

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Summer 2017 Issue 68

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



CONNECTING NATURE AND COMMUNITY FEATURE

Crowdfunding tips

Blogging for nature

How to run farm and nature walks



Victorian
Landcare
Program



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SUMMER 2017 ISSUE 68



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Editorial Committee

Tracey Koper Victorian Catchment Management Council, Susi Johnson Farm Tree and Landcare Association, Kevin Chaplin Mallee CMA, James Link Landcare Australia Limited, Mike Haughton Victorian Landcare Council, John Robinson DELWP and Carrie Tiffany Editor.

Editorial contributions

Carrie Tiffany
Email: editorviclandcare@gmail.com

Cover photograph

Wildlife photographer Chris Tzaros leading a bird photography course in the Rise and Shine Bushland Reserve near Newstead in Central Victoria in April 2016. Photograph by Geoff Park.



From the Minister

Connecting with our natural environment benefits our wellbeing by keeping us physically active, improving mental health, supporting healthy ageing and building stronger communities.

This makes Landcarers among the most important people in our community, promoting healthy activities in the outdoors while making a remarkable difference to local landscapes and our natural environment.

There is a great deal of behind-the-scenes work in keeping Landcare groups, network boards and committees running effectively. In this edition, you will read some of their fascinating stories from the bush and on the farm.

You can learn about a project in the South Gippsland Landcare Network to improve koala habitat in the Strzelecki Ranges, which is helping to rally the community to protect and promote this iconic species. Landholders have completed major revegetation works and the local community has undertaken training to learn how to monitor the local koala population.

You can also read about Merrin Butler, from the Mount Worth Landcare Group in

West Gippsland, who promotes nature walk activities and farm visits to encourage more people to experience nature. Christmas Hills Landcare Group also uses regular walks, talks, guest speakers, wildlife monitoring cameras and live animal displays to increase interest in the local natural environment and create a sense of shared purpose.

When it comes to caring for our local landscapes, there is no task too small and no effort that should go unrecognised. By working together and supporting our Landcare groups and networks, we can make a real difference to the future of Victoria's natural environment and growing communities.

Last year we marked a significant milestone when we celebrated Landcare's 30th Anniversary with a special recognition event at Queen's Hall in Melbourne's Parliament House.

Parliamentary Secretary for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Anthony Carbines, presented the 2016 Joan Kirner Landcare Award to Alice Knight OAM and 10 Landcare Executive Committee Service Awards, one award for each Catchment Management Authority region.

I would like to personally congratulate these worthy winners and thank them for their outstanding efforts.

It is important to celebrate the dedication of our community in this way. We have had an incredible 30 years of achievements and on-ground actions that support healthy landscapes and healthy communities. Landcarers are our environmental pillars and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve in the years ahead.

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

New Victorian Landcare Gateway

The new Victorian Landcare Gateway website received more than 11,000 visits in its first two months after its launch in late September 2016. There was a 96 per cent increase in mobile devices accessing the site. The website has been significantly improved with a new layout, use of larger fonts and faster loading times.

Landcare groups are encouraged to use free online document storage platforms such as Google Drive and Dropbox to

save documents rather than storing them on the website. Links to stored documents can be easily created on the website.

Information on managing group content on the website can be found under resources.

Go to www.landcarevic.org.au

For more information, including updating editing access to your group pages, email landcarevic@gmail.com

Victorian Landcare Program Review Action Plan

The Victorian Government review of the Victorian Landcare Program involved extensive consultation with the Landcare community.

The Victorian Landcare Program Review Action Plan details the recommendations made to help shape the Victorian Government's future support for Landcare.

Victorian Landcare Program Review Action Plan is available on the Victorian Landcare Gateway website. Go to www.landcarevic.org.au

Landcare in Victoria celebrates 30 years

By John Robinson

Landcare in Victoria celebrated 30 years of achievement on Friday 25 November 2016 at Parliament House, Melbourne.

More than 200 people attended the event in the beautifully appointed Queen's Hall. Most of the attendees were community members who had been involved in Landcare since its early days.

Special guests included Ron Kirner, the late Joan Kirner's husband, and Heather Mitchell's three daughters – Deirdre Brocklebank, Lindley Bulot and Sandra Mitchell.

In 1986 Joan Kirner, then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and Heather Mitchell, then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation, came together to tackle land degradation in Victoria. The partnership they developed between the State Government and Victoria's farming community produced Landcare. Joan Kirner officially launched Landcare at Terry Simpson's property at Winjallock, near St Arnaud on 25 November 1986.

In Heather Mitchell, Joan Kirner had found a like-minded partner and ally. Both Joan and Heather understood that community and landholder participation would be key to the success of Landcare. They could also see that when the community worked together to tackle local problems much wider social and environmental benefits were produced.

In its first year seven Landcare groups were formed. In 2016 Victoria has almost 600 Landcare groups that cover 68 per cent of privately owned land. Landcare projects can be found in more than 20 countries around the world

The anniversary celebration at Parliament House recognised the achievements of Landcare in Victoria over the past 30 years, and acknowledged the contribution of community Landcarers to the movement since its inception.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Anthony Carbines MP, presented the prestigious 2016 Joan Kirner Landcare Award to Alice Knight OAM. Alice was recognised for her outstanding contribution to Landcare and the catchments and communities she has served.

Alice, along with her brother Kevin, are fourth generation farmers from Pittong, west of Ballarat. Alice's involvement in Landcare began in 1988 as a founding member of the Pittong-Hoyles Creek Landcare Group. In the 1990s she joined the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group's committee where she served as chairperson for five years.

Alice's passion and commitment to Landcare and the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group are legendary. She understands the importance of community participation and the need to involve private landholders in protecting, restoring and enhancing their natural resources to improve both productivity and the environment.

Alice was surprised and honoured to win the award.

"I was very touched. To receive the award in a room full of Landcarers who have made

significant contributions, many of them friends, made it even more meaningful."

Alice also acknowledged the immense contributions of her brother Kevin Knight, Cam Nicholson and the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group.

Anthony Carbines also presented Landcare Executive Committee Service Awards to 10 community Landcarers. These awards recognise a person from each of the CMA regions who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to their Landcare group or network through an executive committee role.

The winners of the Landcare Executive Committee Services Awards

Corangamite: Peter Berrisford, Bellarine Landcare Group & Bellarine Catchment Network.

East Gippsland: Craig Bush, East Gippsland Landcare Network.

Glenelg Hopkins: Colleen Lomas, Panyyabyr Landcare Group.

Goulburn Broken: Allan Stute, Sunday Creek Dry Creek Landcare Group, Sunday Creek Sugarloaf Sub Catchment Inc., & South West Goulburn Landcare Network.

Mallee: Dorothy Reid, Birchip Landcare Group.

North Central: Doug Hansford, Guildford & Upper Loddon Landcare Group.

North East: Jim De Hennin, Wises Creek-Talgarno Landcare Group & Mitta to Murray Blackberry Action Group.

Port Phillip & Western Port: Irene Pearey, Yarra Ranges Landcare Network.

West Gippsland: Melissa Ainsworth, Yarram Yarram Landcare Network.

Wimmera: Michael McMurtrie, Jallukar Landcare Group & Project Platypus.

The list of those on the 30 Years of Landcare in Victoria Honour Roll was also on display at Queen's Hall.

For details about the 30 Years of Landcare award winners and the Honour Roll go to the Victorian Landcare Gateway www.landcarevic.org.au



Alice Knight (third from right) with the 10 Landcare Executive Committee Service Award winners.

Five crowdfunding tips from the southern Otways

By Libby Riches



In late 2015 the Southern Otway Landcare Network (SOLN) was offered the opportunity to participate in the Victorian Government's Threatened Species Protection Initiative crowdfunding pilot. Crowdfunding involves raising funds for a project through internet donations.

DELWP offered us direct access to the crowdfunding platform Pozible, which provided us with the advice and assistance we needed. Ultimately our crowdfunding campaign was successful bringing in around \$20,000 to support our threatened species projects.

The campaign was also very hard work and required the Network to draw down on all our resources and social capital. Crowdfunding requires a lot of time and effort and may be a challenge for small or under-resourced groups or networks. We've put together a few tips to assist groups and networks that might be thinking about a crowdfunding campaign.

It's time consuming

Estimate the amount of time you think that the campaign is going to take and then double it, maybe even triple it. One staff member at SOLN worked almost full-time on the campaign over the three weeks that it ran.

Preparation is critical

Take time before you launch to put a strong team together; design your campaign and ready your social networks. Once your campaign is live your job will be to promote it widely and constantly wherever you can. A communications plan that identifies all available avenues for promotion and sets a timetable for working through them is a great idea.

Be realistic and work with your supporter base

You are seeking funding to continue doing the good community and environmental



The Southern Otway Landcare Network's crowdfunding campaign helped to raise funds to continue work on habitat monitoring and restoration for threatened species including the Long-nosed Potoroo.

work you are already known for. Most of your support will be from existing community connections who already know you and want you to succeed. Be prepared to call in your hard-earned social capital.

Know your audience

The southern Otways has poor internet connectivity which results in quite low levels of computer literacy. Many of our members wanted to support us but were uncomfortable using a computer based platform. Talk to people face to face.

We set up a laptop at the SOLN Christmas Party so people could make donations online. Be open to taking donations by cheque or cash. Pozible can help you with the best way to manage this.

Make it fun

For those of us who aren't great at self-promotion or naturally comfortable with

asking people for money, crowdfunding can be a stressful experience. Keeping it fun will help to make it easier. One of our community members donated straws of Limousin stud bull semen as one of our rewards. The reward wasn't claimed but it generated a bit of a buzz.

Crowdfunding was time consuming and stressful, but the benefits were terrific. We brought in money that means we can continue to support our habitat monitoring and restoration program. There was also a strong sense of support offered by the community. Important relationships were consolidated and new partnerships developed.

For further information contact Libby Riches at libby.landcare@soln.org

Thanks to Doug Gimsey for the photograph.

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Establishing connections between landholders and the local flora and fauna has been a core objective for the Christmas Hills Landcare Group.

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Cackles the kookaburra was a hit at the local primary school's spring fair.

Animals and secret cameras encourage landholders

The Christmas Hills area is rich in flora and fauna. Large areas of remnant woodlands and forests occur on private land, with several rare and threatened species using this vegetation as habitat.

Establishing connections between landholders and the local flora and fauna has been a core objective for the Christmas Hills Landcare Group (CHLG). The group sees these positive experiences and connections as the first stage in engaging landholders to take action to care for their local environment.



Sisters Tayla and Jordan Keene bond with a carpet snake.

Animals are an attraction

We have used a number of different methods with varying degrees of success. Our first attempt to use animals to attract a crowd was in 2012 when we arranged for the Wild Action Zoo to bring a selection of native animals to the local primary school spring fair. We requested as many locally occurring species as possible.

We'd also arranged for a local ecologist to give a presentation on the importance of wildlife habitat in Christmas Hills, and then a talk from the group on how we help landholders to look after this habitat.

The event ran inside the school hall. The animals were a hit. The hall was packed with more than 140 people (many were school-aged children). The crowd was thrilled with the parade of kangaroos, koalas, wombats, kookaburras, Masked Owls, Lace Monitors and blue-tongue lizards. Several delighted children were selected from the crowd to come up and hold and touch an animal on show.

However, with food and other spring fair attractions outside, the numbers quickly dropped for the talk by the ecologist, and for the group's presentation we had 15 people in the audience – all of them

already members! So we missed an opportunity to get our message to a wider audience.

In 2014 we engaged Blacksnake Productions to bring a selection of snakes and lizards, with as many local species as possible, to an end-of-year event for our members held at a private house. The animal presenter was also asked to provide advice on what landholders can do to care for reptile habitat on their properties.

This time the message was successfully delivered. We had more than 30 people in attendance with a good selection of young people. We asked the young people why they had come and it was because of the snakes.

In 2015 we engaged Full Flight Conservation Centre to provide a flight display of birds of prey. By sandwiching our annual general meeting between an expert guest speaker on birds of prey and the bird display, we had more than 60 people stay for the meeting. They all received a copy of our annual report, reflected on the health of the group, decided on the program of events for the coming year and saw the management committee re-elected. More than 90 people watched the birds of prey show.



A flight display of birds of prey and an expert guest speaker encouraged people to attend the Christmas Hills Landcare Group's annual general meeting.

to care for nature at Christmas Hills

By Doug Evans

Cameras reveal the hard to see

Since 2011 the CHLG has been making motion-sensing infrared cameras available to landholders. We provide instructions on how to use the cameras and where to place them to detect native fauna. Initially the cameras captured still images, but since 2013 they have been set up to take short videos. Landholders from more than 40 different properties have participated, and the majority continue to be involved.

We present a selection of the better videos that show what animals were seen as part of our end-of-year event. The Brush-tailed Phascogale is a small carnivorous marsupial that occurs in Christmas Hills, but as it is nocturnal it is not often seen. This Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 listed species has now been captured on motion-sensing cameras on 26 different properties and all of the members of the CHLG can now readily recognise a Brush-tailed Phascogale if they see one.

When landholders were offered the opportunity to have nest boxes specifically suited to phascogales installed on their property the response was strong. More than 80 nest boxes have been installed on 25 different properties in Christmas Hills.

The Slender-tailed Dunnart was first detected by one of the cameras in 2014 and has been reliably captured at four different properties since. Artificial habitat for dunnarts in the form of concrete pavers and ground-mounted nest boxes have since been installed on 22 different properties in an effort to retain and grow this small local population.

Eastern Pygmy Possum mystery

Late in 2015 CHLG member and regular camera user, Phil Styles, caught a fleeting glimpse of a small animal that had been disturbed from a thick shrub in his garden. The animal was unfamiliar to Phil and he tried to get some photographs of it on his mobile phone. The photographs were inconclusive but there was some hope he may have uncovered the tiny and rarely seen Eastern Pygmy Possum.

A few months later, as part of another CHLG project, the stomach contents of a fox trapped on a property less than two kilometres away contained the hairs of an Eastern Pygmy Possum. This information was shared with the wider group at the 2016 annual general meeting.

A camera was set up in the banksia shrubs in Phil Styles's garden and we were able to confirm that his original sighting was

an Eastern Pygmy Possum. Some of the footage now features on YouTube.

Phil has been delighted to be involved in the motion-sensing camera project.

"I love the images we get. We had more than 300 videos from the camera among the banksias – rats, rabbits, cats, dogs, gardeners – and then finally a little creature appeared on the screen that we had been hoping for. I have rarely felt so much pleasure," Phil said.

Phil has since borrowed a cat trap from the local council to remove that threat to his resident pygmy possum. The owners of 21 properties at Christmas Hills are now about to set up and monitor nest boxes designed to suit Eastern Pygmy Possums on their property.

The CHLG has found that providing landholders with the ability to discover what lives on their properties has been a very effective way of connecting people to nature. These positive connections have in turn inspired the landholders to take positive actions to care for habitat on their properties.

Doug Evans is Chair of the Christmas Hills Landcare Group. For further information contact Doug at pipdoug@bigpond.net.au

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For the past few years the Goulburn Broken CMA has been working with local communities to protect Macquarie perch populations in the Yea River and the Hollands, King Parrot, Seven and Hughes creeks.

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The Fish Circus featured a demonstration of electro-fishing.



Young artist Quillan Parker enjoys the activities at the Fish Circus held at Avenel in 2016.

Fish Circus recruits supporters

The once widespread Macquarie perch has declined dramatically since the 1920s, with remaining populations relatively small and isolated. For the past few years the Goulburn Broken CMA has been working with local communities to protect Macquarie perch populations in the Yea River and the Hollands, King Parrot, Seven and Hughes creeks.

Coordinating the Hughes Creek effort is Goulburn Broken CMA's River Health Officer Christine Glassford.

"We are aiming to improve the length, number and condition of the riffles and pools within the Hughes Creek and eventually reconnect this population to the Goulburn River and other isolated populations in the King Parrot Creek and Yea River," Christine said.

As well as habitat improvement works a number of events have been organised to capture the broader community's interest in native fish. Hundreds of people from

across the region turned up to a Fish Circus held in Avenel last September.

"The event evolved from a suggestion from local community member David Palmer for a carp fishing competition," Christine said.

"David raised his concerns about the large number of carp in the Hughes Creek following a fishing trip where he was able to catch nothing else. As well as cleaning up the carp, we saw the day as a terrific way to raise awareness of the need to protect and improve habitat for native fish species such as Macquarie perch."



for the Macquarie perch

By Fiona Lloyd

A local family, the Steers, hosted the event on their property. As well as the carp fishing competition, the day involved demonstrations and displays from Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI), Waterwatch, Turtles Australia and professional carp fisherman Keith Bell. The local Hughes Creek Landcare Group contributed by organising children's activities and entertainment.

Fish volunteers help with habitat

Native Fish Australia (NFA) volunteers have also been keen to get involved in the Macquarie perch project.

"The NFA volunteers, along with native fish expert Will Trueman, ARI and Goulburn Broken CMA staff spent a day in early 2016 working with local landholders to relocate timber from the adjoining land into a stretch of creek that had been identified as a priority area for habitat improvement," Christine said.

"It was quite an operation. The farm manager's tractor and operating skill proved to be invaluable for shifting the larger pieces of material. Smaller limbs were manoeuvred into log jams by

hand, then secured to improve depth and shelter. Though these smaller pieces are more likely to shift in high flows, it is expected they will not move far before getting caught up in the large wood structures installed downstream."

The NFA volunteers also helped plant hessian bags containing indigenous sedges and rushes in staggered groupings across a large sand slug at Wicket Hill, upstream of the Macquarie perch stronghold.

The works are designed to reduce the power of the water when it passes over the sand during high flows and increase the stability of the sand deposits. Reducing the amount of sand that moves during floods will help to protect the important refuge pools downstream.

"Community efforts to improve habitat is critical to support this population growth and expand the range of Macquarie perch, along with other native species that have been mirroring these positive changes, like trout cod and blackfish," Christine said.

More information about the Hughes Creek Project can be found under the current projects tab at www.gbcma.vic.gov.au or contact Christine Glassford at christineg@gbcma.vic.gov.au

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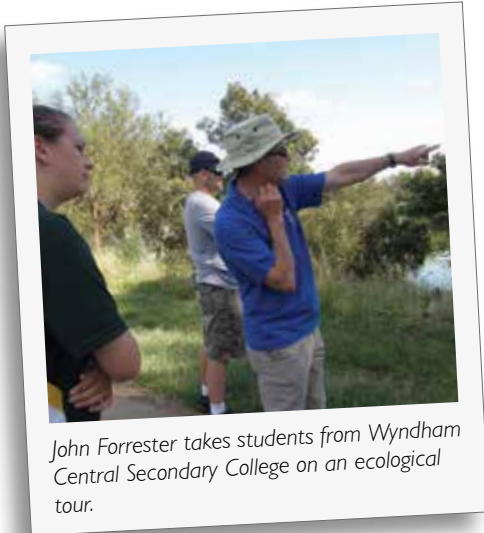
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A day in the life of a Riverkeeper

By John Forrester

The Werribee River is Melbourne's second largest river system. The river has two main streams, the Lerderderg and the Werribee. The Werribee River is the meeting place and country of the Wathaurong and Wurundjeri Traditional Owners.



John Forrester takes students from Wyndham Central Secondary College on an ecological tour.

Lerderderg is based on an Aboriginal word with a possible link to the peppermint gum. Werribee is also an Aboriginal name meaning backbone or spine – which is a good description of how the river has carved its valley across the landscape.

Until the 1980s the system was considered a rural waterway. Since then the three municipalities through which the river flows, Moorabool, Melton and Wyndham, have grown as peri-urban areas to the west of Melbourne. Melton and Wyndham are among the fastest-growing municipalities in Australia.

The Werribee River Association (WRivA) was formed in 1981. Its purpose is to protect water quality in the Werribee River and other local waterways and wetlands flowing to the coast and Port Phillip Bay, promote the re-establishment of natural habitat for wildlife in the catchment, and provide recreational and educational opportunities for the local population.

WRivA is affiliated with Waterkeeper Alliance (WKA), an international

organisation that started in New York in 1966 when commercial and recreational fishermen formed the Hudson River Fishermen's Association to save their river from industrial pollution. The fishermen recognised that citizen-led advocacy was the only way to ensure that laws were enforced and their river, livelihood, and the health of their families were protected.

As a result of its successful work the WKA has spawned over 300 Waterkeepers across the world protecting rivers, bays, coasts, creeks and other waterways.

I was appointed as the Werribee Riverkeeper in 2013 after being a member of WRivA since 1993.

My role as the Werribee Riverkeeper is to champion the river. This means speaking up for the river itself using action, advocacy and education to raise people's awareness about the needs of the river. Riverkeepers and Waterkeepers are also responsible for conducting research into the waterway and the factors that improve it or threaten it.

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My role as the Werribee Riverkeeper is to champion the river. This means speaking up for the river itself using action, advocacy and education to raise people's awareness about the needs of the river.

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A WRivA Waterwatch activity at Bungeys Hole on the Werribee River in 2016.



Riverkeeper John Forrester (at left) leads a group of staff from Good News Lutheran College on a walk at Cobbleicks Ford Reserve, Mount Cottrell, in the City of Wyndham.

In 2014 I attended the WKA River Rally Conference in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania USA and heard Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President of the WKA Board speak.

"This is an apocalyptically important battle we are engaged in ... Our rivers should be our places of wilderness ... as stewards we can act as trustees for our future generations," Kennedy said.

There are four active Australian Waterkeepers. The Port Phillip Baykeeper and the Upper Hunter, Werribee and the Yarra Riverkeepers. We work together to investigate how waterway protectors can be most effective in the Australian context.

The Werribee River and the community

The Werribee River has a number of threats impacting on its health – climate change, worsening water quality, increasing litter loads, unsatisfactory planning and setback requirements, and fragmented management controls.

WRivA works in a wide range of ways and with many organisations to protect its waterway.

Over the last 35 years WRivA has facilitated 70 clean-up activities, 45 revegetation projects, 10 school conferences, 50 school lessons and 50 walks and talks associated with the Werribee River. We have also contributed to more than 20 plans, strategies, and policies.

In 2015 alone WRivA's activities involved 5000 participants or observers.

My day-to-day work as a Riverkeeper is busy and varied. It could involve assisting with LitterWatch – a combined local group activity to raise awareness of the increasingly negative effects of litter – visiting schools for environmental education sessions, contributing to reports, and answering queries about the river.

Annual clean-up days are a major focus. A monthly activity called Beach Patrol 3030 sees volunteer walkers and kayakers alternating each month between cleaning up the Werribee River and Port Phillip Bay beaches. From July 2015 through to October 2016 the community patrol collected 2795 kilograms of rubbish including 4603 bottles and cans. Each of the clean-up days finish with a visit to a local café.

In 2016, WRivA welcomed Melbourne Water as a partner in our programs. We are working together on monthly Waterwatch water quality testing, drought refuge monitoring, DNA sampling for platypus, revegetation projects, workshopping the value of waterways, a Healthy Waterways Strategy, and encouraging young people to become future environmental leaders.

Being a Riverkeeper is very satisfying. It gives a collective voice to a particular community's concerns about their

waterway. There are many Australian rivers, creeks, bays, coastlines and waterways that could do with a Waterkeeper, to ensure that the waterway reflects the values the community desires.

For further information or to get involved with WRivA contact John Forrester at werribeeriver@gmail.com

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My day-to-day work as a Riverkeeper could involve assisting with LitterWatch, visiting schools for environmental education sessions, contributing to reports, and answering queries about the river.

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Blogging for nature

By Geoff Park

Two days before Christmas in 2008 I sat down and wrote my first blog post. It was called A Walk in the Rise and Shine.

Have just enjoyed a nice walk in the Rise and Shine Nature Conservation Reserve with one of our three boys, Joe. There was lots of bird activity with Yellow-tufted and Fuscous Honeyeaters, a family of White-browed Babblers, Dusky Woodswallows and a pair of Jacky Winters feeding a young fledgling. We also found active nests of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters with at least one nest hung in the low foliage of a Long-leaf Box.

Little did I realise at the time that the blog, *Natural Newstead*, would become a minor personal obsession that is regarded with affection by readers from our local patch and around the world. With more than 2000 posts and nearly half a million page hits, *Natural Newstead* is now one of the top 100 birding web sites in the world.

When I first started I didn't really know what a blog was. I had a lot of disorganised notebooks and bird lists and a vague notion it might be a good idea to put them online. I didn't think anybody would be interested in reading it; I just wanted to document my observations in a more organised way.

Natural Newstead has become an online nature diary, largely about the birds and the bush around the small country town

of Newstead in central Victoria, where I live. I'm really committed to the idea of understanding the local, of making sense of my place. My one rule for the blog is that all of the stories and photographs are about places within 15 kilometres of Newstead. It's an area I've spent a lot of time wandering around over the last 30 years.

I've been inspired by the nature diarists from the past, right back to naturalists such as Gilbert White, a pioneering English parson-naturalist who recorded the daily happenings in the one area over a long period of time. Nowadays there are literally hundreds of people maintaining this tradition, via the internet.

A focus on the local

Stories on *Natural Newstead* follow a simple formula – a short written entry designed to be interesting and informative, coupled with some nice photographs, typically of birds, but also including flora and landscape.

Newstead is quite distinct from an ecological point of view because we are at the intersection of different environments. There's the Loddon River, which is the boundary between the volcanic country to our west (largely a cleared, agricultural landscape) and the box ironbark forests and woodlands to our east.

The Moolort Plains are five minutes to the west. I'm fascinated by the plains country.

An Eastern Yellow Robin at Rise and Shine Nature Conservation Reserve.



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With more than 2000 posts and nearly half a million page hits, Natural Newstead is now one of the top 100 birding web sites in the world.

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It is an extraordinary beautiful landscape and a haven for raptors, including some hard to find species such as the Black Falcon and Spotted Harrier. Cairn Curran Reservoir adds another dimension. It was constructed in the 1950s. As the water level goes up and down you find different birds, and birds are a bit of an obsession of mine.

I get a lot of enjoyment out of the blog and the fact that other people enjoy it as well is wonderful. I definitely want to encourage people to get out and experience nature. Even better if they are inspired to record their observations and share them with others. In this way we help people to engage with the natural world and build an understanding and a deeper appreciation of place.

Documenting place can create community

I like to think that what I'm doing – and a lot of people are doing similar things – is maintaining the tradition of a local nature diary. It all comes back to documenting my place. People in town now contact me about things they've seen because they know I'm 'the bird watcher.' It has made me appreciate that a lot of people who I didn't know have a real interest in nature.

I've always been a keen photographer. The challenge of capturing good images of birds has meant an ongoing investment of time to improve my technical skills and money to buy better equipment.

Continued on page 14

A male Mistletoebird at the nest at Strangways.



A female Spotted Pardalote at Newstead.



Powerful Owls at Muckleford.



A Brown Falcon on the Moolort Plains.

My photography is constantly improving, but I'm always searching for the 'perfect image,' which still eludes me.

I try to get out in the bush every day. My day is not complete unless I've been out for an hour. I'll go somewhere and just sit and wait for things to happen. Sometimes you get some nice photographs, other times you dip out completely.

Noticing seasonal changes

One thing I particularly enjoy is documenting the seasonal changes that occur in the local landscape. There's the arrival of spring migrants such as the Sacred Kingfisher and Rainbow Bee-eaters and in autumn welcoming the Swift Parrots after they have bred in Tasmania. There are also international visitors such as stints and sandpipers visiting local wetlands on their oscillating journeys between their northern hemisphere breeding grounds and Australia.

I think it's important to encourage people to record the events in their own local area. It may seem mundane but in 50 years' time our observations are going to be significant when they are all threaded together. You can argue about the cause of climate change, but you can't argue with the fact that apple trees are flowering three weeks earlier than they used to in the UK. The evidence is indisputable. You just need to look at the old observations by Gilbert White and the other nature diarists. Local observations will become more and more important for documenting climate change.

Natural Newstead links me to other local naturalists. I publish the photographs and observations of blog contributors such as my good friend Patrick Kavanagh. Patrick is a keen observer who takes exquisite photographs of birds and tiny invertebrates.

But mainly I do it because I like to celebrate the ordinary. Some people are excited by rare and unusual things, but I think it's just as important to celebrate the everyday.

Geoff Park is a field naturalist, photographer, environment blogger and a partner in the environmental consulting business, Natural Decisions.

To read Natural Newstead go to www.geoffpark.wordpress.com

For further information contact Geoff at geoff.park@naturaldecisions.com.au



Wurundjeri Elders, land management team and community members at the partnership signing agreement event at Mt William stone axe quarry in November 2016.

Anniversary celebrations highlight Landcare connections with Traditional Owners

By Rhys Collins

Celebrations held in the Port Phillip and Western Port region to mark 30 years of Landcare in Victoria have highlighted the positive relationship between the CMA and Traditional Owners.

The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA works with the Boon Wurrung, Wurundjeri and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner organisations within the region. In 2014 the CMA worked with each organisation to develop a series of statements about the goals and aspirations of Indigenous organisations to participate and be involved in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture.

This work has strengthened relationships between local Landcare groups and Traditional Owners. It has also provided employment of Indigenous people including the Wurundjeri Narrap (land) management team.

The 30 years of Landcare anniversary events held in 2016 saw a number of successful cultural activities that further increased personal connections and cultural awareness within the Landcare community.

As part of the field trips associated with the 2016 National Landcare Conference, delegates joined Wurundjeri Narrap team members to tour the Wurundjeri-owned Coranderrk property in Healesville, and the bush foods and insectarium trial set up at the Fielderberry Farm in Cockatoo.

With support from the CMA's regional Landcare Facilitator, Karen Thomas, the Wurundjeri owners of Coranderrk farm have secured funding to develop a farm plan. Management funding through the CMA's environmental project, Yarra4Life, has also been secured.

The Wurundjeri hosted representatives from the Jacksons Creek EcoNetwork, the Upper Deep Creek and Upper Campaspe Landcare Networks and Macedon Ranges Shire on a tour of the culturally significant Mt William stone axe quarry.

Aunty Carolyn Briggs from Boon Wurrung Foundation attended a celebration dinner with Western Port Catchment Landcare Network at Garfield, and welcomed them to Boon Wurrung country with a smoking ceremony.

Regular and ongoing engagement and statements of commitment toward achieving collaborative goals have been formalised in Partnership Agreements signed by the CMA and the Wurundjeri and Wathaurong Cooperative in 2016.

For further information contact Rhys Collins at rhys.collins@ppwcma.vic.gov.au



From left, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA Chair Neville Goodwin signing a partnership agreement with Wurundjeri Elders Aunty Alice Kolasa, Aunty Doreen Garvey Wandin, Aunty Julie-Anne Axeford and David Buntine from the CMA Board at Mt William stone axe quarry.

A community unites for Koalas in the Strzelecki Ranges

By Nicole Walsh

Koalas were once widespread across Victoria but declined to near extinction in the early 1920s due to hunting for the fur trade, land clearing and massive bushfires. In order to combat this decline Koalas from colonies established on French and Phillip Islands were moved across the state.

These translocated Koalas have genetically swamped most of the remaining Koala population in Victoria, with the exception of the Strzelecki Ranges where small surviving colonies of naturally occurring Koalas remained.

Genetic diversity is important for species to adapt to environmental change and disease. The Koala population in the Strzelecki Ranges potentially represents a unique remnant gene pool that may be the key to supporting and rebuilding Victoria's Koala populations in the future.

In recognition of its conservation significance the Victorian Government, through its Communities for Nature Program, provided funding to the South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) for the Friends of Strzelecki Koala (FOSK) – Habitat for Life Project 2012-16.

Over the last four years SGLN has worked to identify suitable Koala habitat on private and public land; engage with landholders to protect and improve the condition of Koala habitat through fencing and weed control; create native vegetation corridors to improve habitat connectivity across the

Strzelecki Ranges and South Gippsland region; and to engage with the broader community to increase awareness and understanding of Koala conservation.

Landholders address habitat issues

Landholders Geoff and Donna Russell from Hallston undertook two plantings with the FOSK project in 2014 and 2015.

"The project involved fencing two gullies that stretched nearly the full length of our property to keep the cattle out of the waterways. The plantings connected to the west branch of the Tarwin River, which was planted out about ten years ago by Gippsland Water," Geoff said.

"The plants have gone very well, we had very few that did not survive, most have flourished. We've also had many comments about how good the gullies now look from the other side of the valley. We can't wait for the trees to get to a size that will support Koalas. We had a great group of people for both plantings including some university students doing environmental studies. They were a terrific group and very enthusiastic," Geoff said.

Communicating the Koala message

The support of the local community for the local Koala population was considered an important part of the project. There was already a high level of interest and concern for the welfare of Koalas in the Strzelecki Ranges and various community activities and events helped to reinforce this.

Getting the message out to the community was achieved through a dedicated FOSK website, Facebook page, a quarterly newsletter to supporters, community forums, field days, community planting days, school visits, training sessions and local newspaper articles.

Various publications and resources have been produced including education material for schools, landholder case studies, an identification guide to the *Eucalypts of the Strzelecki Ranges and Gippsland Plains* and a brochure called *Living with Koalas in the Strzelecki Ranges* which looks at ways that people on bush blocks on the edge of built up areas can co-exist with Koalas.

Another key component of the FOSK project was a Citizen Ecologist Program. This involved the community in collecting data on the local Koala population. A Koala sighting map was launched which allowed people to record Koala sightings in the South Gippsland region on a dedicated website.

Volunteers were recruited through radio, flyers, Facebook, the local Landcare network and the FOSK supporters group. All sorts of people got involved including students, landholders and community members. Their motivation was a genuine desire to learn more about the Koala population and what habitat is needed to support the species.

Volunteers were trained in how to collect Koala scats and submit them for genetic analysis. This has assisted in developing a genetic profile for the Koala in the Strzelecki Ranges. More than 200 scat samples were collected.

Volunteers are valued

Volunteers were also trained to undertake Koala distribution and habitat preference surveys. These surveys form an important baseline on the extent and condition of Koala habitat across the region. The data from the surveys has been used to develop a Koala habitat model. The model allows regional authorities and community groups to generate maps at a local scale on which to base their on-ground priorities. We hope the model and maps will assist local government when assessing planning and development applications in areas used by Koalas.



Volunteers hold up the FOSK banner at Geoff and Donna Russell's planting day at Hallston in 2014.



Koalas resting in the Strzelecki Ranges. It is unusual to see them sharing the same tree.

Volunteers Marijke and Richard Price from the Jindivick Landcare Group participated in the habitat surveys at Morwell and Wilsons Promontory National Parks.

According to Marijke the survey team leader immediately made them feel valued.

"We connected on a level of common understanding and positive rapport and were made to feel part of the team rather than being led by the team.

"At Morwell National Park our task involved establishing the population and

activity levels of Koalas in a specific area in order to compile a population estimate for management purposes. Richard and I enjoyed the camaraderie as well as the opportunity to learn the process and know the significance of this knowledge.

"We look forward to the possibility of participating in similar research in the future," Marijke said.

FOSK has achieved a great deal for the Koala in the Strzelecki Ranges as well as having a community strengthening impact

throughout the region. The desire to protect this important population of native animals has sparked a broader desire among people to nurture the environment and through doing so we nurture each other.

Nicole Walsh is a former project officer for the South Gippsland Landcare Network. For more information contact the network at sgln@landcare.net



Fosky the Koala was popular at the Fish Creek Kindergarten.

“

Volunteers were trained in how to collect Koala scats and submit them for genetic analysis.

”

Vocational education introduces young people to Landcare

By Lisette Mill



The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network is connecting with young people through a vocational training program that encourages them to investigate future career options in conservation and land management.

The Green Line Project is based at Woolsthorpe, a former railway siding, and also along the disused railway land that stretches 37 kilometres from Koroit to Minhamite. The Network has partnered with South West TAFE Vocational Education Training in Schools students studying components of the Diploma of Conservation and Land Management (CLM).

This partnership commenced in late 2015, and was launched with Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources funding in June 2016. Nine students aged between 15 and 17 from colleges around Warrnambool are participating. The students attend one day a week over two years during term time.

The students are learning practical work skills, gaining knowledge of remnant vegetation on the Victorian Volcanic Plains and being introduced to Landcare and community projects.

The Green Line Project includes two shelterbelt demonstration plots (400 metres by 20 metres). The students have collected seed from the railway land,

propagated the plants and planted them within the shelterbelts. The plants were chosen to demonstrate to landholders the best species for shade and shelter on nearby farms. The students have also set up intricate trials of planting and weed control methods to show what works best in low disturbance establishment regimes.

The project is supported by Victrack, Landcare Australia Limited and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The former Victorian Minister for Training and Skills, Steve Herbert, praised the project for providing engaging and practical opportunities for vocational education and training students in emerging areas of employment.

Students have responded to the project with enthusiasm. Many of them have little prior knowledge of conservation work. The project aims to teach them valuable skills that may be useful to their future careers and improve their understanding and appreciation of the local landscape. It is hoped students that graduate from the program may go on to be land managers.



Native vegetation shelterbelt species for The Green Line project growing at the South West TAFE nursery at Warrnambool.

David Smuthwaite, senior teacher from South West TAFE, said The Green Line project was an integral part of the TAFE Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

"It will be exciting to be part of this work as rehabilitation of this significant resource unfolds," he said.

Keith Williams, a student from Warrnambool Alternative VCAL Education (WAVE) School, has been learning to follow a site grid for different trials.

"There's a lot of maths, way more maths than I expected. I thought we were just going to plant trees ... there is more to it," he said.

Eden Addison from Warrnambool College was given the task of mixing up Blackwood seeds to be direct seeded into spots raked over with an old CFA fire rake.

Eden was surprised at the number of seeds one tree can produce and how cheaply a handful of seeds can become a new shelterbelt. Within four weeks of planting the seeds in scrapes in August, the new plants were visible.

"It's so easy. I thought this would be hard but it is easy," Eden said.

For further information contact Lisette Mill at Basalt to Bay Landcare Network basalttobay@gmail.com



Students from South West TAFE visit the Sungold Field Days Allansford shelterbelt demonstration site.

Community reaches out to the Black Spur Creek Wetlands

By Kathleen Brack



Members of the Nerrena Landcare Group have recently completed a management plan for 40 hectares of run-down wetlands on public land in South Gippsland.

The Black Spur Creek Wetlands Management Plan outlines a vision of how the group intends to restore the site. Guided by the plan, the group recently started its first work on the site, removing pussy willows thanks to funding from the West Gippsland CMA.

The plan and the works are especially exciting as the members of the Nerrena Landcare Group have known for a very long time just how special the Black Spur Creek wetlands are, but frustratingly have been unable to help.

The Black Spur is a unique area of public land created by the confluence of three key parcels of public reserve: the South Gippsland Rail Trail, the South Gippsland Highway and the Tarwin River. The area has never been cleared and remains an untouched pocket of South Gippsland environment, home to melaleuca swamps, rich birdlife and one of the only incidences of Strzelecki gums to be found on public land.

However, due to the decrepit and unsafe trestle bridges along the railway line the site was inaccessible to the public, full of weeds and never managed or appreciated by the community.

According to Kate Walsh, a member of the Nerrena Landcare Group, the group was

keen to open up the area but cautious to take on the project due to the likelihood of a highway realignment that would go straight through the middle of the site. The scale of the project was also an issue for a small group of volunteers.

"For years and years we kept bringing up the wetlands and their importance but always the voices of reason told us it was too hard for a small group of volunteers, already busy with their own land and projects," Kate said.

Two key events then changed the outlook for the project – the opening of the South Gippsland Rail Trail through the middle of the site, and the confirmation of the highway realignment route. This spurred a new momentum among group members.

Nerrena Landcare Group president, Jill Vella, said some key members of the group received a burst of enthusiasm and decided to bring all of the site's key stakeholders together.

"There were lots of people talking about the site, lots of people talking in corners about the same thing and not really talking to each other. We brought the key people and stakeholders together in a room.

"We all said the time is right to do this.

"The project seemed to be beyond the scope of a small group of volunteers, so we suggested we really needed a plan where the works were handled by contractors. Yes we were keen to have working groups and citizen science but we knew it had to be based on a proper plan and proper work," Jill said.

A grant from the South Gippsland Shire allowed the Nerrena Landcare Group to contract a consultant to produce the plan. A key component of the plan is to encourage the community using the rail trail to better understand the environmental values of the site, through access and interpretive signs.

"We want the Black Spur Creek Wetlands to be a place everyone can enjoy, because it really is special," Jill said.

Willow control is now underway in the wetlands and along the adjacent Tarwin River. This work is funded by the West Gippsland CMA through the Victorian Government Regional Riparian Action Plan.

For further information contact Kathleen Brack at KathleenB@wgcm.vic.gov.au



Members of the Nerrena Landcare Group standing on a South Gippsland Rail Trail trestle bridge spanning the Black Spur wetlands.



Participants inspect a caravan fitted out to house free-range chickens on an organic dairy farm near Warragul during a Mt Worth and District Landcare Group farm walk.

Reaching out to the community with farm

Farm and nature walks are a good way for Landcare and environment groups to connect to the wider community and attract potential new members. This article outlines how the Mt Worth and District Landcare Group designs and runs its annual farm walk and how the Springsure Hill Landcare Group, in conjunction with the West Gippsland Seedbank, runs its successful spring nature walks.

An annual farm walk

The Mt Worth and District Landcare Group, located south of Warragul on the steep slopes of the western Strzelecki Ranges, has been operating since 2004. The group has an active membership of approximately 40 households. Each February, when the weather is warm the days are long and there are no other Landcare projects underway, the group runs an open farm walk.

Two or three properties within easy driving distance of each other are chosen.

On the day each host family gives a short talk describing the history of the property, their current plans, what they've achieved and the work still in progress.

The host family leads participants around their property to show how specific projects are progressing. During the walk there is always a lot of chat, the sharing of knowledge and relevant questions asked of the host. The atmosphere is relaxed, friendly and inclusive.

It sounds simple enough, but there is a fair bit of preparation that goes on behind the scenes. Rosemary Kennedy, the group's secretary, offered some advice on how to make sure a farm walk is a success.

"Contact owners well in advance and check if they have any specific rules they want visitors to their property to observe. This may include no dogs, no smoking, and children being under supervision at all times. The rules can then be stated in the flyer so everyone is clear about what is required.

"Plan the logistics for the day, have a clear timetable and stick to it. It is useful to visit the properties beforehand to discuss with the owners where people will park their cars, where they will gather and the route of the walk. This enables organisers to develop a suitable timetable for the day and complete a safety audit to ensure there are



Caroline Gully (at right), from the West Gippsland Seedbank, helps to identify indigenous plants on a nature walk at Sweetwater Creek.



A farm walk on a large sheep property at Tetoora Road generated a lot of discussion.

“
Make sure there's plenty
of time for people to
network, ask questions
and share information.
”

and nature walks

By Merrin Butler

no hazards and the tracks are suitable for children. One to two hours per farm is then scheduled on the event flyer depending on what will be shared on each property.

“Arrange to have lunch at a farm that can offer good shade and facilities. Make sure there's plenty of time for people to network, ask questions and share information. We usually suggest participants bring their own picnic lunch. The group provides tea and coffee.

“Information about the event can be placed in the local newspaper, emailed through community networks or mailbox dropped. Make sure you include the name and details of a contact person on all publicity.

“Ensure that all participants sign the FTLA attendance form on the day. This is essential for insurance purposes but also gives the secretary the contact details for any potential members to follow up with afterwards.

“Having information to hand out about Landcare or any specific topics that are relevant to the group is also appreciated by new members,” Rosemary said.

As the Mt Worth events are held in February people often bring excess fruit and vegetables from their gardens to swap with others.

Rosemary believes that the walk is a great way to make new or potential members

feel welcome and build a stronger sense of community.

A spring nature walk

A different type of event has been a success for the Springsure Hill Landcare Group, located north-east of Warragul. In conjunction with the West Gippsland Seedbank, the group runs a nature walk in mid to late spring when many of the indigenous plants are in flower.

The walk is a great way to attract people who are new to the area and are keen to be able to identify some of the plants they see in the surrounding bushland. The walk also encourages discussion about selecting plants for inclusion in shelterbelts or other revegetation projects that landowners may be planning.

According to Caroline Gully, President of the West Gippsland Seedbank and a member of Springsure Hill Landcare Group, the planning is similar to a farm walk.

“The main difference is the preparation of a handout with numbered photographs of plants that could be seen along the walk.

“If you have twenty or thirty people on a walk, you have to provide a way for them to identify the plants themselves. People like to walk at their own pace and they can't always hear what the leader is saying.” Caroline said.

The day before the event Caroline, assisted by Yvonne Pelachi, tagged 35 different plants with a number that corresponded to a photograph on the handout.

“There were several families on the latest walk and the children enjoyed trying to find the plants that were tagged with numbers, and then checking them against the matching photograph,” Caroline said.

A final tip from Caroline is to ask a member of the group to take photographs on the day.

“As one of the organisers you will be too busy to do it yourself and it's great to have a record to share with others or to promote the following year's event.”

The most recent walk was held on a relatively flat track in a local state forest. It ended with a barbecue lunch where there was much discussion about special orchids and other plants that had been found along the way. A lot of information was also shared about the activities of the Landcare group and the Seedbank.

Merrin Butler is a member of Mt Worth and District Landcare Group and the secretary/treasurer of West Gippsland Seedbank. She can be contacted at merrin@wgseedbank.org.au

Around the State – News from the Regional

North Central

The region has been buzzing with 30 Years of Landcare celebrations. The CMA hosted a bus tour and dinner event in St Arnaud last October. More than 65 people travelled through Winjallock passing 'Stricta Hill' where Landcare was launched by Joan Kirner in 1986 and enjoying the commentary from local Landcare Facilitator Kevin Spence and Winjallock Landcare Group President, Rhonda Fernandes.

Kevin and Rhonda pointed out the innovative direct seeding work undertaken in the past that has resulted in well-functioning shelterbelts as well as the extensive group efforts on erosion control, rabbit management and salinity plantings.

Dinner was a chance to celebrate and catch up with old and new Landcare friends. Rob Youl gave a rundown on times past and his predictions on the future of Landcare. Rob was followed by the 2015 Young Farmer of the Year, Grant Sim. Grant showcased his passion for soil, worms and new systems on his farm. It was a great celebration of Landcare in the region.

For further information contact
Tess Grieves on 5440 1890.

Wimmera

Wimmera groups and networks had a busy end to 2016 with water returning to many waterways and wetlands after a prolonged dry period, and some flooding across the region.

Urban Landcare activity continues to grow with Local Landcare Facilitator Wendy McInnes providing key support for the establishment of The Patch Project. Based at the Horsham Salvation Army headquarters, this project involves volunteer groups, Horsham Rural City Council, Wimmera CMA and Western District Employment Access.

A partnership-based event with author Bruce Pascoe will be held on Harmony Day, 21 March 2017. The event will pick up on Aboriginal culture and biodiversity themes from last year's Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar and continue to strengthen relationships between Landcare and the Barengi Gadjin Land Council.

For further information contact Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.



A remote sensing camera set up by the Mallee CMA on a landholder's property at Hattah captures a kangaroo and a Mallee fowl managing its nest.

Mallee

Landcare groups in the Mallee have enthusiastically taken advantage of the good season. A number of groups have established linkage corridors and are working to enhance native vegetation on both private and public land. These projects will continue in 2017.

The Birchip Landcare Group has been very active and is planning a revegetation corridor of 3.5 hectares to be planted in autumn.

2016 was also an excellent year for the Mallee fowl. These hard-working, ground-dwelling birds were very busy with reports of active Mallee fowl mounds right across the region. Landcare groups are highlighting the importance of this species to their local communities and working on projects including linkage corridors and fox control to help support the Mallee fowl population.

For further information contact
Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

West Gippsland

The region's five Landcare networks banded together recently to host an expression of interest campaign to identify projects. Landholders, Landcarers and groups submitted nearly 200 projects on both public and private land across the catchment. Projects ranged from caring for riparian areas on public reserves, to sustainable agriculture such as soil and effluent management, and remnant and threatened species protection.

The campaign was promoted via social media, in local newspapers, through a mail-out to Landcare group members and with posters placed around local

communities. A highlight was the campaign's animation that explained how to express interest in simple language.

Since the combined Landcare network expression of interest campaign has closed the networks have been busy contacting landholders, undertaking site visits and supporting groups to seek appropriate funding for their projects.

The regional expression of interest program is ongoing. Go to the CMA website or visit your local Landcare network to apply.

For further information contact
Kathleen Brack on 5613 5966.

North East

Landcare groups and the broader community were involved in a range of community consultations led by the CMA last November to understand the natural resource management investment priorities across the catchment. The information collected will inform future natural resource management investment plans for the region and the mid-term review of the *Regional Catchment Strategy*.

Landcare groups have also been consulted through online surveys and individual and group consultations to assist in the review of the *North East Landcare Support Plan*.

Landcare groups and the CMA have been working with partners to support farmer health and wellbeing. Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups worked with organisations in Mt Beauty to provide and deliver pamper packs to dairy farmers, while Look over the Farm Gate events provided opportunities to get help and advice.

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

Corangamite

Corangamite CMA, in partnership with Federation University, has been working with Landcare networks across the region to develop a natural resource management planning portal. The portal is an online mapping tool for matching local and regional priorities for catchment management planning.

The portal aims to provide Landcare networks, community groups and stakeholders with the capability to identify joint priorities to develop and progress as partnerships. The portal project provides access to spatial data, information and knowledge to assist stakeholders in setting their local priorities.

Landcare Coordinators

Congratulations to the Corangamite Landcare volunteers recognised at the 30 Years of Landcare celebrations held in November. Also in November, the annual Wise Waterways Workshop provided training to professionals and volunteers interested in learning how to manage waterways.

Check the Victorian Landcare Gateway www.landcarevic.org.au for local events in early 2017.

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

Glenelg Hopkins

The very wet winter and spring experienced in the region created difficulties for many revegetation projects that were underway. In some cases tractors could not be used which meant no fencing and no planting and in other cases plantings were washed away before they could establish. Plantings that did survive got a strong start with good soil moisture.

The CMA has collated evidence of flood damage and will apply for funds to assist flood recovery. The CMA's drought employment crews have been kept busy assisting landholders to clean debris from fence lines in the aftermath of the floods.

The Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network has been working with the CMA to remove willows and revegetate a site along the Merri River in Warrnambool. Multiple field days run by local community groups were conducted in November, interpretive signs are to be installed and a site maintenance day conducted by the network at Platypus Park was also a great success.

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

East Gippsland

Landcarers from across the region gathered at Lakes Entrance last September for a dinner to celebrate 30 Years of Landcare.

Winners of the Short Video Competition, hosted jointly by the East Gippsland Landcare Network, Far East Victoria Landcare Inc. and the Snowy Interstate Landcare Committee, were also announced at the dinner.

The prizes were awarded by Fiona Eagger, celebrated television and film producer. The Landcare Legends category was won by Cath Woods from the Raymond Island Landcare Group. The Group Gossip category was won by Louise Avery from Nungurner Landcare Group.

Jo Trevaskis from Wairewa Landcare Group won the Farming Flair Category. The Innovation category was won by Dawn Parker from Far East Victoria Landcare. The Primary Schools category was won by Lindenow Primary School and the Secondary Schools category by Nagle College. The short videos are on the CMA's YouTube channel.

Guests at the Landcare dinner watched a film about 30 Years of Landcare in the region, produced with the support of Craig Bush and Jan Lucas. The film featured excerpts from a film produced in 2006. The event was a successful celebration of Landcare and there was much confidence for the future.

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

Port Phillip and Western Port

More than 500 people from across the region attended six events to celebrate 30 Years of Landcare last November. Events were held at the top secret Holden Proving Ground in Lang Lang, the covenanted 200-hectares of Tootgarook Swamp at Boneo Park Equestrian Centre

and the culturally significant Mt William stone axe quarry near Lancefield.

Guest speakers at the events included Professor David Lindenmayer from the Australian National University, James Fitzsimons from The Nature Conservancy, Jacqui Young from the Mt Rothwell Conservation and Research Centre, and Boon Wurrung Elder, Aunty Carolyn Briggs.

More than 90 people were treated to a flight display of birds of prey from the Leigh Valley Hawk and Owl Sanctuary. The events were a great opportunity to network and celebrate achievements.

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

Goulburn Broken

More than 90 representatives from local Landcare groups came together to celebrate the achievements of 30 Years of Landcare and also to look at future challenges and opportunities last November. Peter Kenyon from the Bank of Ideas was the guest speaker. Peter reinforced the need for strong local leadership and opportunities to diversify the income sources for Landcare.

2016 was a wet year and a good growing season for weeds. Weeds such as Paterson's Curse were rampant from October to December 2016. Many conversations are now underway between production landholders and neighbouring lifestyle landholders about the need for weed control.

Landcare groups are preparing for the release of a new strain of rabbit calici virus and hoping it will complement their existing efforts to control rabbit numbers in the region.

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



More than 100 people celebrate 30 Years of Landcare in the middle of the covenanted Tootgarook Swamp at Boneo Park Equestrian Centre at an event run by the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA.

In brief

Creek restoration work helps prisoners to rehabilitate

By Michael Gleeson

An important water catchment providing drinking water to towns in central Victoria is benefiting from a partnership between the North Central CMA and Middleton Prison in Castlemaine.

Landmate crews from Middleton Prison are working alongside the CMA at Birch Creek, a 40 kilometre-long waterway that connects with the Loddon River. Landmate is a Victorian Government program that sees prison crews assist with environmental management works on public and private land.

The crews have been planting trees, removing weeds and building fences to restrict livestock access to the creek. The works will help to improve water quality and reduce erosion and are part of a long-term commitment to restore and maintain the creek.

According to Matthew Menhennet, the Landmate and Agricultural Manager with Corrections Victoria, the crews have done more than 200 days of community work in the past 12 months.

"This work has delivered some great environmental improvements for many Landcare groups within a 100 kilometre radius of the Middleton Prison. The crews at Birch Creek are also learning some important skills to help with their rehabilitation, including environmental management, landscaping and pest control.

"By learning how to make a positive contribution to the community, these



Matthew Menhennet from Corrections Victoria checks the Landmate plantings along Birch Creek in central Victoria.

prisoners are less likely to reoffend after they complete their sentences, thus contributing to a safer community," Matthew said.

Tim Shanahan from the North Central CMA said the partnership with Landmate was making a tangible difference to local ecosystems.

"We are seeing meaningful natural-resource benefits, thanks to the skilled labour provided by Landmate and the materials made available through the CMA's projects," he said.

Five prisons are involved with the Landmate program – Middleton, Beechworth Correctional Centre,

Dhurringile Prison, Langi Kal Kal Prison and Hopkins Correctional Centre.

The program has operated for more than 20 years as a joint initiative between the Department of Justice and Regulation and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

For further information contact Matthew Menhennet at matthew.menhennet@justice.vic.gov.au

Take2 for climate change

To share the efforts your group or network is making towards sustainability join the Victorian Government's collective for climate change action. Take2 for climate change is a platform for sharing and inspiration. Go to www.take2.vic.gov.au to sign up.

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories about climate change.

We are seeking stories about how Landcare groups and networks are monitoring, planning for and responding to the changing climate. Our readers are keen to learn about the success of different projects, as well as what hasn't worked and the insights and reflections of groups and networks along the way. Please contact the editor with your story ideas.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 3 March 2017.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine

Email: editorviclandcare@gmail.com

The Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and distributed in partnership with the Farm Tree & Landcare Association and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



Mailing list enquiries and to receive your copy via email alert

Contact Farm Tree & Landcare Association

Phone: 9207 5527 Fax: 9207 5500 Email: ftla@vff.org.au

Read the magazine online

The Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine is available online on the Victorian Landcare Gateway www.landcarevic.org.au both as web pages and pdfs.

Back issues (pdfs) of the magazine can also be found at www.landcarevic.org.au



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