare groups are a great place to seek out and share knowledge about local ecosystems, the indigenous plants and animals, and how they work in together.

Ray Thomas is the Regent Honeyeater Project Co-ordinator.

Regent Honeyeater

The Regent Honeyeater is an endangered bird once common in the Box Ironbark forests of Victoria. The Regent Honeyeater Project has established itself as one of the most active volunteer conservation projects in the nation.

A whole farming community is engaged in restoring remnant Box Ironbark habitat for the endangered Regent Honeyeaters still living in the district. Propagation and planting days are organised each year for a thousand students from more than 20 local schools and hundreds of volunteers from universities, walking clubs, church groups, bird observers, scouts, environment groups and the like.

Almost 1300 hectares of restored habitat with more than 450,000 new seedlings planted is reducing salinity and erosion problems,

and improving water quality, stock shelter and natural pest control. For more information and details of upcoming planting days go to www.regent.org.au



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In these tough economic times when farmers are struggling to make ends meet does it really matter if biodiversity declines and if we lose a few species?

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What an opportunity to barrack for the mighty Tigers and see Landcare receive wider promotion. And we won the game!

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Laura Brennan, daughter of SGLN Co-ordinator Belinda Brennan, runs out onto the MCG as team mascot for the Richmond tigers.

Tigers roar in support of Landcare

By Phillip McGarry

On 4 July 2010 a dedicated group of Landcare members and friends from West Gippsland sat together in the Ponsford stand at the MCG to watch the Tigers roar for Landcare.

The round 14 AFL game, Richmond versus Sydney, became the first ever Landcare branded AFL game in Australia when the Richmond Football Club and the West Gippsland CMA formed a partnership to promote awareness of GippsLandcare and Landcare in Victoria.



The team ran through a giant banner: Tigers Roar Support for Landcare! Get involved today! Go to www.landcarevic.net.au

The game was an opportunity to get the Landcare message to 40,000 plus Richmond members and the wider football following public. The promotion was about reaching a totally new and different demographic of people to those who are the traditional audience for Landcare.

Richmond CEO Brendon Gale said the club was pleased and proud to be in partnership with the West Gippsland CMA.

“We hope that we can raise awareness about Landcare in Victoria, and help promote action for improved landscapes now and for future generations,” he said.

The promotion reached the 39,383 people at the match on the day. More than 100,000 were also exposed to the Landcare message through articles in 48,000 nationally syndicated AFL records, plus three weeks exposure on the official Richmond football club website and radio air time on ABC Gippsland and the ABC-774 Coodabeen Champions show.

Geoff Hocking, CEO of the West Gippsland CMA, said the promotion was an exciting opportunity to engage and involve a lot more people, through the reach of the Tigers and AFL football.

“Landcare is about communities achieving good outcomes for sustainable landscapes, healthy waterways and connected communities. Having Richmond help raise the profile of our region’s GippsLandcare brand will promote much wider awareness of the important role Landcare plays in natural resource management”, said Geoff.

Trevor Colvin from Wonyip Landcare Group tossed the coin at the start of the match and also attended the Richmond Football Club President’s lunch.

“To see the function room decked out with information about Landcare for 230 corporate members was fabulous. This promotion was a brilliant, exciting and effective way of taking the Landcare message to more people,” Trevor said.

Ian Wilson, a member of South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) and long-time Tigers supporter, said the day was fantastic.

“What an opportunity to barrack for the mighty Tigers and see Landcare receive wider promotion. And we won the game!”

The game was a tight struggle, fortunes ebbed and flowed and in an action-packed nail-biting finish Richmond won by 4 points: 14-5-89 to Sydney 12-13-85. Landcare was definitely a winner too.

Orr Road biolink restores the legacy of irrigation

By John Laing



The Shepparton Irrigation Region is one of Australia's most productive areas. Fruit, tomatoes, dairy and a range of irrigated crops all contribute to the region's multi-billion dollar output. Water for the region is diverted from the Goulburn and Broken Rivers and distributed through a series of channels and storages.

Waranga Basin is one of these storages. Approximately 15 kilometres from the Goulburn River near Murchison, the basin stores water for distribution to towns and irrigation districts between the Goulburn

and Campaspe Rivers. Water is also diverted from here for Bendigo.

One of the legacies of the development of irrigation in the region has been the fragmentation of the landscape. The pre-European vegetation was mainly Victorian Riverina; this is now classed as 100% fragmented without any largely intact landscapes remaining.

Since it was formed in the mid-1990s the Dhurringile and District Landcare Group has been working to reconnect the landscape between the Goulburn

River and Waranga Basin by revegetating drainage lines, mapping and removing weeds, putting up nesting homes and creating a biodiversity corridor.

With only three wide road reserves in the area suitable for vegetation corridors we are lucky to have one of them running east-west at the point where the basin and the Goulburn River are closest.

The hills around Waranga Basin also contain remnant goldfields vegetation including blue, green and Kamarooka Mallee and Broughton's pea. The Orr Road biolink is also home to the endangered Grey-crowned Babbler.

The project has had involvement from many organisations and received funding and support from local, state and federal governments. The city of Greater Shepparton, Goulburn Broken CMA, Goulburn Murray Water, Goulburn Murray Landcare, the Goulburn Valley Environment Group, DPI, DSE as well as Murchison, Toolamba, Dhurringile and Tatura Primary Schools have all been involved at some stage.

For further information contact John Laing at johnlaing@iinet.net.au



Orr Road, looking east from the bridge over the Stuart Murray Canal, in 2007.



Orr Road in 2010 after a joint planting day with the Dhurringile Landcare Group and Goulburn Valley Environment Group.

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One of the legacies of the development of irrigation in the region has been the fragmentation of the landscape.

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Grey-crowned Babblers are highly social birds. When their habitat becomes fragmented populations shrink in size and become isolated from each other.

Habitat fragmentation

The Grey-crowned Babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis*) is one of Victoria's most endangered bird species. Fortunately it has a large group of loyal friends. The Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler Group, in partnership with many other organisations including Trust for Nature, have worked actively over the last ten years to protect their habitat and to try to increase their numbers.

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For this highly social species habitat fragmentation has caused major social disruption.

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The Grey-crowned Babbler lives in open woodlands. It prefers mature eucalypt trees interspersed with younger trees and shrubs and other ground cover. The babbler is highly social and lives in groups of up to 15 birds. All of these birds help to defend the territory and to raise the young, with more young being raised by larger groups. At night, the entire family roosts in the same nest. The nests are easily seen in trees and understorey and look like footballs made of twigs and leaves. The babblers eat insects they find on the ground among leaves and fallen branches or behind bark on trees.

Fragmentation causes social disruption

The major cause of the Grey-crowned Babbler's decline in Victoria has been the loss of their preferred woodland habitat. These areas have been cleared for agriculture, wood collection and mining. As a consequence babbler populations have shrunk in size and have become isolated from each other. The number of birds in each family group has also declined, because smaller populations of babblers produce fewer young. For this highly social species habitat fragmentation has caused major social disruption.



Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler at work.

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The group's conservation mantra is to try to save the species one family at a time.

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threatens the Grey-crowned Babbler

By Tiffany Inglis

To conserve the babbler, Dr Doug Robinson of Trust for Nature and the Friends Group says there have been some successes, but that the low babbler numbers are still a concern.

“Overall, we estimate that the population in Victoria has declined by at least 90% over the past 150 years and now consists of just six hundred families – so the species is still at a high risk of extinction. But in those areas where we have focused our conservation efforts, we have generally seen positive responses in terms of survival and breeding success. We know now that it is possible to help Grey-crowned Babblers – it's just a matter of having the resources and the time to do it.”

Given their understanding of the threats to the Grey-crowned Babbler, the Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler Group have focused their efforts on four major activities to:

- Increase the total amount of habitat available for babblers in priority areas by encouraging the protection and restoration of habitat on private land.

- Increase the quality and availability of habitat at known babbler sites to increase group size and breeding success.
- Increase the connectivity between isolated groups or patches of habitat. This creates more opportunities for birds to disperse and colonise.
- Undertake regular surveys of babbler populations to watch population trends and to determine the effectiveness of their conservation activities.

Friends try to save one family at a time

The group's conservation mantra is to try to save the species one family at a time. Doug Robinson says he never imagined people would commit to the cause for such a long time.

“I started studying the Grey-crowned Babbler back in 1991. And in 2000 a group of us formed the Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler Group with a few other like-minded people. But here we are, ten years on and those same people are still committed.”

In 2009, with funding support from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation and Goulburn Broken CMA, researchers from the University of Melbourne and Trust for Nature compared babbler populations at sites where landholders had protected habitat compared with sites where there was no habitat improvement.

Their study showed that babbler groups were more likely to have persisted at sites where there had been habitat works, breeding success was higher at sites with additional habitat and the number of young raised per family at sites with additional habitat was nearly double that of babbler families at sites with no additional habitat.

The commitment of the Friends Group is clearly paying off – their efforts have been pivotal in maintaining populations of the Grey-crowned Babbler.

To get involved in the Friends of Grey-crowned Babbler Group contact Doug Robinson at dougr@tfn.org.au



50 issues – another milestone

The first issue of the Victorian Landcare Magazine published in spring 1996 featured an article by Wimmera Landcare stalwart Barry Clugston. To celebrate our 50th issue we asked Barry to share his thoughts with us on the Landcare journey.

Landcare is a practice, philosophy, concept and hugely successful activist program across Victoria, the nation and as an export to other countries. The wonderful song by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody, “From Little Things Big Things Grow”, could have been written about Landcare.

I was at the launch of Landcare by Joan Kirner and the late Heather Mitchell in 1986 near Paradise, just over from Navarre. It was later launched as a national initiative between the federal government, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers Federation.

The Landcare message quickly caught the rural imagination – the people who have made it work. Different communities have concentrated on different aspects of Landcare – pest destruction, soil conservation works, weed control, linking city and farm groups, eradicating rabbits, developing farm plans and catchment plans, tree planting schemes, cat control,

improving regions for our wildlife, protecting biodiversity, and looking after the birds and insects.

Many, many people have been involved and dramatic and subtle changes have been wrought on large areas of farm, shire and crown lands. The activists within each community have applied imagination, hard work and clever negotiations to achieve real gains for their district or region. A whole industry of rural people who have learned new skills to deal with their local concerns has evolved. Because of Landcare, we will be better placed to tackle climate change.

Government agencies and local shires have often been called on to join in the work. Some have responded in magnificent fashion while others have dragged the chain, but the real success for Landcare is when the community and agencies work together for a common goal without ego or high praise.

[illegible]

We have come a long way, but many challenges remain and I am confident we will respond to these new issues in a collaborative fashion – that is the true success of Landcare.

Pinkerton link – creating a forest from nothing

By Kylie Smith



A sludge paddock used to dispose of the solid by-product of sewage treatment may not sound like the most promising place for a wildlife corridor. Yet the former sludge paddock at Western Water's Melton Recycled Water Plant is on the way to becoming a showcase for the linking of habitats to help protect endangered native species.

The paddock stretches between two islands of bushland: Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock, in an area that skirts the Werribee River, west of Melbourne. The link is part of a long-term vision to connect these sites to the Werribee River corridor.

Pinkerton Forest, owned by Western Water, is endangered remnant Greybox Grassy Woodland, and home to a pair of endangered White-bellied Sea Eagles. Bush's Paddock, owned by Melton Shire Council, is Basalt Plains Grassland, a vegetation class listed as critically endangered.

Daryl Akers, of Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG), says it is vitally important to create links between such habitat islands.

"These small woodlands are important on their own, but they are more significant when joined together. Linking them enables wildlife to move between areas and recolonise and makes them less vulnerable to natural disasters."

Western Water stopped depositing biosolids in the paddock in 2008 due to concerns about possible contamination. That left the disused paddock as an obvious place to create a link between Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock.

In 2007 Western Water signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PLEG, including a commitment to rehabilitate the area. A 2009 grant from DSE Vision for Werribee Plains got the project off the ground and a management plan in place.



The endangered remnant Greybox Grassy Woodlands in Pinkerton Forest will have a positive future due to a partnership between Western Water and the Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group.

Different revegetation techniques are now being trialled at the site – these include weed control and planting native tube stock to scraping off a layer of the high-nutrient contaminated soil and direct seeding.

The Landcare group has been involved with planning the works and have collected a large amount of seed. Daryl Akers says there are now about 150 species of birds in Pinkerton Forest, and the list is growing.

"Over the years it has been transformed – it has been a real success story. The White-bellied Sea Eagles raised two chicks in the forest last year, and have returned this year to nest again.

"That's a validation of all our efforts."

For further information contact Tim Hatt, Western Water's Environmental Officer, on 9218 5502.

Landcare

Readers are invited to enter our 2011 Landcare Photography Competition.

Entries are invited in three categories: sustainability, water and 'what Landcare means to me'. There is a general prize in each category and prizes for primary and secondary students.

Each prize winner will receive \$150 for their school, Landcare group, or charity. The winning entries will be published in the magazine. To enter, send a low resolution jpg (under 200KB) to magazine@dse.vic.gov.au with your name, contact details and a caption. Prints and CDs will also be accepted and should be posted to: Project Officer, Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management Magazine, DSE, PO Box 500, East Melbourne 8002.

You will need to gain the permission of anyone who is recognisable in your photographs. A high resolution file (over 1MB) will be required if your photograph is to be published. The competition closes on 10 June, 2011.

Photographs from the Biodiversity of the Riverina exhibition:



"About 130 million years ago much of Australia was submerged under a shallow sea. As the sea retreated, it left behind sediments and enormous quantities of salt in what is now the Murray Basin. These salts accumulated in shallow evaporation basins (lakes) in the western part of the basin. The colour of these lakes can be startling: ranging from dusky mauve to bubblegum pink. The lake hues are caused by algae that inhabit the waters."
David Taylor.

photography competition



"The Victorian Frog is a stunning little tree frog whose plaintive call is often heard after rain. Like many frogs this species lives in natural water bodies and dams that have some grass and trees around them. Fallen branches also provide good sheltering spots for frogs. You can make a contribution to frog conservation by retaining some vegetation around your ponds and dams." David Hunter.



"Both the ANU and Charles Sturt University are conducting studies into the ecology and conservation of insectivorous bats in rural landscapes. These studies show that roost sites are a key habitat requirement for most species of bat. In Australia 18 species of insectivorous bat are classified as threatened." Craig Grabham.



"Scorpions are arachnids, which means that they are related to animals such as spiders, ticks, mites and harvestmen. They are nocturnal hunters, feeding mainly on beetles, cockroaches, spiders, slaters, centipedes and millipedes. The scorpion digests its prey by pouring digestive juices onto the prey and breaking it up with its jaws. The hard outer body casings are discarded. The main predators of scorpions are carnivorous marsupials such as the dunnart." Dirk Spennemann.



"Sturt's Desert Pea is referred to as the flower of blood by some Indigenous groups. The name comes from a story about a young woman who escaped marriage to an elder by eloping with a younger lover. The spurned man and a few of his friends tracked down the couple and killed them both. Sometime later, the old man returned to the place where the deaths took place and found the ground covered in these scarlet flowers. This is just one example of how biodiversity and culture are intimately and inextricably linked. Our environment shapes our culture, our identity, and our lives." Dirk Spennemann.

Biodiversity spotlight on South

Saving Sam – Friends of Strzelecki Koalas

Many people remember Sam. Sam was the Strzelecki koala who survived the Black Saturday bushfires with the help of a local fire fighter, but later lost his life. The plight of Sam touched the nation, but many people don't realise that more koalas will be lost if we fail to protect and enhance the Strzelecki region they call home.

In May 2010 the South Gippsland Landcare Network launched the Friends of Strzelecki Koalas – a three-year project to increase habitat and the ecological resilience of the landscape for Strzelecki koalas and other important native species.

Protecting and enhancing our high quality remnant vegetation and creating biolinks between remnant bush will allow koalas to move across farmland rather than along the roadsides where they often come off second best against cars. Crossing open farmland can also leave them vulnerable to attack by foxes.

The project aims to protect remnant vegetation by fencing and active management, increase areas of

vegetation by strategically connecting areas of remnant vegetation, reduce the threat of pest plants and animals and raise community awareness of the importance of remnant vegetation in the Strzelecki Ranges. While the project has koalas as a focus, any work to protect and improve the landscape improves the environment for all species, including humans.

A recent partnership with HVP Plantations has been very important for the project. HVP donates resources including finance, data, time and land to the communities that surround its plantations. HVP has prepared a Strzelecki Koala Habitat Atlas in conjunction with the Australian Koala Foundation. The atlas identifies primary and secondary koala habitat and the Landcare network is working with HVP to identify the work needed to link these areas.

The project is also funded by donations from the public and we hope to raise additional funds from corporate



This koala lives in the Dollar area near Foster North.

partners and philanthropic trusts. All donations over two dollars are tax deductible through the South Gippsland Landcare Fund.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend of the Strzelecki Koalas check the website at www.sgln.org.au for details and a membership form.



Members and friends of the Mardan Mirboo North Landcare Group at the launch of the Friends of Strzelecki Koalas.

One million trees

In September 2009 the South Gippsland Landcare Network launched a project to plant one million trees over the next five years. By September 2010 more than 86,600 indigenous plants are in the ground, with many plantings still to be recorded.

By increasing the extent of vegetation in the region we hope to improve the resilience of our high value ecosystems. The project has been supported by the West Gippsland CMA and South Gippsland Water. Works undertaken in the first year have included the creation of biolinks, revegetation and weed control for Fisher Lake wetlands and retiring steep land and revegetation to control erosion.

Propagation kits were developed as part of the launch of the one million trees project. The kits contained potting mix, tubes, a spray bottle, instructions and enough seed for 500 trees or shrubs matched to a specific ecological vegetation class.

The kits were launched at Mossvale Park in September 2009 with a level of frenzy and excitement generally reserved for the January sales. The day was an outstanding success with the level of demand for kits taking us by surprise.

Propagation workshops were held over the spring and the results have been highly variable. One grower reported that her seed yielded more than 900 seedlings. Another participant



Linda Whitaker from the Arawata Landcare Group with the results of her 500-seed propagation kit.

bought a second kit because her first kit produced more than 600 seedlings. However, we did have a number of growers who reported poor results.



A site in the Mardan Mirboo North Landcare Group area before works (left) and after five years of waterway protection and revegetation works (right).

Remnant gems of the Tarwin Catchment

The upper reaches of the Tarwin Catchment are the focus of a project aimed at protecting high quality remnant vegetation and improving water quality. Funding for this project has been provided by the West Gippsland CMA and the project is being delivered by the South Gippsland Landcare Network.

The project is specifically targeting landholders in the upper reaches of the Tarwin Catchment who have very high quality areas of remnant vegetation on their properties. Herbicide will be made available to control weeds. There is also assistance available to landholders to fence out and revegetate creeks or waterways that are closely linked to existing areas of remnant vegetation.

All of these projects are the result of partnerships and collaborations. The South Gippsland Landcare Network thanks the West Gippsland CMA, South Gippsland Water and HVP Plantations for their support for these important biodiversity projects.

For further information go to:
www.sgl.n.org.au

Biodiversity and human well-being

By Margrit Beemster

Researchers have found that demographic factors such as age, gender and years lived in a neighbourhood are more important in influencing personal well-being than variations in biodiversity or natural features in neighbourhoods.

A Charles Sturt University research project analysed responses from nearly 1000 surveys delivered to randomly chosen households in 36 local neighbourhoods in nine regional centres and towns in Victoria and NSW. The results were analysed in three different studies.

Associate professor Gary Luck, an ecologist from the Institute for Land, Water and

Society, led the study examining the relationship between biodiversity and well-being, comparing the responses from the survey with data on biodiversity (bird species richness and abundance, plant density, vegetation cover, and levels of urban development).

"Basically there was no strong relationship between variations in neighbourhood environment and personal well-being," said Dr Luck.

"People who lived in neighbourhoods with more birds and more flowering plants didn't get a higher score than those who lived in neighbourhoods with less birds and plants. There are other factors which also influence people's well-being, such as your age and how much income you had.

"The same went for people's connectedness to nature. We did find, however, a stronger, more positive relationship between the natural features of the neighbourhood and neighbourhood well-being, but still demographic factors tended to be more important."

Dr Dianne Boxall, a psychologist from the Centre for Inland Health, led the study on relationships between neighbourhood well-being and connectedness to nature, and personal well-being.

"The idea is that, from an evolutionary perspective, human beings have an inborn predisposition to prefer the natural environment, and are more likely to relate to it than an artificial one," said Dr Boxall.

"Perhaps people choose where they live because they are choosing an area that is going to make them feel better. Access to green space and biodiversity might be attractive to people without them even realising it. Using the Neighbourhood Well-being Index it appears that people in a richer, more biologically diverse environment are expressing more satisfaction and happiness than those in a less diverse environment, bearing in mind the demographic factors are still important."

Dr Boxall found a small but significant correlation between the Neighbourhood Well-being Index and connectedness to nature. That is, the higher the sense of neighbourhood well-being the greater the connection to nature.

"Feelings of neighbourhood well-being and connectedness to nature might be associated with people's long-term care for the environment," said Dr Boxall. "If we can understand what makes people feel connected then hopefully we can improve people's care for the natural environment."

Dr Penny Davidson, a social researcher from the Institute for Land, Water and Society, looked at how factors such as outdoor activity levels and demographics influenced connectedness to nature.

She found that people who were more active felt more connected to nature. Women felt more connected than men, as did people with a higher level of education, and people with pets.



Dr Dianne Boxall's social research project showed that people with a higher sense of neighbourhood well-being feel a greater connection to nature.

“

If we can understand what makes people feel connected then hopefully we can improve people's care for the natural environment.

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Researchers from Charles Sturt University were surprised to find that demographic factors played a bigger role than neighbourhood biodiversity in people's sense of well-being.

Landcare message hits the media

Landcare broke new ground during Landcare week in September with its first ever series of community service announcements released to television, print and radio. The advertisements were developed by DSE and Landcare Australia Limited in partnership, and celebrate the achievements of current volunteers as well as encouraging people to get involved in Landcare across Victoria.

More than 100 community members and 115 school students were involved in television filming over two days in August. The finished advertisement depicts volunteers from many different walks of life climbing out of a coin collection can in different settings. The aim is to persuade people to donate their time, rather than money, to Landcare.

Terry Hedt's property near Little River benefited from the planting of more than 1200 seedlings during filming. The advertisement also features spectacular views of Ross and Lynn George's property, Westgate Park on the Yarra River in Melbourne, Lilydale Sanctuary along the Moorabool River and the Anglesea coastline.



Laura Berg and Katie Ryle survey coastal grasses at Anglesea for the filming of the Landcare community service announcement.

Geelong Landcare Network Co-ordinator Bronte Payne and Landcare volunteer James Pettit worked behind the scenes to ensure the filming ran smoothly at Geelong. Friends of

Westgate Park members Tony Flude, Naomi Sunner, George Fotherington and Lecki Ord organised the volunteers for the filming at Westgate Park. To view the finished product visit www.landcarevic.net.au/news/landcarecsa

City creek links culture and community

Flemington's rich culture was celebrated in May with a tree planting and community day at CityLink's ornamental pond on Moonee Ponds Creek as part of National Tree Day.

The project was jointly funded by a Melbourne Water Community Grant and CityLink's Neighbourhood Connections Program. Families from the surrounding community and representatives from local councils planted 300 trees to revegetate the area around the pond, under the supervision of the Victorian Mobile Landcare Group.

The day provided CityLink's neighbouring communities with the opportunity to get involved in the Moonee Ponds Creek environment while celebrating their cultural diversity.

Wurundjeri elder Ian Hunter performed a smoking ceremony to mark the beginning of a strong community connection with the Moonee Ponds Creek and the greater environment. There was also a performance from the Minua Gidij Murra Dancers and a rendition of a Koorie song by the Debney Meadows Primary School choir.

The tree planting is the latest in a number of CityLink community projects designed to improve the Moonee Ponds Creek environment, including Clean Up Australia Day and the Evans Street mural project.



The Victorian Mobile Landcare Group assisted the Flemington community at a planting day on Moonee Ponds Creek.

Woodside Landcare Group turns 21

by Bronwyn Johnson

In 1989 Frankie MacLennan came home from a meeting at Phillip Island and told her husband Graeme that she was going to start a farm trees group in Woodside. The group later became known as the Woodside Landcare Group. Twenty-one years of dedication to the idea of creating

sustainable farms and restoring the beautiful South Gippsland Plains followed.

On 18 September 2010 the Woodside Landcare Group celebrated its 21st birthday with a traditional country roast dinner at the Woodside Hall. There was music, fine local wine, a history lesson from

first president Fergus Irving and speeches from Rob Youl and Neville Penrose.

The event was an opportunity for the group to discuss past experiments in shelterbelt construction and roadside restoration and reminisce about misadventures with home-built seeders and questionable species choices. We shared our failures and successes and lamented the loss of knowledge and staff from the area as funding priorities shifted. It was an opportunity to remember, reconnect and laugh.

There were 26 people at our first meeting; 14 of them are still members today and another 30 families have joined along the way. We all agreed that one of the secrets of our longevity is the superb suppers provided at all our meetings by Kay Belcher – a passionfruit sponge and a pragmatic sense of humour can get you through anything!

For further information please contact Bronwyn Johnson on 5175 7893 or by email at bronwynj@wgcm.vic.gov.au



The 21st birthday organising committee. Back row from left, Charles Meckiff and Bryan Walpole. Front row from left, Frankie MacLennan, Kay Belcher, Bronwyn Johnson, Elizabeth Balderstone, Rosemary Irving and Fergus Irving.

Landholder knowledge sought for critical grasslands

The Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion is a massive 2.3 million hectares stretching from Melbourne in the east to Portland in the west. In spring, the small, scattered remnants of native grasslands are dotted with wildflowers in shades of yellow, orange, purple, red and white.

The native grasslands and grassy woodlands occur on highly fertile and arable lands and have undergone a massive decline. In recognition of this, the Natural Temperate Grasslands and the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion have been listed as critically endangered under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The listing requires that National Recovery Plans be prepared to establish what needs to be done to conserve these communities. Vanessa Craigie and Melissa Doherty from DSE are working on a Recovery Plan to guide the management of both communities. The plan will identify key areas where these communities occur, document the threats facing them (such as weed invasion), identify actions to address

the main threats and educate the wider public about the beauty and importance of these grassy ecosystems.

Many of the grasslands and grassy woodlands are on private land and the knowledge of landholders in identifying the best techniques for management will be

invaluable. Vanessa and Melissa are keen to hear from landholders. They can be contacted by email, or by telephone and are also available to attend field days.

For further information please contact Vanessa Craigie on 9637 9851, or by email at vanessa.craigie@dse.vic.gov.au



Native grasslands with Everlasting and White Sunray Daisies on a property near Dunkeld.



Taken from Jarrahmond Road, this photograph shows the landscape scale connectivity beginning to occur across the Snowy River Flats near Orbost.

Jarrahmond landscape links bring back the birds

For close to 20 years members of the Jarrahmond Landcare Group have worked steadily to protect and improve native vegetation on river flats bordering the Snowy River. The focus has been on fragments of native bushland in paddocks vulnerable to weed invasion, grazing and incremental clearing. By fencing out livestock and restoring native plants, vital wildlife habitat has been conserved.

A few years ago the group upped the ante with a bold plan to reconnect these restored and native remnant areas and to create a continuous native plant corridor between the Yalmy State Forest and the Snowy River. It became known locally as the Linkages project.

Far East Victoria Landcare Co-ordinator Penny Gray said a total of 21 landholders had participated over the years.

"Altogether they've put up 25 kilometres of fencing and planted over 25,000 plants across the lower catchment of the Snowy River, with all landholders signing agreements to maintain the new fences, remove weeds and pests and prevent or minimise the impacts of grazing. An average of eight properties participate annually," Penny said.

"It's only a small community and some are absentee landholders who come down on weekends. I've been impressed by the group's attitude. Members quietly contribute by carrying out small-scale projects on their own properties and adding to them, according to their capabilities, every year."

The project has received over \$125,000 from various funding sources in the eight years since its formal inception. The funding has supported tree planting and fencing materials and has been used to geometrically correct aerial photos of the group's 4800-hectare region to help prioritise replanting activities and measure progress over time.

Along the way partnerships have been formed with the East Gippsland CMA, Parks Victoria, DPI and DSE. Field days have been held on seed collection, learning how to use a GPS and rainforest revegetation techniques.

Greening Australia has contributed welcome expertise while volunteers from the Orbost Youth Club, Forestech TAFE and Orbost Secondary College have assisted with the tree planting.

“

Members quietly contribute by carrying out small-scale projects on their own properties and adding to them, according to their capabilities, every year.

”



An owl box produced for the Jarrahmond Landcare Group by the Orbost Men's Shed is installed by a local arborist.

More recently Jarrahmond Landcare Group members decided to monitor birds in the area to see if the environmental works were causing a return of different species. Community members were invited to contribute to a bird species list and have now put together a brochure on the birds of Jarrahmond. More than 120 photographs were donated to the project by the people of Gippsland.

The Landcare group has also formed a partnership with the Orbost Men's Shed who are making boxes for use by barn owls. The boxes will soon be seen scattered across the Snowy River flats in an attempt to encourage the birds to nest in the area.

For further information contact Penny Gray on 5161 1365.

Around the State – News from the

North East

Above average rainfall through winter and spring has seen a number of flooding events with significant damage to some catchments – particularly those that were fire affected. Landcare groups have been taking advantage of the good rainfall to undertake as much revegetation as plant supplies will allow.

A collective of Landcare networks in the North East was successful in gaining funding for the Caring for our Country Regional Landcare Facilitator, and is now recruiting. This is a great result for the networks, showing they can plan and undertake region-wide projects.

The Mudgegonga Landcare Group was awarded more than \$100,000 in funding from the Recycling for Recovery program for fire recovery work with four neighbouring groups.

For further information contact
Tom Croft on (02) 6024 9107.

Mallee

The Mallee is having one of its best seasons in the last decade and confidence in the area is once again on the rise. A number of landscape scale projects are being implemented, both on and off farms and the Sea Lake Landcare Group has a project that involves ten landholders along 12 kilometres of the Dunmunkle Creek working to link the



Nungurner Primary School students enjoyed getting their hands dirty on National Tree Day.

lower end of Lake Tyrrell with Green Lake. Meantime the The Yelta Landcare Group has planted over 3500 trees throughout the Merbein area west of Mildura.

Rabbit control is a priority this year. The good season for farming has created ideal conditions for rabbits. There has been a rapid increase in rabbit numbers and, if not contained, they will be a major headache for farmers and the environment in the year ahead. The locust issue is another major concern.

For further information contact
Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

Goulburn Broken

Our fire recovery networks are working to deliver the Recycling for Recovery Program projects. Several facilitators have moved on recently and it takes some time to rebuild knowledge and capacity in the region. The Pasture Cropping project is going from strength to strength. Courses are now being delivered in NSW and information is being provided to interested Landcare networks in Tasmania.

This is an exciting time for Landcare in our region. Our facilitators are working on the delivery of wetland tenders and to support the communication and community engagement activities of agency programs. We hope to sustain this momentum during the institutional change process and the development of the new Catchment Authority.

For further information contact
Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

East Gippsland

Landcare is alive and well in the region with high participation rates and an extensive range of on-ground works underway. The networks have run a number of well-attended field days, including a workshop in Buchan with DPI on wild dog management. One network is now implementing their new Junior Landcare Program. In the Far East a dinner held during Landcare week attracted more than 100 attendees. Comedian Rod Quantock provided the entertainment for the evening.

Welcome back to Natalie Jenkins, who has returned from maternity leave to co-ordinate activities for the East Gippsland Landcare Network and best wishes to Penny Gray who is on extended leave from Far East Victoria Landcare. Thank you to everyone for being so supportive during my first months as Regional Co-ordinator.

For further information contact
Sandie Brown 5150 3581.

Port Phillip and Westernport

Volunteer Landcarers from across the region gathered at Federation Square in September for the CMA's 2010 Regional Landcare Awards. Wurundjeri elder Bill Nicholson Jr and the Jindi Worobak dance troupe performed a welcome to country after an inspiring speech on community leadership by Dr Rhonda Galbally. The master of ceremonies for the day was Dr Kate Auty, Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability.

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The Mallee is having one of its best seasons in the last decade and confidence in the area is once again on the rise.

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Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

Congratulations go to Balnarring Primary School in the Young People Caring for Land category, Nillumbik Shire Council in the Local Government Caring for Land category, Vicki Boyle in the Individual Caring for Public Land category, Friends of Merri Creek in the Community Group Caring for Public Land category, Janet Truscott and Grant Murray in the Individual Caring for Private Land category, Faye Tughtan and Graham Wood in the Primary Producer Caring for Land category and Labertouche Landcare and Sustainable Farming Group in the Community Group Caring for Private Land category.

For further information contact
Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

North Central Region

We've had a challenging couple of months after a downpour on the first weekend of September brought flash flooding to parts of the region.

Eight groups were put through their paces at Landcare Gateway training. The groups learnt about the Gateway and then developed their own pages with news items, activities, newsletters and photos. The CMA also hosted three native vegetation identification workshops in Rochester, Castlemaine and Inglewood attended by more than 60 people.

Coinciding with Landcare Week, the CMA distributed the latest edition of the Community Grants Guide – August 2010. The guide is available on the Landcare page of the CMA website and also on the North Central page on the Victorian Landcare Gateway.

For further information contact
Jodie Odgers 5440 1883.

West Gippsland

The Yarram Yarram Landcare Network's Jack & Albert River Restoration Project is underway.

Network co-ordinator Paul Martin and his wife Gemma are leaving the region and everyone wishes them well. Paul leaves the network in the hands of a capable and committed new board.

Maffra & District Landcare Network is going through its new strategic planning process with its new co-ordinator, Darren Williams, while Beth Ripper, chair of the network, has taken on an extra role as

Senior Deputy Chair with the Victorian Landcare Council.

Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network has recently recruited two new Landcare groups. South Gippsland Landcare Network held its AGM in September and the number of new board nominees exceeded the positions available.

The new desalination plant has created some opportunities for the Bass Coast Landcare Network. The network has also been reflecting on the sad passing of Peter Huthwaite. Peter's commitment and dedication to Landcare, his group and his network was exceptional. He is sorely missed.

For further information contact
Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

Corangamite

Several Landcare groups participated in National Tree Day with thousands of trees planted. The 2010 Rip Curl Planet Day was also a huge success, with 200 volunteers planting 15,000 seedlings across nine sites between Point Impossible and Point Addis. The event was a collaboration between local volunteers, corporations,



Rip Curl staff worked with Landcare volunteers at the Rip Curl Planet Day. Seedlings were planted at nine sites between Point Impossible and Point Addis.

government, land managers and the Surf Coast & Inland Plains Network

A huge thank you to the Geelong, Lara, Batesford and Anglesea volunteers who gave up their time to be involved in the Landcare Community Service Announcement project. We couldn't have done it without them.

For further information contact
Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

Wimmera

Max Skeen stepped down from the position of Regional Landcare Co-ordinator in September after completing an outstanding innings. It was great to see his efforts recognised by so many Landcare supporters across the Wimmera and around the State. Joel Boyd has moved into the position and is keen to build on Max's achievements.

The Victorian Landcare Forum at Halls Gap was a great achievement for the region. We now have three part-time Regional Landcare Facilitators supported through Caring for our Country funding.

We welcome Gail Harradine to the region as the new NRM Indigenous Facilitator. The Wimmera River Community Recovery Project has received funding through the Recycling for Recovery program to protect and enhance the natural and cultural values of the Yanga Track area affected by the 2009 Renslaw fire.

For further information contact
Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

The Victorian State Landcare team bids a special farewell and thank you to Max Skeen, one of the original members of the team from its inception in 2002.

Glenelg Hopkins

Many groups have been involved with revegetation projects. Planting has been going ahead with optimism following good winter and spring rains. In some areas planting has been delayed due to too much water – a rare occurrence.

A number of groups have taken advantage of the Gateway website. The uptake is slowly increasing and the CMA has planned further one-on-one training with group members to take place before Christmas.

For further information contact
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

In brief

ClimateWatch

ClimateWatch is an online database developed to improve understanding of the effects climate change is having on Australia's plants and animals.

Landcarers are invited to get involved in ClimateWatch. As a registered ClimateWatch user you can observe the timing of natural events, such as the budding of flowers, falling of leaves, calling of frogs and the appearance of migratory birds and record these observations on the ClimateWatch website.

The data collected will contribute to an online database for people studying the impact of climate on ecosystems and will help shape Australia's scientific response to climate change. Go to www.climatewatch.org.au and follow the simple steps to register.

FTLA Annual forum and AGM

Farm Tree & Landcare Association (FTLA) members and friends are invited to attend the association's annual forum and AGM in Melbourne on 24 February 2011. The event will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the FTLA.

Professor Allan Curtis from Charles Sturt University will present the results from his latest Landcare survey and a discussion session will be held for members to talk about the future direction of the FTLA and Landcare



"The Curl Snake is a small venomous snake that shelters within soil cracks and beneath fallen timber. Habitat loss has been linked to population declines in this species. We found it by using recycled railway sleepers and roofing tiles. Surveys of this species by the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University will help improve our understanding of reptile distributions and habitat requirements." Damian Michael.

in a positive and friendly atmosphere.

For further information call the FTLA on 9207 5527 or email ftla@vff.org.au

Next issue – Managing water

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on managing water.

We welcome your contributions on this topic as well as your general Landcare news and views.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by 15 February 2011.

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Read the magazine online

Back issues of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine can be found at www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine
The print size of the magazine can be enlarged online for easier reading.