

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Spring/Summer 2015 Issue 65

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



LANDCARE AWARDS FEATURE

Lyn Coulston wins Joan Kirner Landcare Award

Project Platypus – planning brings success

Kate Williams – our young Landcare leader

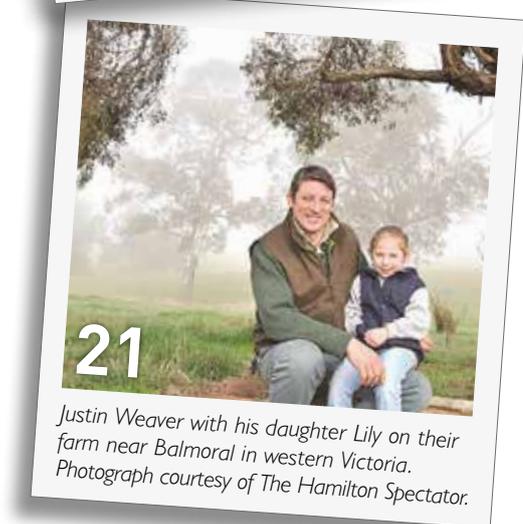
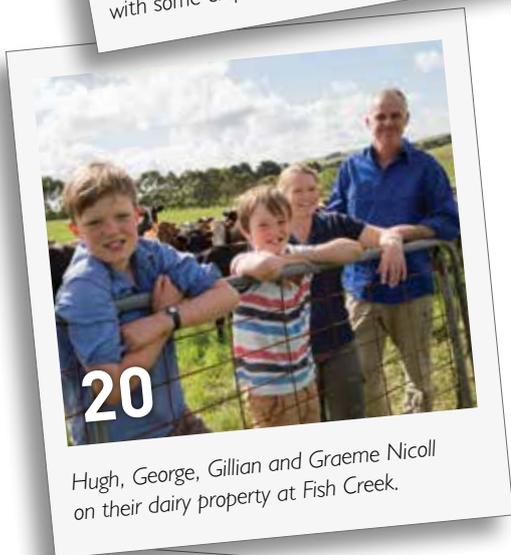


Victorian
Landcare
Program



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SPRING/SUMMER 2015 ISSUE 65



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Printed by Print Dynamics, Waverley.

ISBN 1327 5496

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136 186, email cel.hub@delwp.vic.gov.au, or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/magazine/vlcm

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Cover photograph

Lyn Coulston OAM, winner of the 2015 Joan Kimer Landcare Award, by John Robinson.



From the Minister

Dear Landcarers

In this edition of the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine we meet the winners of the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards.

It was great to be with outstanding Landcarers from around the state at the 2015 Landcare Awards. The awards were hosted by the Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM and demonstrated the incredible work that is happening helping to protect and preserve our environment. I was honoured to present the very first Joan Kirner Landcare Award, which was presented to Lyn Coulston for her energy, dedication and commitment to Landcare in the Upper Murray region.

I extend my congratulations to the winners, along with the highly commended and commended entrants and all of the

other groups and individuals that were nominated.

Reading about the award winners you can easily see the remarkable dedication, resilience, commitment and creativity of the Landcare community.

The achievements of the Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) are well worth celebrating. Through an energetic campaign the group was able to build its membership from 10 to 110 in six months. MCLG is now thriving and working on a number of large-scale biolink projects.

Barwon Heads Primary School is another standout winner. Students were unhappy about plastic bags littering their local coastal environment so they took action by producing 4000 reusable jute shopping bags and distributing them throughout the town.

I would like to wish the winners of the nine national award categories, who will represent Victoria in the 2016 National Landcare Awards, the best of luck.

Thank you to all of the Landcarers who provided input to the current review of the Victorian Government Landcare Program, which will be completed in the near future.

I look forward to working with the Landcare community to ensure the best possible support for Landcarers and community groups, which in turn, supports local environmental projects.

Hon. Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Environment,
Climate Change and Water



The winners of the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards pictured with Environment Minister Lisa Neville and Governor Linda Dessau.



Celebrating Victoria's Landcarers

Victorian volunteers who deliver on-ground environmental works throughout the state were honoured at the recent 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards.



Uncle Colin Hunter performed the Welcome to Country.

The awards ceremony was hosted by Her Excellency The Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria, at Government House on 31 August 2015. More than 400 people attended the ceremony held in the grand ballroom.

Wurundjeri Elder Colin Hunter performed the Welcome to Country and spoke about the need for people to work together in caring for the land.

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Lisa Neville and the Governor presented the awards, which celebrate the achievements of Landcare's more than 60,000 members.

Minister Neville said the awards were a welcome chance to celebrate the achievements of Landcarers in Victoria and say thank you to them. She congratulated the winners and commended all of the nominees.

"The projects highlighted by these awards are delivering some very important environmental outcomes and I urge Victorians to have a look at what these winners and nominees have achieved."

"Next year Victoria will celebrate 30 years of Landcare, so it is great to have so many outstanding winners in the national category awards, who will be representing Victoria in the 2016 National Landcare Awards," Minister Neville said.

The 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony featured a new award in honour of the late Honourable Joan Kirner AC for her ground breaking role in establishing the Landcare movement.

After the announcement of the awards the guests were entertained with music from The Folk Outfit as they mingled and enjoyed refreshments in the ballroom, grand apartments and gardens of Government House.



Minister Neville said the awards were a welcome chance to celebrate the achievements of Landcarers in Victoria and say thank you to them. She congratulated the winners and commended all of the nominees.



(From left) Minister Neville with Kelvin Harris, Nelly Naulty and Ella Panek-Mitchell from Barwon Heads Primary School – winners of the Junior Landcare Team Award – with Governor Dessau.



(From left) Governor Dessau, Chairman of the South Gippsland Landcare Network Board Mark Waters, and winner of the Manpower Young Landcare Leader Award, Kate Williams.



Joan Kirner Landcare Award Lyn Coulston OAM



Lyn Coulston has been a major influence in the development and implementation of Landcare in the Upper Murray region of north east Victoria for more than 30 years.

Lyn's energy, dedication and commitment have earned her great respect in the community. Lyn was a founding member of the Upper Murray Catchment Farm Tree Group, helped form the Upper Murray Landcare Network, was an initiator and current secretary of the Upper Murray Blackberry Action Group, and is the current chair of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and Trees Victoria.

Lyn is also involved with a range of committees and boards. She is a past mayor of Towong Shire and the current Chair of the North East CMA.

Lyn is respected throughout the region for her contribution and dedication to Landcare, the environment and natural resource management. She is a great example of a Landcare leader – having initiated or overseen a large number of on-ground community projects in the catchment.

One of Lyn's great strengths has been forging strong and lasting partnerships between community, agencies, land managers and other government groups. She willingly gives of her time and knowledge, and is passionate about education and building community capacity. She has been a tireless campaigner for sustainable production, development and improved land management. Lyn's contribution to Landcare has involved a huge personal commitment of her time and resources.

Lyn was the winner of the Individual Landcarer Award at the 2007 Victorian Landcare Awards and was highly commended for the 2011 Long Service to Landcare Award. In 2014, Lyn was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to conservation, the environment, and the community in Towong.

Lyn said receiving the Joan Kirner Landcare Award was a wonderful and overwhelming honour.

"I am still coming to terms with it. It really does mean a lot to me to have received this award," Lyn said.



Lyn Coulston has been a tireless and inspiring campaigner for Landcare in the north east for more than 30 years.

Fairfax Media Landcare Community Group Award



Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group

In 2011 the Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group (MCLG) was declining and membership had dwindled to just 10 properties. However, the determination of a few of the remaining members saw a new executive committee formed with the twin aims of reinvigorating the group and seeking funding opportunities.

The committee was able to secure funding for gorse and serrated tussock control and set up an agreement with Barwon Water to fund a group coordinator. The new coordinator worked with the committee sending newsletters to all previous members of the group encouraging them to participate in the weed control project. The newsletter, along with numerous door knocks, meetings, discussions, newspaper articles, information days and appearances of the information trailer at community events, was a success. In six months the group membership jumped from 10 to 110.

The group is now thriving and has recently secured funding for a number of large projects. These include support from

the Biodiversity Fund for weed control and Communities for Nature grants for seed collection, rabbit control, wildflower gardens and revegetation projects. A 20 Million Trees grant will assist in creating a large-scale biolink between Wombat State Forest and Brisbane Ranges National Park and the RE Ross Trust is supporting a conservation project for the Southern Bent-wing Bat.

The group has also developed new Landcare initiatives such as the Moorabool Urban Nectar Project. Nectar-producing plants and nestboxes are being made available to landholders in urban and peri-urban areas to create biolinks through regional towns and to encourage native species safely back into urban areas.



Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group Coordinator Elle Fox works on the urban nectar project with a student from Ballan Primary School.

This project has also been a great way for MCLG to form new links with local townspeople.

The MCLG has developed many strong partnerships. The group works with the Corangamite CMA on river and soil health initiatives. Partnerships are also in place with Moorabool Shire Council and Federation University. MCLG collaborated with Federation University to develop the Moorabool Biolink Investigation and Strategy, and has also developed its latest five-year strategic plan. These documents are aligned with a number of catchment and regional level strategies that will help guide the activities of the group into the future.

The group is active in the landscape and in the community. Training initiatives and knowledge days have been held on wastes and bioenergy, carbon in the landscape, soil health, wildflowers, weed identification, the use of chemicals, frog identification, seed collection and storage, and rabbit control.

Coordinator, Elle Fox, believes the urban nectar project has been especially successful at forging new links between the group and the community.

"We've really hit on a great way to encourage urban community members to join Landcare. By establishing nectar-producing plants in their home gardens local townspeople can participate in Landcare and contribute to biolink and revegetation projects within the catchment.

"It demonstrates that you don't have to live on a large property to participate in Landcare," Elle said.



An annual Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group tree planting day on a member's property.



Rob Fallon demonstrating the use of a blackberry spray rig.



One of Rob's major achievements has been the establishment of the Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group, which is committed to a coordinated approach to blackberry control in the region.



Australian Government Landcare Facilitator or Coordinator Award Rob Fallon



Rob Fallon was appointed Northern Yarra Landcare Facilitator after the devastating bushfires of 2009. Rob lost his own property in the fires, but that didn't stop him from establishing three Landcare groups and the Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group in the area.

He helped facilitate more than 40 workshops on different land management issues and secured assets for the community, including a blackberry spray rig and equipment trailer.

Rob also worked to establish a volunteer program, linking local school groups with the Landcare groups. He laid the groundwork for numerous future projects such as the Chum Creek waterway habitat project.

Evelyn Feller from the Chum Creek Landcare Group said Rob's advice and support was critical to the founding and growth of the group.

"The Chum Creek area suffered significant loss of property and habitat and infestations of noxious weeds as a result of the fires. Rob Fallon worked tirelessly with several community groups and at events to identify individuals interested in establishing a new Landcare group.

"Rob provided the major impetus to the group forming, including hosting community meetings to gauge interest and identify priorities. The initial committee members were inexperienced in managing community groups. We relied heavily on Rob's expertise to see us through the administrative hurdles of establishing and registering a group, as well as providing invaluable advice on running meetings and conducting educational workshops.

"Rob's contribution has extended to assistance in preparing grant applications which led to funding from Melbourne Water to conduct a professional habitat report of Chum Creek waterway as a first stage in a major creek protection and rejuvenation project. None of this would have been possible without Rob," Evelyn said.

In addition to his work with the local Landcare groups and network, Rob visited more than 70 fire affected properties in

the area giving advice on weed control and sustainable land management practices. His compassion, knowledge and ability to focus on the practical hands-on problems facing residents have been invaluable to fire recovery in the area.

One of Rob's major achievements has been the establishment of the Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group (NYBAG), which is committed to a coordinated approach to blackberry control in the region. Rob has been responsible for securing five years of funding for the group, which has now successfully treated 3000 hectares of blackberries on more than 150 properties.

Rob's efforts secured NYBAG a spray rig, storage shed and training for locals in blackberry treatment. Although no longer formally employed as a facilitator, Rob works voluntarily as the secretary for NYBAG.

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award

Karen O'Keefe



Karen O'Keefe has been actively involved in Landcare for the past 10 years. She has worked for the Lismore Land Protection Group, the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group and is currently the Australian Government-funded Regional Landcare Facilitator for the Corangamite CMA.



Karen O'Keefe riding her Quarter Horse, Flair.

Karen is also a member of her local Rokewood Landcare Group and is a past volunteer executive committee member of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group. She is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and has taught conservation and land management at Federation University.

Karen is passionate about the environment, sustainable land management and healthy rural communities. Karen grew up on a farm and has managed her own lifestyle properties. She is actively involved in the Quarter Horse industry and has a strong interest in assisting horse owners to manage their properties sustainably.

With the Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award Karen is planning a study tour to the US on horse property land management program design and delivery. She will travel to Idaho to visit the demonstration farm of Alayne Blickle who runs a horses for clean water program across the US.

Karen plans to use the knowledge from the tour to replicate and further develop a pilot program she worked on with the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group in 2012 on adopting environmental best management practices on horse properties.

Karen believes the information and skills gained from the study tour will directly influence on ground natural resource management programs in the Corangamite region and beyond.

"We already have interest from seven Landcare groups and networks in the region wanting to participate in a horse property management program. My experience with the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group showed that by tailoring a program to meet the needs of horse property owners we can engage a new audience in Landcare and improve natural resource management on these properties," Karen said.

VFF/FTLA Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship Lisette Mill



Lisette Mill is the Landcare Facilitator for the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network in south west Victoria. The network is situated in one of the most cleared, but also the most productive, landscapes in Victoria. In her three years as network facilitator Lisette has interrogated the model for the most effective ways to achieve Landcare outcomes in the region.

Lisette saw the need for an economic, evidence-based report on why land managers need to plant more native shade and shelter belts. She worked with industry and government to get these facts. A consultant then produced the report *Economic Benefits of Native Shelter Belts*.

It took two years to secure the many agencies and businesses that are stakeholders in the report, which includes Dairy Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, Glenelg Hopkins CMA and the Australian Government's Department of Environment.

"The report shows conclusively that not planting shade and shelter negatively impacts on the financial wellbeing of the farm business. It provides the scientific evidence and reported industry best practice. It proves that Landcare is for everyone," Lisette said.

Lisette is also working on two major biolinks that cross the heart of her region. The St Helens Biolink Project and The Green Line Project will blend to connect the on-ground works on individual properties and Crown land between the Shaw River and the Merri River.

Lisette secured the involvement of the Green Army in both projects. At St Helens they worked to protect habitat for the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot. On The Green Line Project they assisted with the long-term plan to transform a 37-kilometre former railway line into a biolink containing outstanding remnants of Victorian Volcanic Plains vegetation.

Lisette plans to use her fellowship to conduct a survey to investigate why landholders do, or don't, create adequate shade and shelter on their farms. She will also ask landholders what they and the industries they supply will do in the future, and identify where future connections can be strengthened. The results will be presented as a social media journal for all to use and learn from.



Lisette Mill training a Green Army Crew working on The Green Line Project in how to set up baits for remote sensing cameras.

Yarram Yarram Landcare Network's (YYLN) Coastal Saltmarsh Protection Project has conserved more than 700 hectares of saltmarsh on freehold land between Port Albert and Reeves Beach.

The project started in 2009 and has involved working closely with landholders to protect and enhance high priority areas of coastal vegetation including saltmarsh and mangrove communities.

Management activities have included fencing to exclude livestock from sensitive areas, revegetation with 40,000 locally indigenous tube stock and the removal of infestations of highly invasive weeds.

The goal of the project, to provide a continuous biolink to protect the Nooramunga wetlands and improve water quality entering Corner Inlet, has now been achieved.

According to Samantha Monks, Landcare Project Officer from YYLN, the initial challenge and biggest hurdle for the project was convincing landholders to participate.

"We needed to build trust with local landholders and help them to understand the importance of protecting saltmarsh areas from livestock and effluent runoff. All of the targeted landholders eventually came on board and the partnerships built with them have been vital to the success of the project," Samantha said.

Individual landholder management plans and works agreements were developed with works funded through devolved grants and in-kind contributions.

Other partners in the project were Corner Inlet Connections; Coastcare; West Gippsland CMA; Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Yarram Secondary College; Albert River Landcare Group; Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place; BirdLife Australia and many members of the local farming community.

Flexible timelines, funding arrangements and the use of contractors to undertake specialist on-ground works were also important to the success of the project.

"Working in these areas presents many challenges. Delays are inevitable due to unpredictable inundations caused by high tides and sometimes the flooding of project sites. Added to this is the complex task of revegetation in highly saline areas – knowing which plant species to grow and where and when to plant," Samantha said.

The project outcomes have been extensive. They include the immediate end of stock damage to hundreds of hectares of coastal saltmarsh at project sites, decreased sedimentation and nutrient runoff into the Corner Inlet and Nooramunga estuarine and marine ecosystems, the creation of an ecological buffer zone between farmland and the wetlands, and the protection and enhancement of critical flora and fauna habitat.



A discover Corner Inlet field day is well attended by local residents.

The project has provided many opportunities for the community to build its skills and knowledge in the identification of saltmarsh flora and fauna and the importance of its management. Saltmarsh field days, interpretive signs and nest box building activities with local school children have been important points of connection.

Samantha Monks said it was an honour for Yarram Yarram Landcare Network to win the 2015 Coastcare Award.



Yarram Yarram Landcare Network's saltmarsh protection project site adjoining Nooramunga wetlands.

Junior Landcare Team Award

Barwon Heads Primary School



Living in a coastal town close to mangroves, seagrass meadows, farmland and coastal woodlands inspired the teachers and students of Barwon Heads Primary School to run a major environmental awareness project called Let Our Sea Be Plastic Bag Free.

Grade five and six students designed the branding for the project in 2012 and it continues to grow today. The project involved producing more than 4000 reusable jute shopping bags and 500 reusable fruit and vegetable bags, town signage, the stenciling of roadside drains and community screen printing. Three giant marine puppets spread the message, along with 300 postcards produced by Ocean Grove Coastcare.

Students are encouraged to use reusable containers for their school lunches to reduce excess packaging. Every Tuesday students run a wrap-free food day. The school's rubbish is regularly weighed to check progress and the results are shared at assembly. Worm farms are used to reduce organic waste. Students have also made short films, which are shown at assembly to highlight waste issues to the community.

The group also sought the support of local business including the town's IGA supermarket. The IGA reported a 23 per cent decrease in the number of plastic bags supplied to shoppers in the first eight months of the project.

The project has now expanded into other schools, campgrounds, local festivals, community markets and the neighbouring township of Ocean Grove.

According to Principal Darren Roskosch, the project is part of a broad Landcare ethos at the school.

"We are constantly learning about the natural values and services that the local environment provides. Students attend environmental workshops on litter, marine life, waterway health and toxic accumulations within our food chain.

"The project grew out of a workshop in 2012 where senior students looked at catchment issues and the ocean, giving them the knowledge to develop the project.

"Within the school grounds we are involved in constructing a miniature sand dune habitat, installing vegetable beds and fruit trees, and taking part in energy saving and recycling activities," Darren said.

The next stage of the project – where bags made from recycled material can be borrowed from purpose built bins around the town – involved students from Bellarine Secondary College who made the bags during their Environment Day workshop.

Partnerships have also been important to the success of the project. Barwon Heads Sustainability Group and Ocean Grove Coastcare held community screen printing days for community members to print the

Let Our Sea Be Plastic Bag Free logo on T-shirts, tea towels and pillowcases.

Other project partners include Barwon Coast, Barwon Region Waste Management Group, City of Greater Geelong, Parks Victoria, and many local businesses and community groups.

"Seeing the project implemented locally has given the students ownership and a great deal of pride in what they have done," Darren said.



Students from Barwon Heads Primary School with reusable jute shopping bags they helped to make.



Barapa Culture Team member Dixon Patten presents Gunbower local Margaret Hester, whose father found a 10,000 year-old Aboriginal skull, with some clapsticks.

“
The Barapa Culture Team and steering committee looks after country by gaining and sharing knowledge of plants traditionally used for food, fibre and medicines, and sites of cultural heritage such as scarred trees, shell middens and earth mounds.
 ”

Indigenous Land Corporation Indigenous Land Management Award Barapa Culture Team



Australian Government
 Indigenous Land Corporation

The Barapa Culture Team and project steering committee has worked in partnership with North Central CMA over the past two years to identify, map and record the cultural values of the Lower Gunbower Forest to improve the management of environmental water.

The Barapa Water for Country project has seen the collection of information and knowledge on the cultural and spiritual values of the area and is assisting the voices of the Barapa Barapa Traditional Owners to be heard in the water management of the forest.

The Barapa Culture Team and steering committee looks after country by gaining and sharing knowledge of plants traditionally used for food, fibre and medicines, and sites of cultural heritage such as scarred trees, shell middens and earth mounds.

With the support of an archaeologist and an ecologist, the team has used maps to prioritise cultural hot spots. Then, by walking in the steps of their ancestors, the hot spots are visited so their cultural values can be recorded and watering priorities considered.

The steering committee has guided the project as well as collaborating with the

North Central CMA to deliver cultural awareness training to staff and create a film showcasing the project's achievements. A cultural heritage knowledge exchange brochure and a plant guide that includes known language names and cultural uses for food, fibre and medicine plants are in production.

The Barapa Culture Team has developed and passed on skills in ecology, such as plant identification, land forms, water requirements and the use of hand-held GIS recording devices. They have learnt how to distinguish natural tree scars from Aboriginal ones, and how to record sites to the standards of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, which has resulted in several new cultural heritage sites being recorded.

The Barapa Culture Team also invited volunteers from Turtles Australia to participate in cultural awareness training. Following the training, the team and the volunteers worked together to survey and record turtle nests to protect them from foxes. Koori children visited during the field work, sharing the Barapa Culture Team's knowledge, learning the protocols of a welcome to country and smoking ceremony, discovering how to make

traditional implements and cooking and eating bush tucker together.

Until now, Barapa people have been largely excluded from making decisions about their land and water. This project has helped to reconnect people to country and to overcome some of the barriers that prevent their involvement.

According to Barapa Elder Uncle Ron Galway, the project has been a great success.

“I have been looking for this type of gathering all my life after 43 years working at a sawmill. We want to preserve what we have left. Our motto now is, ‘we can't change the past, but we can change the future.’”

The Barapa Water for Country project has been funded by DELWP, with significant in-kind contribution from the Murray Darling Basin Authority's Indigenous Partnerships Program.

In the longer term, the project will help inform how CMAs across Victoria can develop environmental and cultural watering priorities that reflect Traditional Owner values and aspirations.

“

There are lots of creative ways to see projects delivered. I've switched my focus from private land to public land and community assets. In this area we started out as a farm tree group but quickly made the change to Landcare so we could take up the many opportunities that offered.

”



David McAninly on his dairy farm in South Gippsland.

Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award David McAninly



David McAninly has been a Landcare leader for more than 30 years. A dairy farmer from South Gippsland, David was early to recognise the benefits of farm trees. Keen to encourage his neighbours to get planting he helped found the Albert River Farm Trees Group, later to become the Albert River Landcare Group.

David has led by example. He has planted 50,000 trees on his farm, protected 16 hectares of remnant vegetation, as well as tackling willow removal, riparian restoration and making numerous other improvements in nutrient and water management.

He has modelled his farm on best practice in the dairy industry and is eager to share his knowledge at every opportunity. Willow removal and the revegetation of riparian areas are his two great interests.

David has been a tireless advocate for Landcare in the community. He worked with the local high school to develop an agriculture course for students. The course helped students appreciate the farming heritage of the area, the role of farming in conservation, and career possibilities.

After completing a train the trainer qualification, David took a busload of

students out to farms each week to explore different aspects of the farm from a practical and academic perspective. He also helped to establish a plant nursery at the school and has taken hundreds of children out on tree planting excursions.

In 1990 David worked with 11 local families and the community to revegetate and develop a seven-kilometre trail between Hedley and Gelliondale – one of the first rail trails to be established in Victoria. With David at the helm this project was completed in one year. He went on to steer the establishment of the Alberton Reserve and revegetation of the Tarra River and the Albert River Reserve.

David's leadership of the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network has forged many strong partnerships in the region, which have

attracted major funding for a number of large-scale environmental projects.

David's advice to other people working in Landcare is to be flexible.

"There are lots of creative ways to see projects delivered. I've switched my focus from private land to public land and community assets. In this area we started out as a farm tree group but quickly made the change to Landcare so we could take up the many opportunities that offered.

"Campaigning so staff are secure and on-ground works continue is part of the territory. Encouraging shared funding relationships and linking with philanthropic groups can be worth the effort. The main thing is to keep sharing the Landcare message – it's so positive it's difficult for people to resist!" David said.

Australian Government Partnerships with Landcare Award Rural City of Wangaratta



The Rural City of Wangaratta (RCOW) has a 15-year history of support for the 12 Landcare groups within its municipality. The resulting partnerships have evolved and adapted to changing circumstances over the years.

The first support offered involved RCOW providing grants for herbicide to Landcare groups carrying out roadside weed control. In 2005 this program was evaluated and after a round table discussion with representatives from each Landcare group, the scope of the grants was widened to include field days, rabbit control and the employment of roadside weed and rabbit control contractors.

There are 2500-kilometres of rural roadsides and 160 hectares of urban bushland within Wangaratta municipality. Reducing the threat of pests to agricultural productivity as well as managing the native vegetation on roadsides for increased biodiversity has been a priority for RCOW.

The municipality is divided into five zones for annual roadside weed and rabbit control works. Each zone has an experienced local weed control contractor. Landcare group members contact their zone weed contractor directly to assist them in locating and treating weed areas of concern. This system has been very effective at ensuring the right areas are targeted and the job gets done.

Through partnerships, cooperation and flexibility, weeds and rabbit hotspots are now at maintenance levels on all rural roadsides.

Other weed and pest control projects include a short film and a *Ute Guide: Chilean Needle Grass Identification and Management* that was produced in collaboration with the Gecko Clan Landcare Network. The Milawa Markwood Oxley, Hodgson's Horseshoe Lagoon and Whorouly Landcare groups were supported to host Chilean Needle Grass workshops.

RCOW has also developed a valuable and productive partnership with the Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group. This is part of the city's long-term commitment to restoring habitat and maintaining patches of bushland and river and creek frontages within Wangaratta.

A Bush Regenerator position was established within the city to facilitate knowledge sharing with Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group. Joint projects include the restoration of the Kaluna Precinct, a 29-hectare nature reserve, the development of a management plan for natural areas and many community awareness raising activities and events. Recent events include a Wareena Wetlands planting day, a significant trees photographic competition and exhibition, and a friendly frogs event.

In 2011 the Springhurst and Byawatha Hills Landcare Group and RCOW formed a



Council weed contractor Steve Mooney injects cactus on the Glenrowan Bushland Water Reserve as part of the Greta Valley Landcare Group's cactus control partnership.

partnership to rehabilitate and manage the Old Byawatha Primary School Reserve, a culturally significant site that features critically endangered Box-Gum Grassy Woodland vegetation.

RCOW also manages weed and rabbit control on the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail within the municipality. Other partnerships include waterwatch monitoring, the Springhurst Rabbit Round Table, the Whorouly Water Reserve Management Agreement and Chilean Needle Grass control by the Milawa Recreation Reserve Management Committee.



The late Helen Curtis, Pat Kuhle and Peter Curtis from the Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group test water samples from the King River with equipment provided by the Rural City of Wangaratta.

“
Reducing the threat of pests to agricultural productivity as well as managing the native vegetation on roadsides for increased biodiversity has been a priority for RCOW.
”

Manpower Young Landcare Leader Award



Kate Williams

Kate Williams is a Landcare Project Officer for the South Gippsland Landcare Network. As part of her role with the network she has been the executive officer of the Community Weeds Taskforce (CWT) for five years.

The CWT is the only comprehensive, community-based pest plant and animal committee in Victoria. Kate has been instrumental in the CWT achieving its aims of improved compliance and enforcement outcomes for regionally controlled noxious weeds, greater collaboration between public and private land managers and increased community awareness of pest plants and animals.

Kate has visited many properties in South Gippsland to provide specific, tailored advice on pest plant and animal control.



Kate Williams from the South Gippsland Landcare Network assessing a property at Koonwarra for a koala habitat project.

In 2010 Kate held two blackberry control field days focusing on conventional control methods. In response to a community desire to look for non-chemical methods of control she designed and delivered several alternative blackberry control field days in 2011. These field days explored the use of steam, biological control agents and plant-based herbicides. A further blackberry rust spore collection and distribution day resulted.

Kate is committed to increasing community awareness of Landcare and pest plants and animals. She has presented to pre-schools in Traralgon and Fish Creek, primary schools in Poowong, Toora, Foster, Fish Creek and Tarwin Valley and secondary schools in Leongatha, Korumburra, Foster and Mirboo North.

She has worked with students at the National Centre for Dairy Education and has trained horticulture students at Gippsland Community College.

Kate's energy and enthusiasm are infectious. She is always thinking of new and innovative events to involve more people in Landcare in South Gippsland.

"I like the idea of passion-mashing. This is where you might bring two things together that you love. Last year this was bike riding and local produce with pedal to plate tours. I helped organise a bike ride with the Nerrena Landcare Group where we rode from the Koonwarra Farmers Market to a local farm to learn about lamb production and marketing.

"A second event was a ride from Foster to the Franklin River visiting past Landcare works sites and a dairy farm on the river. These events were good fun and great learning experiences too," Kate said.

Kate's skills with technology and social media have been a great asset in the region. She administers the website of the South Gippsland Landcare Network and a website dedicated to invasive plants, manages several Facebook pages and the network's Twitter account.

Add to this editing the local Landcare newsletter, delivering whole farm planning and computer mapping training to farmers, presenting at conferences, writing funding applications and lobbying politicians and you get a picture of Kate's energy levels and her commitment to Landcare.



Kate has visited many properties in South Gippsland to provide specific, tailored advice on pest plant and animal control.



Landcare Network Award Project Platypus



Project Platypus has been operating as a Landcare network in the Upper Wimmera catchment for more than 20 years. Its mission is to empower the community to improve the environmental health of the catchment while maintaining and improving productivity.

Project Platypus classifies its activities into four different categories: native vegetation and waterways, invasive plants and animals, community engagement, and sustainable agriculture.

Each area is overseen by a committee comprising of board members, staff, partner agencies, Landcare group members, and other community representatives. The committees develop plans in their area of operation. The planning process involves evaluating completed projects, reviewing current activities, identifying gaps and developing project ideas. New project ideas are documented and updated every two months resulting in a living plan that helps drive the activities of Project Platypus.

Effective planning is one of the network's strengths. Each year local Landcare groups are offered the opportunity to undertake action planning where Project Platypus helps to identify the group's priority actions.

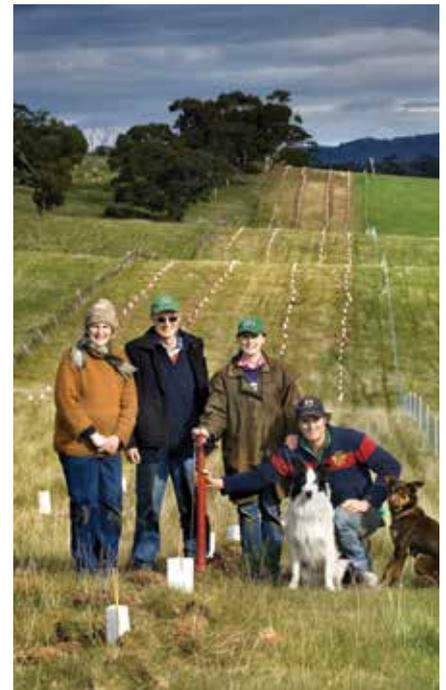
Project Platypus develops its own strategic plan every three years and has been involved in the development of many

other plans including the *Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Plan*, the *Upper Wimmera Platypus Recovery Plan*, *Upper Wimmera Landcare Group Support Plan* and the *Six Mile Creek Community Action Plan*.

Project Platypus has recently developed the *Grampians to Pyrenees Biolink Connectivity Plan* to guide revegetation and native vegetation protection across the Upper Wimmera catchment and increase ecological connectivity between the Grampians and the Pyrenees Ranges.

Over the life of Project Platypus approximately 2800 hectares of land has been revegetated with more than one million indigenous plants. In addition, more than 3200 hectares of native vegetation on private land has been fenced out to be managed for conservation.

Each year more than 100 landholders work on revegetation, remnant vegetation protection, weed and rabbit control, erosion control and sustainable agriculture projects. Added to this more than 400 students and community volunteers assist on the projects.



A group of Project Platypus volunteers celebrate the completion of a tree planting event at John and Trish Sweeney's property at Paradise. Paradise is just around the corner from Winjallock where Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell launched Landcare in 1986.

The native vegetation protection program undertakes 200 hectares of revegetation and 100 hectares of remnant vegetation protection work each year.

According to Project Platypus Chairman Phil Hall, the project is more than its impressive revegetation statistics.

"Project Platypus has helped shape a culture of farmers in the Upper Wimmera who regularly undertake environmental protection works with the aim of improving the region's production capacity and general environmental health.

"We also have a broad strategic objective to involve the wider community in Landcare activities. This means lots of farm visits, workshops, guest speakers and events for women in agriculture. The community plant outs, often with as many as 250 volunteers, are also a great way to reach out to people and give them a chance to get involved," Phil said.

Project Platypus has a strong focus on partnerships. Relationships have been developed with the Wimmera CMA, government agencies, local government, corporate and philanthropic bodies, Landcare and community groups and schools.



Allistair Stephens demonstrates how to plant a tree at a Project Platypus community tree planting event at Tom and Carol Eastick's property at Rhydney.



The Mills family from Drouin South with their new robotic dairy.

Australian Government and DEDJTR Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award – Victoria and Port Phillip and Western Port Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills



Australian Government



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

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

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

Soil fertility is now at, or above, recommended levels in many of the farm's paddocks. A new dairy effluent system

which separates the solids from the liquid allows for manure from the dairy to be applied to any location on the farm further improving pastures, maximising summer crop production and reducing the need for bought fertilisers. A large dam is used to irrigate summer crops and helps to prevent nutrients and sediment from entering the Minnieburn Creek which enters Western Port.

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

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

Most recently Trevor has built a revolutionary robotic dairy. The dairy is much less stressful for Trevor and the cows.

The dairy computer system can be accessed through his mobile telephone. There is full video surveillance and he can easily decide which cows have a high cell count. Trevor and Anne-Marie's young children are also very interested in the new technology being used on the farm.

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

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

"I've noticed many native birds and animals returning. We have wallabies, koalas, echidnas, plus a wide variety of waterbirds moving around the property and using the wildlife corridors we created."

Trevor has more environmental works planned for this year, including planting 2200 trees.

DEDJTR Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award – Goulburn Broken

Tom Abbotsmith Youl



Tom Abbotsmith Youl is a young farmer from Glenburn in the Yea Valley. Over three generations Tom's family has balanced conservation and productivity on their 130-hectare property, Graceburn Farm.

The newest enterprise on the property is Tom's Paddock – a nomadic egg production business where chickens housed in chook caravans follow cattle around a rotational grazing system.

Tom was inspired to start the enterprise after attending a Goulburn Broken CMA workshop in 2011 where US holistic farming expert Joel Salatin talked about the benefits of using environmentally sustainable, chemical-free practices to improve farm productivity.

Tom is working with two complementary enterprises. A herd of 50 beef cattle are rotationally grazed with 900 nomadic chickens. The chickens scratch over and fertilise the pastures with the excrement left on the ground by the cattle in place of chemicals or mechanical methods.



Tom Abbotsmith Youl runs a nomadic egg production business on his family farm in the Yea Valley.

The system has seen an improvement in soil health at minimal cost and without the use of chemicals. There have also been improvements in pasture health, animal nutrition and increased productivity.

The farm gate products of boxed eggs and beef demand a premium price because of the ethical production methods and the customer relationships that Tom has developed.

Tom is the face of the farm and its products. He makes personal deliveries three times a week to his customers in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne and the cafes of Yea, Kinglake and surrounds. On weekends Tom attends regional farmers' markets to promote his products and production ethics.

Tom's grandfather cleared the rolling hills of Graceburn farm for cattle breeding in the 1960s. Significant areas of remnant bush along boundaries, waterways and drainage lines were retained and protected with one of Victoria's first Trust for Nature covenants.

According to Tom the balance between agricultural land use and ecological conservation is made possible with the use of high-tech electric fencing, reticulated stock watering systems, land class fencing,

wetlands for native wildlife, stock exclusion areas and revegetation works tailored for different ecological vegetation classes.

"Remnant vegetation areas are monitored for healthy biodiversity and for invasive weeds, especially blackberry. If intervention is necessary we implement it in the most unobtrusive way possible.

"We believe that public awareness and education is the key to improving our food system from an environmentally destructive one to a regenerative one. Every time we eat, we are voting for the production system that produced that food," Tom said.

The gate to the property is always open. Tom runs farm gate tours for consumers and the local community and has hosted many Landcare events to demonstrate the positive impact the production system is having on the property's soils and environment.

Tom's biggest challenge is being able to meet demand for his products.

"Being a smaller-scale producer has its challenges. Farm efficiency is critical. Carrying capacity has to be matched with consumer demand. I'm confined to the 130-hectares of the property, but I'm looking at adding a third product – chicken meat or pork are in the planning phase."



Tom's chook caravans follow a rotationally-grazed beef cattle herd.

DEDJTR Innovation in Sustainable Farm

East Gippsland Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group

The Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group is made up of primary producers within the Far East Landcare Network. All members are farmers actively involved in Landcare who recognise a need to develop sustainable solutions to local production-based issues.

The Orbost district group got underway after 20 landholders completed a preliminary survey in 2006. The survey highlighted the level of interest and commitment to the project and outlined some specific directions for the group.

A steering committee was formed and a plan to provide monthly discussion group sessions, research and demonstration sites, property tours, access to quality speakers and financial support to producers to undertake priority on-ground projects, was developed.

The group started with a Prograze Course. Sessions were held on eight different properties. This highlighted the opportunities of opening up a farming enterprise for focused discussion. Topics covered within the Prograze Course were profitable and sustainable grazing, pastures for livestock production, beef production,

pasture growth and grazing management.

Each member of the group undertook a whole farm planning course with an emphasis on understanding environmental best management practices. Soil testing took place on the different farms so that participants had a better understanding of their properties. A low stress stock handling weekend was held and a vitamin B12 trial was undertaken across five properties.

In its third year the group took up the opportunity to be a support site to the EverGraze Project. One member's property was used to trial the establishment of new perennial pasture systems within the region and the group had the opportunity to hold field days on pasture establishment, monitoring, ongoing management, and the costing of these new practices at a commercial scale in the region.

Three stock containment areas were also established on the EverGraze Project property. Other group members were able to view how these areas can be used in managing drought and flood as well as to lessen the invasion of pest plants and



Members of the Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group planning priorities and actions.

disease when new animals are brought into the enterprise.

According to member Vanessa Ingram Daniel, having the group has assisted in bringing guest speakers to an isolated area as well as helping to forge closer links locally.

"The group has been a source of knowledge and a place for discussion and support. Sometimes the fact of knowing you are not alone with your problems and being able to talk and laugh over a cup of tea can be a great way of getting individuals up and going again," she said.

North Central Matthew Bailey

Matthew Bailey, vineyard manager and horticulturalist at Taltarni Vineyards in Moonambel, has developed an innovative method to help control insect pests and reduce chemical usage on the vineyard.

Matthew established his first insectarium on the property in 2007. An insectarium is a belt of native plants grown alongside a productive crop to provide a pollen and nectar source for a range of beneficial insects.

"I like to call it an insect holiday resort – where insects can spend plenty of time kicking back and relaxing in a secure and sheltered environment," Matthew said.

The venture was such a success two further insectariums were planted in 2008 and 2009 with a combined total of 3000 native plants. An additional 1000 plants will be established this year.

Taltarni has a long-term strategy for pest control, involving an integrated pest management system. The aim is for fewer or no sprays being required, while dropping pest levels and negative impacts.

Environmental problems associated with pest control sprays include initial and residual toxicity, the development of resistance and the rapid build-up of pests due to the elimination of natural enemies.

Matthew believes that resistance and impacts on natural enemies can be minimised by the more effective use of pesticides, fungicides and herbicides in conjunction with an insectarium to harbour and maintain beneficial insect levels.



Matthew Bailey has established insectariums at Taltarni Vineyards to provide habitat for large numbers of beneficial insect species.

"We use sticky traps and field observations to assess insect levels in the vines and in the insectarium. Our results show the insectariums are harbouring large numbers of diverse beneficial insect species," Matthew said.

This year Taltarni will use locally sourced native plants to establish an insectarium within the blocks of vines. It will funnel insects further into the vineyard, and in the future link up with other insectariums, forming an insect network servicing a large area of vines.

The new insectarium will feature some rare native plants sourced from within the property including Goldfield Grevillea. The insectarium functions as a pest control hub as well as increasing biodiversity and functioning as a wildlife corridor for native fauna.

Matthew is committed to demonstrating the benefits of insectariums on vineyards and believes the concept has wider agricultural applications. He has published his results in industry journals, and run workshops and tours for other growers.

Corangamite Josh Walter

Murnong Farming is an innovative mixed-farming business located at Inverleigh.

Farm manager Josh Walter has a systems approach to managing the property. His aim is to have a mix of enterprises that complement each other.

Cropping is the primary business with 900 hectares sown to canola, wheat, barley, oats, lucerne and pulses. Added to this is an intensive prime lamb flock of 900 ewes and a 320 sow free-range piggery.

"The pig manure is spread over cropping paddocks, the lambs get the grain left over from seed cleaning and we produce the large quantities of straw needed for the piggery," Josh said.

Josh is constantly looking for new ways to increase productivity and improve the natural capital of the property. He has worked with a range of partners to establish trials on farm forestry, lime and fertilisers and cover cropping.

Since 2005 Josh has been working with a consultant analysing satellite images of crop yields to identify where cropping paddocks are underperforming. Coupled with regular soil testing, the satellite analysis allows for different soil types to be managed with inputs tailored accordingly.

Where results indicate an area is best suited to pasture, deep-rooted perennials are established to support the sheep grazing enterprise. Prime lambs are rotationally grazed using electric fencing to maximise pasture growth and groundcover. Along with improved sheep genetics, a focus on pasture management and nutrition has led to healthier lambs.

Josh has also been involved in planting more than 10,000 trees on the property. Biodiversity has been improved, along with the quality of water flowing into dams and the Barwon River. The preservation of an area of endangered remnant grassland has provided a haven for beneficial insects.

According to Josh this has greatly assisted with managing pests in adjacent cropping paddocks.

"We haven't had to use broad spectrum insecticides on the property for three to four years. We just don't have insect pests. Minimum tillage means greater biological activity in the soil, which creates the right conditions for good insects. We also have more water being stored in the soil and reduced erosion."

Josh is actively involved in a number of local organisations that promote and share

knowledge on innovative farming systems. He is well regarded as a presenter on systems farming and has hosted numerous walks and field days on the property.

Murnong Farming also participates in annual farm days, where city families spend the day experiencing life on a farm.

Josh believes the challenge of farming is to be constantly learning.

"Farm management is about looking at everything as a whole, recognising that every action impacts upon another, and constantly searching for new ways to increase productivity and improve natural capital."



Josh Walter leads a tour of the mixed enterprise property he manages at Inverleigh.

Wimmera Simon Brady

Simon Brady farms Jallukar Park, a mixed enterprise farming business north east of Ararat. The farm is a leading example of how productivity increases can be achieved while demonstrating sustainable farming practices.

Simon took over the management of the property from his father, Peter, ten years ago. Simon has continued the cropping and hay operation and enhanced the sheep-meat and wool side of the business.



Simon Brady on his property Jallukar Park near Ararat.

The farm also trades cattle to take advantage of good seasonal conditions when they occur. This strategy helps to improve resilience and deal with climate and market variations.

Simon is an active member and past president of the Perennial Pasture Systems Group (PPS) which delivers extension, research and training to farmers in the region. On Jallukar Park he has demonstrated that perennial pastures improve productivity through increased groundcover, reduced salinity risk and reduced nitrate leaching.

Simon has been an innovator in the autumn saving of pastures by moving sheep into containment areas in late summer until after the autumn break. This protects pastures and maintains groundcover. He has also implemented a unique system of using Arrowleaf Clover in a grazing and cropping rotation, providing quality fodder in the pasture phase while building soil nitrogen to be utilised in the cropping phase.

According to Simon, farming in the area is a challenge.

"We have poorly structured soils and an unreliable spring rainfall. The farm requires timely seasonal management. Low fertility soils are treated with a targeted fertiliser and liming program. I have the yearly program mapped out very precisely so as to use the often marginal moisture for crop and pasture growth."

Long dry spells also have to be managed to ensure sufficient groundcover to avoid soil damage," he said.

Despite the demands of a highly productive property, Simon manages his time so he is able to contribute to PPS, Project Platypus and Jallukar Landcare Group activities. He has hosted many tours of the farm and recently coordinated fencing crews for fellow farmers affected by the Moyston Fire in early 2015.

DEDJTR Innovation in Sustainable Farm

West Gippsland Graeme and Gillian Nicoll

Graeme and Gillian Nicoll manage their Montrose Dairy property at Fish Creek with the aim of producing food and caring for the environment. Montrose Dairy comprises 310 milking cows and a dairy beef herd on 240 hectares of owned and leased land.

Graeme and Gillian have grown the herd and acquired more land through purchase and lease since Graeme began farming in 1997. The couple focuses on doing everything well and striving for best practice across all areas. Genetic selection is used for herd breeding, 70 paddocks allow for a sophisticated rotational grazing regime, soils and fertilisers are closely managed, effluent is utilised on the farm and greenhouse gas emissions are monitored.

Whole farm planning has been a valuable tool to assist with forward planning and farm layout. Habitat areas such as dams and gullies have been set aside for biodiversity and indigenous native vegetation has been planted for shade and shelter. These areas make up around 20 per cent of the farm, which is home to more than 120 species of plants, birds, reptiles and mammals.

Graeme has refined pasture management on the property over the past 18 years. Pastures are monitored during critical periods using an electronic GPS pasture meter. This, together with a farm systems approach, has resulted in the farm business achieving 50 per cent more pasture consumed than the average Gippsland dairy farm.

Graeme and Gillian have adopted new technologies across all aspects of the farm including business management systems

in the office and the use of social media. Montrose Dairy has a blog and a popular Twitter handle @hoddlecows.

Gillian believes modern farming methods are often challenged by those from outside the agricultural sector.

"We see a role for us in sharing messages of sustainable food production with the broader community who are often no longer linked to farm enterprises. It is our responsibility to share with the community what we do and how we do it.

"We share photographs of our farm and practices via social media, talking to farmer groups and making our farm available for visits to try and break down some of these barriers," Gillian said.

Graeme and Gillian are involved in dairy industry activities both regionally and nationally and are active members of the Fish Creek Landcare Group. In 2010 Graeme was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship to study resilient farming systems in Europe, North and South America and New Zealand.

Gillian said the family values nature and has a great drive to demonstrate that profitable, productive farming can coexist with sustainable environmental management.

"When we're not farming we enjoy bush walking, surfing and kayaking in amazing places not far from home. These places are often within the same catchment that we farm in. We all have a duty to ensure that our land is treated in the best possible way," she said.

North East Alan Stephenson

Alan Stephenson and his wife Kerrie run Goonibil, a 1200-hectare beef cattle property at Talgarno. The Stephensons have developed the property for holistic beef cattle breeding with the calves being born in mid to late autumn and weaned at six to eight months depending on the season. The majority of calves are then transported to an agistment property for growing out.

The grazing management system at Goonibil is designed to maximise pasture growth and to protect and improve the property's soils and native pastures. Most of the property is under native grass pastures.

The Stephensons have undertaken considerable structural improvements to create approximately 50 paddocks based on land class. This assists with rapid, intense grazing of each paddock and long rest periods as part of the rotation system. Light strength internal fencing and electric assist is used, with the stock being moved before they begin to put pressure on the fences.

A comprehensive stock watering system with solar pumping to strategic storage tanks and gravity feeding to troughs makes for a more flexible system.

Although the stocking rate is fairly low, according to Alan the property is much more economical and enjoyable.

"It looks good and I can see and manage it more clearly."

The livestock and grazing management aims for 100 per cent ground cover at all times to eliminate soil erosion and to suppress annual weeds. Livestock numbers are adjusted to match the available feed reserves. This maximises groundcover, increases native grass growth and aims to ensure there is never a serious seasonal feed gap.

The grazing management used on the property has significantly reduced pest management costs, including weeds and internal animal parasites.

"Developing the appropriate grazing rotation cycle to best suit the property, pastures and livestock enterprise has been



Hugh, George, Gillian and Graeme Nicoll on their dairy property at Fish Creek.



Alan Stephenson has implemented holistic grazing on his beef cattle property at Talgarno.

a challenge, but one well worth the effort," Alan said.

"Now the new infrastructure is in place the property is more time efficient. There is less livestock handling, simpler stock movement and fodder conservation and feeding requirements have been eliminated."

Two thirds of the property is set aside for rehabilitation and preservation of native vegetation. These areas are managed to protect the native grasses and remnants of Grassy Box and dry forest woodlands with occasional, time specific grazing for environmental benefit.

Almost all waterways and gullies on the property have been fenced and revegetated to protect and stabilise banks and protect water quality.

Alan is an active member of the Wises Creek Talgarno Landcare Group, hosting grazing management field days to help promote this management system to others. He has also been involved in dung beetle release projects on the property and bird and reptile monitoring which led to the sighting of a rare whip snake.

Glenelg Hopkins Justin Weaver

Graeme, Betty, Justin and Anita Weaver farm 1328 hectares just outside Balmoral in western Victoria.

Justin Weaver describes his farming business in terms of outcomes.

"The whole business revolves around getting better environmental and financial outcomes through sustainable farming practices without destroying one to get the other."

Justin believes that the work done on the property on managing waterways, holistic planned grazing, minimal chemical inputs and perennial species retention is essential for building a profitable, low-cost farming enterprise with the ability to handle climate and market variability.

More than 19 kilometres of waterways have been fenced-off on the property. This has meant stock access to fragile areas is controlled which has produced improvements in flora and fauna populations, species mix, ground cover retention, erosion control and water quality.

Adopting planned grazing has provided better year-round budgeting of grazing land for livestock. Stocking rates, grazing time, grazing density and recovery periods are closely managed. Alongside a holistic management approach, planned grazing has encouraged more native and introduced perennial species onto the property.

Combining holistic management and planned grazing with a composite beef breeding program has resulted in a more

profitable beef product being achieved through improved weight gains and fertility, extended growing periods and a dramatic reduction in supplementary feeding.

The rise and fall of feed requirements for the breeding herd are matched with the local environmental conditions. For example, calving is in May when green feed should be available for lactating cows, with feed increasing through the winter and spring matching the rising feed requirement of the cows. Weaners are sold in January to reduce feed load for the herd over the summer and autumn as quality and quantity drops off.

Planned grazing means that paddock moves and recovery periods are prepared months in advance and able to be adjusted to suit prevailing conditions by manipulating stocking numbers and constant monitoring of pasture growth, groundcover levels, stock condition, dung score and gut fill.

The Weaver family has a long history with Landcare as foundation members of the West Boort Landcare Group. They are also actively involved in the South West Holistic Farmers group that has a focus on improving and sharing knowledge of sustainable farming through training and trials.

Justin believes that the environment should be seen as an asset, not something that takes time, money or land away from farming.

"We see looking after and improving the environmental credentials of our property as the only profitable way forward."



Justin Weaver with his daughter Lily on their farm near Balmoral in western Victoria. Photograph courtesy of The Hamilton Spectator.

Around the State – News from the Regional

Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

Brendon Kennedy is the state-wide Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator based at North Central CMA in Wodonga. The Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator role seeks to build partnerships between Landcare groups and networks and Indigenous communities and to look for opportunities to enable Indigenous people to be better engaged in Landcare.

A primary method of doing this has been delivering training to non-Indigenous Landcare facilitators, coordinators and community volunteers across Victoria. The training started in 2013 and since then more than 500 people have participated in Indigenous cultural awareness and competency training workshops that have been held from West Gippsland to the Mallee.

The workshops have covered a variety of topics including traditional bark canoes, stone tool identification and scar trees. The workshops also cover cultural heritage legislation, guidelines, the Heritage Act, and traditional ecological knowledge. Workshops on the traditional use of fire have been held in the north east.

The training program is delivered by Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties and Aboriginal organisations and corporations.

**For further information please contact
Brendon Kennedy on 0428 266 786.**

Wimmera

Dry conditions are continuing to challenge farmers and put pressure on waterways in the region. Some groups shifted their tree planting events forward to reduce the amount of watering required to keep this year's plantations going.

Leigh Blackmore stepped down as Manager of Project Platypus in September after seven very successful years. The Wimmera's Landcare community thanks Leigh for his fantastic contribution. Leigh has helped the network grow into a highly effective organisation and his support for Landcare activities and personnel across the entire region has been greatly appreciated. We welcome Amanda Kilpatrick into the Manager's role at Project Platypus.

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

North Central

The region has seen a number of changes in Landcare support staff. Tess Grieves is the new Victorian Government-funded Regional Landcare Coordinator (replacing Amelia Morris) and Mandy Coulson has been appointed to the Australian Government-funded Regional Landcare Facilitator role (replacing Ashley Rogers). Both positions are based at the North Central CMA. Amelia and Ashley's dedication and commitment to Landcare is acknowledged and much appreciated.

The 2015–16 Community Grants Program for the North Central region closed in mid-August. Successful applicants received funding during November which enabled them to plan for on-ground works and community activities before the Christmas break.

Ravenswood Landcare Group, Upper Loddon and Avoca Landcare Network and Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network hosted Rabbit Buster Roadshow sessions during September. The sessions were part of a catchment-wide rabbit management knowledge tour involving experts John Matthews (DEDJTR) and Dr Tarnya Cox.

**For further information contact
Tess Grieves on 5440 1890.**

West Gippsland

The region has seen an extremely busy planting season due to near perfect weather conditions over the past few months. The Bass Coast Landcare Network partnered with school groups, volunteers and the Phillip Island and Bass Coast Green Army to plant nearly 180,000 indigenous trees.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network supported the Nerrena Landcare Group to host a dinner celebrating 12 farmers who developed an environmental management plan for their properties. The 12 producers supplied venison, pork, lamb and beef, which was then prepared by a professional chef.

Staff from all five Landcare Networks attended a training day on using video technology to create Landcare stories. New stories will be featuring on the CMA website and network Facebook pages in the coming months.

**For further information contact
Kathleen Brack on 5613 5966.**

East Gippsland

The weather has been producing some great growth results for the region's revegetation projects. A busy period of spring and summer Landcare activities are planned with a mix of projects funded through Victorian Landcare Grants and National Landcare Programme grants. A project to improve fish habitats around the Gippsland Lakes with joint funding from the Victorian and Australian Governments is also underway.

The East Gippsland Landcare Network ran a plant identification workshop on 11 October 2015 and a native grass identification workshop on 8 November 2015.

East Gippsland's Regional Landcare Facilitator Emma Orgill ran a Succession Planning Workshop at Bairnsdale on 10 November 2015. Landcare in East Gippsland hosted the Victorian Landcare Council Forum on Raymond Island from 30 October to 1 November 2015.

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

North East

The CMA congratulates the groups and individuals from the region who were nominated for the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards.

The CMA, Landcare networks and groups and other partners have recently delivered a carp forum, soil symposium and a deer forum in the region. The regional Mapping Portal is now operational. Landcare groups can now map their projects onto the CMA portal which will make for easier planning and reporting.

A Wise Water Ways Workshop was held in Beechworth from 26–30 October 2015. This workshop has been operating for 16 years and is aimed at people interested in waterway management.

A new Green Army project is operating in the Wangaratta and Lower Ovens area. Four teams will work for two years to improve the environment of the Ovens Heritage River.

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

Port Phillip and Western Port

Thirty four groups from the region have now completed the series of five Conservation Action Planning (CAP) workshops that have guided them in preparing a draft strategic plan for their networks.

Landcare Coordinators



Winners of the 2015 Corangamite Landcare Recognition Awards at Inverleigh in June.

The networks will be supported through a project implementation phase with regular reviews of the implementation, effectiveness and impact of their plans.

CMA staff and Landcare volunteers joined representatives from Trust for Nature, Bush Heritage Australia, Parks Victoria, and The Nature Conservancy who have been trained in CAP facilitation.

Representatives from a number of the Landcare groups involved in the CAP process brought their planned projects to one of five Catchment Action Round Tables to look for prospective project partners and start developing funding applications for their projects.

For further information contact
Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

Corangamite

The region has been busy with many recent events that have been well attended by community volunteers.

More than 80 Landcarers attended the 2015 Corangamite Landcare Recognition Awards at Barwonleigh. A cultural awareness day held at the You Yangs attracted 50 participants. Eighty people participated in a workshop on essential conversations for farm businesses, 100 local landholders joined in the conversation about the new calicivirus and more than 60 landholders attended the South West Soils Conference.

The energy and enthusiasm from the region's volunteers is great to see. Congratulations to all the volunteers and staff who were nominated for the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards.

Go to the Landcare Victoria Gateway at www.landcarevic.net.au for more events coming up in the region.

For further information contact
Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

Glenelg Hopkins

Spring has seen increased Landcare activity in the region with groups working to complete their 2014-2015 Victorian Landcare Grant revegetation projects and submit applications for the next funding round.

The CMA congratulates our 2015 Victorian Landcare Award winners. Justin Weaver accepted the region's Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practice Award on behalf of his family business at Balmoral. Basalt to Bay Landcare Facilitator Lisette Mill was awarded the FTLA/VFF Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship. Kevin Sparrow from Warrnambool was commended in the Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award.

The Landcare team had a successful two days interacting with the farming community at Sheepvention in Hamilton during August. A large model of the catchment attracted a lot of attention and was a good starting point for many fruitful discussions on environmental and production management.

For further information contact
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

Goulburn Broken

A strong contingent of Landcarers from the region made it down to Government House to celebrate the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards. Our congratulations go to Tom Abbottsmith Youl, winner of the

Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award for the Goulburn Broken region.

Community groups are well into the Biodiversity Spring program and the Euroa Arboretum is doing a fantastic job at coordinating the events calendar. To see what's on go to www.euroaarboretum.wordpress.com

Groups and networks are working on the funding opportunities presented by the Australian Government's 20 Million Trees Programme, the Green Army, and the Victorian Government's Community Volunteer Action Grants (Threatened Species Protection Initiative). They are also underway with their Victorian Landcare Grants.

For further information contact
Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

Mallee

Local Landcare facilitators attended the Mallee Machinery Field Days held at Speed in early August to discuss critical issues, successful projects and ideas for future projects.

The Eastern Mallee Landcare Consortium's recent Hudson Pear eradication project attracted strong interest. Many people were surprised to discover how prevalent the pest species has become in the Mallee and were keen to learn how to control it. Virtual fencing was another popular topic with interest in how virtual fencing could be used on broad acre farms to deliver savings in the cost of lamb production.

Landcare groups across the region are currently developing funding applications for a range of important projects.

For further information contact
Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

In brief

2015 Victorian Landcare Awards Highly commended

**Indigenous Land Corporation
Indigenous Land Management Award**
Wandon Estate Aboriginal Corporation
Bangerang Aboriginal Community

Landcare Network Award
Bass Coast Landcare Network
Strathbogie Ranges Conservation
Management Network

**Manpower Young Landcare
Leader Award**
Callum Nicholson
Gio Fitzpatrick

**Australian Government
Partnerships with Landcare Award**
Port Phillip and Westernport CMA

**Fairfax Media Landcare
Community Group Award**
Friends of Braeside Park
Wallan Environment Group

Junior Landcare Team Award
Newham Primary School
Commended – St Louis de Montfort's
Primary School

**Australian Government
Individual Landcarer Award**
Val Lang
Commended – Graeme Brown,
Brian Enbom, Kevin Sparrow

**Australian Government Landcare
Facilitator or Coordinator Award**
Jacqueline Salter



Students from Newham Primary School potting up tube stock with seedlings they have grown from seed they collected.

Move to an electronic format

Options to produce the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine in an electronic format are being explored in order to make the magazine more accessible on electronic devices, cut costs, and reduce the environmental impact from its production and distribution.

The print circulation of the magazine has increased from 19,000 copies in 2007 to more than 26,000 copies today. Printing 26,000 copies of the magazine uses 312,000 sheets of paper.

Every issue of the magazine costs around \$50,000 to produce and distribute. We currently produce three issues per year. Each copy delivered to a postal address costs around \$2.00 per copy. This includes printing, postage, editing, design and envelopes.

More information on the transition to an electronic format magazine and what it means for readers will be available in issue 66 of the magazine, to be published in May 2016.

Next issue – Invasive plants and animals

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on invasive plants and animals.

We are interested in hearing the experiences of groups, networks and landholders working on these challenging issues.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 5 February 2016.

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@landcarevic.net.au

Read the magazine online

Back issues of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine can be found at www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/magazine/vlcm
The print size of the magazine can be enlarged online for easier reading.



Published on recycled and recyclable paper