

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Autumn 2016 Issue 66

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



INVASIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS FEATURE

Gorse control after fire

A recipe for rabbit success

The deer problem investigated



Victorian
Landcare
Program



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

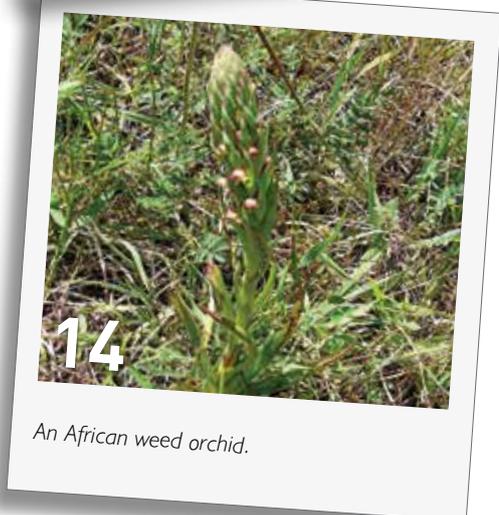
AUTUMN 2016 ISSUE 66



A machine that cuts, paints herbicide, and mulches gorse in one go was effective in treating a decades old gorse infestation.



A fox captured on a remote sensing camera during daylight on a farm at St Helens.



An African weed orchid.

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Cover photograph

A fox at Rise and Shine Bushland Reserve, south of Newstead, Central Victoria, in March 2016 by Geoff Park.



From the Minister

Collaboration is a common theme that underpins many of the successful projects featured in this issue. It includes many stories about groups and networks working hard on incredibly beneficial projects in their local communities.

The Hamilton Field Naturalists have been working on weed control in local parks and reserves for more than 25 years. The group has worked hard to develop a special tool for herbicide wiping. I was impressed that the tool can effectively target weeds with great precision while also protecting nearby native vegetation. This is yet another great example of Victoria's Landcare groups being innovative to protect our natural environment.

Severely impacted by the 2014 Mickleham – Kilmore bushfires, the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group seized the opportunity to control a large gorge infestation in its area during the bushfire recovery period, working with landholders to manage the issue. Their work reminds us of the importance of working together which strengthens the community's ability to respond to environmental issues in a more effective and sustainable way.

Controlling rabbits is an ongoing challenge for Landcare groups across Victoria. This issue provides the latest update from the Victorian Rabbit Action Network – an organisation focused on the human dimension of effective rabbit control.

The network is facilitating a rabbit leadership course to provide community members with an opportunity to discuss the ongoing challenges of rabbit management, including the latest science and strategies for community engagement.

Further information is available on the Victorian Rabbit Action Network website at www.rabbitaction.com

Later this year, Landcare in Victoria will celebrate a major milestone – its 30th birthday. To mark this special occasion we would like to showcase the array of wonderful environmental projects, community achievements and changes that have taken place over the last three decades.

We are calling on Landcarers young and old to share their stories through a series of photographs. To contribute your memories look for further information on the Landcare Gateway at www.landcarevic.net.au

With the 2016 National Landcare Conference and Awards being hosted in Melbourne from 21 – 23 September at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre we have another opportunity to showcase the 30 years of Landcare in our state.

For more information please visit the Victorian Landcare Gateway www.landcarevic.net.au or Landcare Australia's website www.landcareonline.com.au

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

Victorian Landcare Program Review

Thank you to everyone who participated in the review of Victorian Government support for Landcare. The review found overall that the Victorian Landcare Program has been effective in supporting Landcare, and that Landcare Facilitators and the Victorian Landcare Grants are the most valued components of the program.

The review also identified a number of ways to help shape the Victorian Government's future support for Landcare.

To read the Minister's update on the review visit www.landcarevic.net.au

2016 National Landcare Conference and Awards

The 2016 National Landcare Conference will be held from 21 – 23 September at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The conference will be an opportunity to share knowledge and ideas and to celebrate 30 years of Landcare in Victoria – the State where Landcare was conceived.

The National Landcare Awards ceremony and gala dinner will be held on 22 September 2016 and will feature 69 finalists, nominated across nine award categories, from all parts of Australia.

Further information including a call for abstracts, event registration, and the conference program will be available soon on the Victorian Landcare Gateway at www.landcarevic.net.au

Beating rabbits – the recipe for success

By Tim Bloomfield

After more than 60 years of research and on-ground works the recipe for effective rabbit control is logical and easy to follow.

Baiting to reduce rabbit numbers prior to warren ripping is the first stage. Warrens must then be destroyed, after removal of surface harbour such as woody weeds, rubbish, rocks or piled soil. This is followed up with burrow fumigation, re-ripping of reopened burrows or spot baiting areas where warrens were missed. The costs of the program and its effectiveness (impacts on rabbit numbers and biodiversity) must be monitored so the program can be adjusted and refined.

When this recipe is followed at the most appropriate time (the non-breeding season when populations are lowest) we have best practice rabbit management.

When this basic recipe is deviated from, or short cuts are taken, the recipe will fail. A degraded landscape will not recover while rabbits are present, even if the other degrading agents (overgrazing, poor land management) are removed.



In October 2009 rabbits at Ingliston, near Bacchus Marsh, were counted at 190 per kilometre of spotlighting.



In March 2011, after best practice rabbit management, rabbits at Ingliston were counted at 0.5-1 per kilometre of spotlighting.



One person can make a difference to the land; a community committed to working together can make the difference to the landscape.



Setting goals

Having a goal for rabbit control is an essential ingredient to achieve landscape change. Without a goal, people quickly tire of just killing rabbits. Communities can work together to set achievable local goals that could include producing more cereal crops, higher quality stock or improved butterfat, and attracting more Red Tailed Black Cockatoos on farms and bushland.

The next ingredient is commitment. Commitment is better than money. It means we will find the resources, we will act now, and give everything of ourselves to the cause.

One person can make a difference to the land; a community committed to working together can make the difference to the landscape. Best practice rabbit management is about working with neighbours. A community commitment to rid the landscape of rabbits will have an effect that can last for generations.

The last ingredient is equality. Where private land managers, family farms and community groups have made a commitment to control rabbits, it's reasonable that the same commitment be made on public land.

Act now

The time to act is now. The future of the landscape you see out your car window will be decided by the decisions that you make. The combination of El Nino and the next promised rabbit virus, the new rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, and the effects of rabbit calicivirus, provide the best chance to manage rabbit impact across Victoria this century.

We are part of the generation that has the knowledge, skills, ability and will to achieve best practice rabbit and land management. What we do now can last for generations.

For further information contact Tim Bloomfield at environment_first@msn.com

Tarrangower cactus warriors celebrate a 10-year campaign

By Lee Mead

Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) was most likely introduced into the Maldon region as a garden plant in the first half of the 20th century. Since then it has invaded the region's native parks, farmlands, roadsides and heritage goldfields landscape.

A local newspaper article published in 1963 directed all shire inspectors to carry out remedial measures immediately against the spread of wheel cactus and instructed them in strict enforcement. Wheel cactus was clearly a serious problem in the district even then.

In the late 1990s local landholders set out to determine the most efficient means to kill wheel cactus, and discovered how difficult it is to destroy. Due to its thick waxy skin surface spraying was not effective. Its capacity to regenerate from any segment left in contact with soil, and its love of rocky terrain, meant mechanical methods did not have a lasting impact.

An injection tool was developed to administer herbicide directly into the lobes of the cactus, the long needle of which also helped to avoid the sharp prickles. The injection method is very effective, however it is also extremely slow and labour intensive.

The Tarrangower Cactus Control Committee was formed in 2005 with representatives from local Landcare groups and Parks Victoria. Three of the group's original cactus warriors, Ian Grenda, Wendy French and Barry McKnight obtained funding from the Victorian State Government to work in conjunction with Parks Victoria to kill wheel cactus on private and public lands.

The funding was used to establish monthly community field days to increase awareness of the weed and to help property owners initiate eradication works on their properties. The field days now also provide an opportunity for volunteers to participate in the hands-on control of wheel cactus.

The Tarrangower cactus warriors have been at war with wheel cactus for 10 years. According to former group president, Ian Grenda, a lot of work has gone into the campaign.



Tarrangower cactus warriors (left to right) Barry Murfett, Ian Grenda, Bill McKnight, Barry McKnight and Chris Pollock celebrate 10 years of dedicated weed control work.



An infestation of wheel cactus at Pigeon Hill, west of Maldon.

"We've produced numerous brochures and press releases, set up a website, helped train people, demonstrated treatment methods, and also provided free physical assistance and equipment loans to landholders".

"We always work hard to maintain a happy, positive approach and friendly relationships with property owners, and we make sure we have some fun within the group by participating in local events such as the annual Maldon Easter Street Parade," Ian said.

The group celebrated their achievements at the end of 2015 with a party, including a magnificently decorated cake, which was aptly cut by some of the original cactus warriors.

Ranger Team Leader from Parks Victoria, Noel Muller, thanked the volunteers and congratulated the cactus warrior team on the very effective partnership they have maintained with Parks Victoria.

Other important sponsors including the Mount Alexander Shire Council and the North Central CMA were also thanked.

Wheel cactus is now considered a Weed of National Significance and a vigilant approach to its control is still critical. The weed has infested even more properties and parklands, covering a greater radius, with bigger seed banks of fruiting plant infestations.

The continuing spread of wheel cactus is largely due to increasing numbers of absentee property owners and hobby farmers who ignore the problem. The cactus warriors are concerned that without serious support, wheel cactus could soon become a major environmental and economic issue.

For further information go to www.cactuswarriors.org or email Lee Mead at info@cactuswarriors.org

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Blackberry is a good lurker – it can hide very effectively in dense bush where the view ahead is impeded.

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A typical blackberry invasion at Micalong – dense, tall, immersed in existing vegetation and remote.



Preparing for another day of spraying.

Thirty five years of blackberry

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus aggregate*) is the bane of my life. It just doesn't back off. Once blackberry has had some success in an area of bush, resistance is both a physical and emotional challenge.

For the past 35 years my partner Mary Lush and I have been working to maintain a magnificent 200-hectare block of bushland, high in the hills at Micalong on the western edge of the Brindabella Ranges in NSW. The block is steeply incised, with elevation ranging from 650 to 900 metres and an annual rainfall of about 1000 millimetres. A permanent stream runs through the property. The stream idles through five hectares of sandy flats then runs through a 90-metre deep gorge.

The blackberry started to establish when the block was grazed by cattle for six years before we took over its management. We were slow to realise what was going on, and in hindsight should have given the blackberry more attention right from the start. However, 200-hectares of bush is a lot of land to keep an eye on, especially when it is covered with thick vegetation, fallen logs, rocky outcrops, holes, and steep gullies.

Invasive and stealthy

The block provides ideal blackberry conditions. Blackberry can grow very well in shady conditions. It can rapidly climb trees, strangle undergrowth and completely swamp stream sides. Blackberry is a good lurker – it can hide very effectively in dense bush where the view ahead is impeded.

For the past 15 years our primary land management activity at Micalong has been to discourage, rather than to control, blackberry. Control is no longer an option. We live with the blackberry in a state of constant resistance. Blackberry comes before recreation and time to appreciate the ecology of the block. We cannot afford to let one year go by without vigorous resistance.

Mary and I spend at least a month a year spot spraying. Spot is a misleading term here – some patches are the size of picture theatres. We wear backpack spray units and clamber up and down the steep hills.



resistance at Micalong

By David Cummings

With some of the very large patches we employ a professional contractor with a motorised spray rig. But even with 200-metre long hoses some of the patches are inaccessible to the rig so it's back to the hills and the backpacks to hit the remote spots and do the routine follow up work needed after the spray rig's initial knock down.

We recently returned from a solid two weeks spraying herbicide on the block, working for five to six hours a day. We use a couple of old Australia Post bikes to reduce the amount of hiking to and from our campsite, but the carrying of water and herbicide is gruelling. Between us we sprayed 617 litres of herbicide off our own backs. A contractor came in for one day, and with two reels (one operated by me), dispensed 2400 litres.

The value of resistance

Mary and I are now 67 years old. The physical, economic and emotional cost of blackberry resistance has taken its toll and we are starting to question what the future holds for the block.

The land is immensely valuable. It produces fundamental ecosystem services: high quality catchment water; carbon fixation; carbon storage; biodiversity; oxygen; and amenity.

But, sadly these services do not produce a financial return. We would have made

a better commercial decision if we had cleared the land 35 years ago, sought government assistance to revegetate, and accumulated carbon credits.

It would be easier if we lived on the block, but it is remote, and it does not produce any income. To continue to discourage the blackberry we spend income earned elsewhere.

So, what does the future hold? Unless a useful biological control agent that specifically attacks blackberry is found the future will depend on a dedicated and robust labour force. Government must

play a primary role in evaluating, predicting, researching, encouraging and coordinating blackberry control. The work must be strategic and of high intensity. Token efforts on large areas are a waste of time, more so if there is no regular follow-up.

At Micalong we have become attuned to seeing and assessing the bush, always with blackberry in mind. The view is of a steady, inexorable invasion. A life's work of resistance continues.

For further information contact David Cummings at davidcummings01@gmail.com



A sight to gladden the heart of any blackberry sprayer – the tip of a cane curling in response to herbicide treatment.

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Last year the Yarrilinks team brainstormed some new ideas for tackling weeds and pest animals and came up with the idea of eating them.

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An entrée from the Yarrilinks Feral Feast which includes carp, trout, camel and bush tomato.

Feral Feast a delicious success for Yarralinks

By Tim Inkster

Yarrilinks Landcare is a Landcare network situated within the Yarriambiack Shire, based in Warracknabeal. Each year Yarrilinks supports Landcare groups wanting to control weeds such as horehound and boxthorn, and pest animals such as rabbits and foxes. This is much the same as many Landcare networks in Victoria.

Last year the Yarrilinks team brainstormed some new ideas for tackling weeds and pest animals and came up with the idea of eating them. The challenge was to create a tasty and nutritious menu – a Feral Feast – from local pest species.

The idea was met with some scepticism, but it prompted many interesting discussions on the definition of feral and introduced animals. Certainly some animals, for example cats, dogs and foxes, weren't going to be popular on any menu. We were also keen to broaden the discussion around what a weed is and to include weeds in the feast.

Kevin and Sally Gebert from the Creekside Hotel in Warracknabeal were approached

about hosting the Feral Feast. After some discussion they leapt at the idea, spending many weeks sourcing produce and trialling different dishes for the night. Kevin even fished the Yarriambiack Creek to catch carp for the menu.

The concept required some explanation in the community but tickets for the Feral Feast, combined with a night of quality entertainment, soon sold out.

The results were spectacular and a really fun evening took place. Kevin and Sally created a menu using eight feral ingredients. Each dish looked sumptuous and tasted delicious. Diners tasted each dish and tried to guess the feral ingredient. After each course Sally announced what each dish had been. A prize was awarded at the end of the night for the person who guessed the most feral ingredients correctly.

The menu included an entrée of European carp ceviche on Melba toast, trout mousse with home-made crisp breads, and feta stuffed camel balls (made from camel meat)

with kutjera relish. The mains consisted of a roulade of rabbit and prosciutto served with stinging nettle verde on sweet potato and pumpkin puree with braised vegetables, and Massaman goat curry with locally grown braised lentils and clover on the side. The meal finished with a dessert of panna cotta with horehound toffee.

The guest speakers for the evening were Bronwyn Hradsky, a University of Melbourne student who has completed a project tracking foxes through farmland and forest and edible weeds expert Doris Pozzi. Doris shared her knowledge of what common weeds in the region can be used in salads and cooking.

The evening was a great opportunity for discussion about weeds and feral animals. With the need to feed a growing world population Feral Feast dishes may well become the foods of the future.

Tim Inkster is the Yarrilinks Landcare Facilitator. For further information contact Tim at tim@yarrilinks.org

Rabbit control on the Bellarine Peninsula By Emma Camilleri

Rabbits currently cost Australian agriculture in excess of \$206 million per year. Increasing numbers of rabbits have been a concern to the Bellarine Landcare Group for many years. The Group recently secured a \$5000 grant from the Victorian Rabbit Action Network to support community-led action and innovation in sustainable and effective rabbit management.

The Bellarine Landcare Group's project aims to increase community engagement in pest animal issues while developing a sense of ownership for their patch. A local working group has been formed to coordinate the rollout of the campaign.

According to Geoff McFarlane, chair of the working group, the first stage of the campaign will identify cluster leaders in hotspots throughout the region.

"These cluster leaders will work with our Landcare facilitator and working group members to develop the skills to engage with their surrounding neighbours, then invite them to be involved in the project.

"Our long-term goal is to have 30 cluster leaders across the Bellarine Peninsula, each engaging with at least five to ten neighbouring properties. We need this

to be a true community-led project that grows each year," Geoff said.

The working group is promoting an integrated approach that includes the use of baiting, fumigation, ripping of warrens, harbour removal, and community education. Using mapping as a tool for determining program effectiveness and providing long-term monitoring is also a priority. Community members will be trained in using the RabbitScan mapping and monitoring computer software application. This will allow each landholder to map and comment on the impact of rabbits on their property.

RabbitScan can help to set priorities for control, measure control effectiveness, and help people coordinate local action. Users can create and print local maps, measure changes in rabbit damage levels, upload

photos of local problems and bring their group online to work together. RabbitScan can be used by contractors, landholders, community groups, councils and regional bodies.

Bellarine Landcare Group President Jim Mason is feeling positive about the new campaign.

"Funding for projects is scarce these days so to be successful in obtaining the dollars to effectively engage our community, in what is such a hot topic at the moment, is fantastic," Jim said.

For further information on RabbitScan go to www.rabbitscan.org.au

Emma Camilleri is the Bellarine Landcare Facilitator. For more information contact Emma at emma.blg@environmentbellarine.org.au



Bellarine Landcare Facilitator Emma Camilleri discussing rabbit control with community members on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Communities meet to discuss deer control

By Lachlan Campbell

The communities of north east Victoria are working together to look at the social, environmental and economic effects that wild deer are having in the region.



Damage to a Cherry Ballart tree caused by deer.

A forum hosted by the Upper Murray Landcare Network in September 2015 brought together more than 70 interested people including representatives from Landcare groups, the Australian Deer Association, Parks Victoria, DELWP, Victoria Police, Game Management Authority and the North East CMA. Since then deer forums, workshops and meetings have also been held in the Mitta, Kiewa, Ovens and King catchments.

Deer were once a novelty to landholders and the community in the north east, but their increasing numbers means they are now contributing to loss of productivity, road accidents and environmental damage.

Sambar, Red and Fallow deer are causing the greatest problems. Each species has its peculiarities with respect to grazing impacts, preferred diet and their movement across the catchments. One of the key issues identified at the community forums is the limited understanding of the grazing impacts, behaviour and potential population growth rates that are needed to better understand the deer problem.

Deer are believed to be equal in grazing pressure to between three and four dry sheep per hectare. Farms that neighbour public land can be severely affected by the grazing pressures of deer.



A fallow deer on bushland in north east Victoria.

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Deer were once a novelty to landholders and the community in the north east, but their increasing numbers means they are now contributing to loss of productivity, road accidents and environmental damage.

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Deer create wallows that damage fragile bogs and soaks.

The greatest productivity losses are experienced on higher value agricultural and horticultural land (dairy, berries and vineyards), and during winter.

A cattle operation in the Upper Murray using rotational grazing techniques experienced a 75 per cent reduction in carrying capacity due to deer. Summer cereal crops can also suffer severe damage and in peri urban areas there are many reports of deer damaging gardens. The cost of deer proof fencing is high, so landholders are looking for other management options.

Deer can damage biodiversity across catchments. Parks, forests and riparian reserves are most at risk. Some species create wallows in environmentally sensitive Alpine sphagnum bogs in the high plains, and soaks in the low lands. The damage to bogs is well documented. Wallows kill vegetation and degrade these fragile ecosystems.

Established native trees are also at risk from deer rubbing and revegetation projects can be threatened by browsing. Landcare groups in the north east have reported the complete loss of some revegetation projects through browsing by deer. The use of browsing deterrents or large tree guards has seen some success in the short term, but they are not sustainable at a large scale.

Shooter behaviour

The behaviour of a small number of shooters who show little respect to landholders and their assets was identified as a critical issue at the forums. Illegal spotlighting from roads has added another management problem on top of the impacts of deer.

However, the large number of keen hunters provides an opportunity for landholders, working with the Australian Deer Association, to develop collaborative projects and to educate hunters on best practice for control programs.

Shooting of deer is currently the most effective method of managing deer. Records suggest that there are currently 27,000 recreational deer hunting licences sold each year in Victoria with an approximate harvest of 60,000 animals. However, like most pest management programs, without a coordinated approach this can have little impact on overall deer populations.

Each community needs to develop its own management programs to address deer at a local level, and Landcare groups and networks are providing one of the lead roles in this area.

Lachlan Campbell is a Catchment Co-ordinator at North East CMA. For further information email Lachlan Campbell at lachlan.campbell@necma.vic.gov.au

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Farms that neighbour public land can be severely affected by the grazing pressures of deer.

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The seedbank was also triggered by the fires so control in the early stages was essential to prevent the gorse from coming back even thicker than before.

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Landholders from the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group discuss the options for controlling large-scale gorse infestations.

Gorse control after bushfire

By Grant Godden

The February 2014 Mickleham – Kilmore fires presented many challenges for landholders in the Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group, burning out most of the group’s area. The fires also presented an opportunity to control a decades-old gorse infestation that had spread across nine properties.

Despite efforts from some of the landholders the gorse was well established and difficult to access. The fires opened up the area for spraying and less herbicide was needed. The seedbank was also triggered by the fires so control in the early stages was essential to prevent the gorse from coming back even thicker than before. Eucalypts, wattles, native grasses and native herbs were all starting to germinate, providing a further incentive to tackle the gorse.

The group grasped the opportunity. Funding was secured through a Victorian Landcare Grant from the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA and built on earlier works funded by Melbourne Water and Mitchell Shire. As well as on-ground works the project included education, capacity building, and investigation into potential sites of Indigenous cultural heritage.

The landholders involved were a mix of full-time farmers, hobby farmers and

absentee landholders. An information sheet about the project was supplied to each landholder. This was followed up with phone calls and property inspections that led to a detailed works plan and management agreement being prepared for each property. At the same time a Farm Chemical Users Course and a gorse control demonstration day were organised and three sites of significant Indigenous cultural heritage were located.

At the field day more than 20 participants learnt practical tips on gorse control and witnessed a demonstration of the Eco Blade – a machine that cuts, paints herbicide, and mulches gorse in one go.

The control works were started by bushland conservation contractors who treated the most environmentally sensitive areas. Inspecting contractor works and doing written assessments after treatment helped negotiate follow up works from the contractor where poorer gorse kill rates occurred. The landholders followed up with further control work and maintenance.

The project has been very successful. Management agreements were prepared for more than 1000 hectares of land including 117 hectares now subject to

grazing restrictions to encourage the regeneration of native vegetation. A total of 34.5 hectares of gorse was controlled. Further control with the Eco Blade on the remaining properties is planned.

The success of the project came down to the commitment of the landholders, using local networks and local knowledge and applying the lessons from the 2009 fires. Being flexible when working with a variety of landholders with different skills, knowledge and motivations was critical as was being aware of the financial impact that fire has on landholders, often limiting their ability to contribute financially to weed control.

Including Indigenous cultural heritage issues and activities in the project budget was a positive move.

Finally, the biggest overall lesson for the group was being adaptable in delivering the project. Not everything always goes to plan, but by being flexible, the group was able to meet its objectives in spite of unexpected events, such as months of poor weather.

Grant Godden is the Upper Deep Creek Landcare Network’s Landcare Facilitator. For further information contact Grant at udc.landcare.facilitator@gmail.com

No safe harbour for foxes at St Helens

By Lisette Mill

St Helens is inland from the coastal town of Yambuk in south west Victoria, between Port Fairy and Portland. The area is characterised by large plantations of blue gums among small Parks Victoria reserves and mixed sheep, beef and dairy farms.

In 2012 the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network confirmed the presence of the Southern Brown Bandicoot in the St Helens Flora Reserve. This discovery kick-started what is now a large scale fox baiting program across public and private land.

Data from remote sensing cameras funded by Pacific Hydro, confirmed a range of native fauna in the reserve, but also a high incidence of foxes. The challenge was to involve more of the land managers that surround the reserve to target foxes before they reach the reserve and the bandicoots.

The St Helens Biolink Project was created. The project has seen the network, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, the Australian Government Green Army Program, and Pacific Hydro working together on fox control.

Fox control on the reserve is further complicated as the area is surrounded by forestry plantations. As a result of the project the different forestry companies are now baiting foxes within 10 kilometres of the reserve.

Noel Bull from Sustainable Forest Management Environmental Services (SFM) joined the project in 2014. According to Noel the Basalt to Bay Landcare Network is doing a fantastic job of bringing the different landholders together to achieve results on the ground.

"SFM is very happy to be a part of this project. Maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity within forests we manage and complementing those in the land surrounding them is very important to SFM and our clients," Noel said.

Farmers with land adjoining the reserve have also been keen to get involved. Local farmer David Rowbottom had 60 baits taken last year.

"The foxes are very, very quiet now. Normally in February we'd start to see young foxes on the road, but this year I haven't seen any. The program is working but we need to keep up the efforts as fox numbers can build up again within six months," David said.



A fox captured on a remote sensing camera during daylight on a farm at St Helens.

The network has installed permanent remote sensing cameras in the area to record bandicoot behaviour and see how many foxes are sighted. Feral cats are also being monitored in the wake of fox pressure being reduced.

The network is realistic about the long-term challenge of managing foxes in the area. But members are also feeling positive and are excited about the prospect of keeping fox numbers as low as possible so the bandicoots can breed successfully and spread into new areas.

It is hoped the bandicoots will link up with other populations further west, which will prevent their extinction in the local area. Nobody wants to see them become extinct when, by working together, we have the power and resources to protect them.

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



A Southern Brown Bandicoot scuttles away after being photographed in the St Helens Flora Reserve.

Controlling environmental weeds by herbicide wiping

By Rod Bird

The Hamilton Field Naturalists Club (HFNC) has been controlling environmental weeds at Fulham Streamside Reserve and Nigretta Flora Reserve for 10 years.

This article outlines our experience of managing four different species of weeds that are common in many areas of southern Australia.



Juvenile African weed orchids with flower stem and some corms.

Cape tulip (*Morae flaccida*) is a pest plant that spreads from waterways into bushland. Harlequin flower (*Sparaxis bulbifera*) is a dominant weed on road reserves in south-western Victoria. Wild gladiolus (*Gladiolus undulata*) is an increasing problem, spreading from waterways, and African weed orchid (*Disa bracteata*) is a new, aggressive weed in southern Victoria.

African weed orchid has spread across many areas of western Victoria since 2005. This orchid from South Africa produces tens of thousands of fine seeds that blow in the wind to new sites, where it germinates and produces large corms that enable it to persist and compete with native plants. It does not require a specific fungus to grow. Whether it can ever be entirely eliminated is doubtful.

The HFNC is also involved in treating many other threatening weeds, such as blue periwinkle (*Vinca major*), watsonia (*Watsonia mariana*), purple woodsorrel (*Oxalis purpurea*) and gazania (*Gazania ringens*). Gazania, in particular, is a menace that spreads rapidly from street plantings in townships. It can blanket out all native species and survive with little water. Gazania currently dominates roadsides in north-western Victoria and could spread through reserves.

Deciding on a control method

There are many ways of controlling environmental weeds. The most common are hand digging of corm-producing plants, pulling shrub seedlings, herbicide wiping, spot spraying using a backpack and perhaps a spray shield, and broad-scale spraying using a backpack or motorised system.

The choice of method depends on several factors. The number of plants infesting the reserve must be considered, along with the type of pest plant. The quality of the native

vegetation in the reserve is also relevant. In areas of high-quality vegetation great care is needed. The season the control work will be undertaken in can also be important as herbicide only works well when the plant is actively growing. It may be useful to apply herbicide to pest species in winter before native lily and many orchid species emerge. The labour available for the task is also relevant.

Hand digging

Clearly, when early action is planned, hand digging may be the best method. With corm-producing plants, such as cape tulip, sparaxis, freesia, angled onion, wild gladiolus and African weed orchid, the simplest and most effective way is to dig up each plant, taking care to extract all of the corms from the soil. Gazania plants can also be uprooted before they set seed.

Three or four volunteers can easily remove 1000 African weed orchid plants from a small reserve in half a day. No specialised

training is needed or precautions required, as could be the case when herbicides are to be used. If the pest plant is well established chemical control methods may need to be considered.

Herbicide wiping

The objective of herbicide wiping is to kill the pest plants but not the adjacent native species (including orchids and native lilies) that are often closely associated. Broad-scale spraying of cape tulip and other weed species results in most or all of the native species in the spray zone being killed.

Where the pest species are sparsely spaced such spraying creates a vast amount of bare ground that grows only cape tulip and other weeds in the following year. The spray is also ineffective in killing all of the cape tulip plants in the spray area. Cape tulip is difficult to hit with spray and the stem/leaf surface does not wet easily. The same applies to many other bulbous species, such as wild gladiolus.



A weed wiping tool adapted by members of the Hamilton Field Naturalists Club.



Rod Bird and Reto Zollinger from the Hamilton Field Naturalists Club hand digging African weed orchids with a screwdriver.

HFNC has adapted a 'pick up and reach tool' purchased from a variety store. Unfortunately the exact tool may no longer be available. The tool is inexpensive, lightweight, fairly robust and easy to use. Alternatively, long-handled tongs can be adapted as herbicide applicators. Small pads cut from kitchen sponges are attached to the tool's cups. After drilling four holes near the edge of the cups the pads are fixed with a thick wool thread. The pads are then trimmed to size and shape.

The pads are dipped into a container that holds the herbicide-wetter-dye mixture. We use plastic containers that originally held honey or rice, obtained from supermarkets. The opening of the container must be large enough to allow the pads to be inserted. Drill a hole in the centre of the lid and attach the lid to the container by a cord. The container can then be readily closed to prevent spillage during transport.

The herbicide is applied to both sides of the leaf or stem by simply grasping the plant near the base and lifting. No bending is required and many thousand plants can be treated without strain. The tool can also be used to dab the leaves of *Sparaxis* or *Oxalis purpurea*.

Harlequin flower, cape tulip, African weed orchid, wild gladiolus or other weeds of similar structure are individually wiped (with Metsulfuron methyl, Glyphosate, surfactant and dye) to deliver herbicide to the pest plant without contacting other plants.

We estimate that 40-50,000 cape tulip plants were wiped in 73 hours work (about 10 plants per minute) in each of 2014 and 2015 at Fulham. For African weed orchid, where plants are more dispersed, we averaged about two plants wiped per minute at Nigretta (7-8000 plants in 2012, 2013 and 2014).

Metsulfuron methyl has a very low toxicity to mammals and is safe to handle but its action on plants seems slow. Glyphosate speeds up the kill, a necessary attribute if the plants have flower heads and would otherwise set viable seed before dying off. If the plants have set seed the sensible option is to dig them up and burn them.

Metsulfuron methyl solution may become inactive if stored, so only prepare a small volume for immediate use; 1 L may be enough for one person for half a day (1g of Metsulfuron methyl powder is around ¼ a teaspoon measure). Omit the Glyphosate if there are significant native species nearby that would be affected by this herbicide (but not Metsulfuron methyl) if accidentally wiped.

We were concerned that the herbicides we were applying to African weed orchid might not be destroying the corms so in 2014 we established a trial to assess the effectiveness of Metsulfuron methyl and Glyphosate.

On 21 September 2014, before the flower heads had developed, and on 10 October 2014, before flowering we set up the following experimental treatments on four

different blocks. Each plot contained five plants and the herbicide mix was applied twice.

The control block was left untreated. Block two was treated with Glyphosate (60mL/L of wipe solution). Block three was treated with Metsulfuron methyl (1g/L wipe solution) and block four was treated with a concentrated herbicide solution of Metsulfuron methyl, 1g/L, Glyphosate 30mL/L, surfactant 5 mL/L, dye 5mL/L.

The results on 21 October 2015 showed:

1. Control block. Of the 29 plots 25 plants were present with a total of 28 corms.
2. Glyphosate block. Of 26 plots (three pins went missing) none had plants or corms.
3. Metsulfuron block. Of 29 plots none had plants, but six had corms that were a little shrivelled.
4. Combined Glyphosate and Metsulfuron block. Of 28 plots three had small, dead plants and four had shrivelled corms.

The results showed that both herbicides destroyed the corms and that this was not dependent on very early application. However, plants are easily missed and it is necessary to re-visit sites later in spring to dig up any untreated plants before they spread seed. A large screwdriver is a good tool to use.

Rod Bird is Secretary of the Hamilton Field Naturalists. For further information contact Rod at rod.bird@bigpond.com



The objective of herbicide wiping is to kill the pest plants but not the adjacent native species (including orchids and native lilies) that are often closely associated.



People – the sustainable element in weed control

By Anne Stelling

Parklands Albury Wodonga is a community-managed not-for-profit organisation that manages more than 4000 hectares of bushland in the region. Since 1997 we have been creating innovative ways of involving the community in the restoration, development and management of local tracks, trails and bush reserves.

Environmental weeds are a significant problem in the north east. Berries, fruit trees, pasture grasses, street trees and garden plants quickly move into bushland. People are the critical element in cause and control of environmental weeds.

Parklands Albury Wodonga is committed to engaging people in stewardship activities in their local areas. We offer volunteer opportunities, support groups, and form partnerships with local businesses and organisations to restore landscapes and enhance habitat.

Tracks and trails connect people with their landscapes

By working in partnership with local businesses and interest groups we have established a trail network through the hills and waterways of Albury and Wodonga that connects with the High Country Rail Trail.



National Australia Bank employees take a break after weed control work at Nail Can Hill.

In 2015 more than 800 people participated in our track and trail events which attract walkers, runners and riders. The Whistle Stop High Tea and the Sandy Creek Bridge Walk on the rail trail bring out more sedate adventurers. Encouraging people to participate in events is a way of getting them interested in the landscape and becoming active champions of it.

Friends groups and Landcare groups are a great way of getting people together to take control of their patch. Parklands supports a number of Friends groups including rail trail action groups along the High Country Rail Trail and the 15 member groups of the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network. In 2015 we tackled 94 hectares of environmental weeds and planted more than 57,000 native plants with the help of these groups.



Woody weeds piled high by scouts and guides as part of the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network Transform-a-thon.

on public land

Volunteer programs extend the reach of groups

We provide volunteer experiences for a range of needs, from individual students to backpackers and work for the dole programs. We are assisted with labour to tackle environmental weeds and we get an opportunity to educate volunteers about weeds and introduce the idea of environmental stewardship.

Successful volunteer programs make people feel welcome and useful, provide interesting experiences, positive role models and create a good social environment.

In partnership with the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network, Parklands Albury Wodonga has been the Green Army project sponsor locally since 2014. We provide a home base for the teams. The injection of a team of hard-working young people has given our weed control projects an important boost.

Partnerships

We have involved more than 100 partner organisations in projects to connect people with their local bush. Working with the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network to deliver their annual Transform-a-thon is a highlight.

The event involves local scouts and guides in a concentrated woody weeding and planting effort to transform a local area. Parklands provides the leadership, tools and supervision to teach the participants how to recognise and treat woody weeds. The Landcare network coordinates the event, and the scouts and guides raise funds through collecting sponsors for the number of woody weeds they remove.

The 2015 Transform-a-thon also involved the removal of dumped garden waste from the site, followed by planting and mulching to transform a rubbish dump into a bush garden. The event made a lasting impression on all who were involved.

Resource allocation for controlling environmental weeds comes and goes. Local communities are constant. We believe that by engaging communities with the environment one resource will always be reliable: people.

Anne Stelling is a part-time Communications Ranger for Parklands Albury Wodonga. For further information go to www.parklands-alburywodonga.org.au



Willow removal work gets underway at historic Enders Bridge near Trentham.

Willow removal at historic Enders Bridge

By Sandy Scheltema

Willow removal has begun along the Coliban River at historic Enders Bridge near Trentham due to a Trentham Landcare project funded by a Hepburn Shire Council Community Grant.

Enders Bridge was built in 1901 to replace an adjacent toll bridge from 1869. The willow removal project has involved a number of different parties. Trentham Landcare initiated the idea and then involved Hepburn Shire, the North Central CMA, VicRoads, DELWP and a local contractor.

According to Patricia Scheltus, President of Trentham Landcare, the project will improve water flow, encourage native trees and grasses and reduce the chance of willows establishing downstream at the nearby Trentham Falls and the dam and ford below it.

“We are hoping to re-establish native fauna like platypus. Our vision is to create a lovely walking track along the Coliban River towards the Trentham Falls,” Patricia said.

The North Central CMA is building on the work of Trentham Landcare by coordinating further willow and blackberry removal works downstream.

For further information contact Patricia Scheltus at patricia@scheltus.com

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To be successful in rabbit control, we must all work together. Rabbits are everyone's problem.

”



Peter Barnes at Neds Corner in Victoria inspecting native grasses which came back after the removal of rabbits.



Michael Reid, National Rabbit Facilitator, discussing engagement strategies at the Rabbit Leadership Program.

Victorian Rabbit Action Network

It has been more than 150 years since Victorian grazier Thomas Austin released 24 rabbits on his property near Winchelsea. Sixty years later, fields across Australia were crawling with rabbits and the national population peaked at ten billion. The European rabbit's invasion of Australia took the title as the fastest of any colonising mammal in the world.

Fortunately rabbit numbers are no longer at this extreme, largely in response to the successive introduction of biological agents. Myxomatosis disease was released in the 1950s and rabbit calicivirus in 1995. However, this may not always be the case without continual management.

There are at least 304 Australian threatened species of plants and animals adversely affected by the competition and land degradation caused by rabbits. Conservative estimates place the cost of rabbits to the agricultural sector at more than \$200 million annually.

The manager at Trust for Nature's Neds Corner Station, Peter Barnes, knows

firsthand the impact of the rabbit on landscapes. Through good management and a lot of hard work, Peter and his team at Victoria's largest private conservation property (30,000 hectares), were able to significantly lower the rabbit population and now boast 2000 hectares of fenced rabbit-free land.

Rare and threatened plants return

"Once they were removed, more than 60,000 native trees were direct seeded and planted across the property. We saw a series of rare and threatened plants and native grasses begin to emerge," Peter said.

Peter is now plugged into the Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN), a network

of people passionate about managing rabbits and their impact on the landscape.

VRAN is part of a new project focusing on the human dimensions of pest management through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre and Agriculture Victoria to support community-led action in rabbit management.

VRAN has allocated grants for 12 communities across Victoria to support innovation and capacity building in the fight against rabbits. The funded projects range from community mapping, piloting best practice events and formulating rabbit action plans. These projects will build knowledge sharing networks and plans are underway to share the knowledge.



Participants of the Rabbit Leadership Program explore ripping as part of an integrated control program.

supports community-led rabbit control

By Michael Reid

Training for rabbit control leaders

VRAN has also developed a Rabbit Leadership Program. Twenty-five people undertook an intensive three-day rabbit management course designed to empower members of the network. The participants had access to a team of mentors who are experts from different areas of rabbit management. The group and mentors now meet on a regular basis to discuss on-going challenges of management, ranging from the science of rabbit management to community engagement.

Marion Dawson, from the Nicholson River Landcare Group, found the course valuable.

"To be successful in rabbit control, we must all work together. Rabbits are everyone's problem."

Marion believes that community education, timing and having clear objectives are the keys to getting everybody on board with rabbit control.

"I learned that one control method does not necessarily fit all situations, and a number of methods may be required depending on the problem. Careful planning and timing is vital for rabbit control," she said.

The Chair of VRAN, Gerry Leach, emphasised this point.

"It has been consistently demonstrated that the best way to achieve positive outcomes

in pest management is to empower those with the problem to provide the solutions. Regardless of the individual level of leadership or support, acting collectively as a community will considerably multiply the effect of all the individuals actions," Gerry said.

Plans are being developed to share the VRAN approach being applied in Victoria to other states and territories.

Michael Reid is the National Rabbit Facilitator and for more information on the Victorian Rabbit Action Network go to www.rabbitaction.com

For more information on rabbit management go to www.pestsmart.org.au

Neil Devanny, Gerald Leach, Marion Dawson, Peter Barnes and Paul Dennis contributed to this article.

Rabbit conference showcases community know-how

With the last rabbit conference convened in Victoria in 1958, it was time to put the rabbit back in the spotlight.

In August 2015, 140 delegates from across Australia and New Zealand attended the Victorian Rabbit Management Conference connecting participants' knowledge and know-how for more effective community action on rabbits.

The conference was an opportunity to showcase community knowledge and programs and share the latest research and government programs. A dedicated industry stand brought

together pest contractors and many new connections were made.

Neil Devanny, keynote presenter at the conference and sheep farmer from Gooram, shared his experience of a community working together to combat rabbits. Neil was a founding member of the Granite Creeks Project. For the past 20 years the Project has reached more than 1400 properties around Euroa, promoting a coordinated and integrated approach to rabbit management.

The conference proceedings are available at www.rabbitaction.com and video recordings of presenters will be uploaded.

Weed control on the Loddon

The Loddon Weed Control Committee was formed in 2014 as an initiative of the Loddon Plains Landcare Network. The Network was receiving many enquiries from community members about the various weed projects different organisations in the district were working on.



Anthony Gallacher preparing for roadside wheel cactus control at Buckrabanyule.

By getting everyone together around the table we were able to find out what each organisation was doing and to see where we could value add to each other's efforts despite limited resources and funding.

It was decided that a weed committee could be valuable in developing a collaborative approach to tackling weeds across all tenures in the Loddon Shire. The committee's aims are to set the strategic direction for targeting weeds, provide a platform for careful planning for tackling weeds of high priority, and assist landholders with information about control options and support for managing declared weeds, Regionally Controlled Weeds, and Weeds of National Significance.

The committee meets quarterly and brings together representatives from Landcare

groups and networks, Loddon Shire; North Central CMA; Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR); Parks Victoria; Bush Heritage Australia; Goulburn Murray Water and other local natural resource management organisations.

The committee has achieved a great deal in its first year. A shortlist of priority weeds for the region has been produced. These include wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*), African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), African lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*), silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*) and bridal creeper (*Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*).

Funding has been obtained from the North Central CMA and DEDJTR for wheel cactus control at Mt Egbert, and

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It was decided that a weed committee could be valuable in developing a collaborative approach to tackling weeds across all tenures in the Loddon Shire.

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Stems counts were undertaken as part of the Loddon Shire's silverleaf nightshade roadside management trials.

landholders adjacent to these projects have been contacted to inform them of their management responsibilities. Equipment and incentives for wheel cactus control have been made available to the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network. Education materials have been compiled on African boxthorn and there has been an increase in the mapping of noxious weeds through the Loddon Shire database.

Silverleaf nightshade trials

Silverleaf nightshade (also known as whitehorse nettle) is a perennial weed that can dominate pastures and cropping areas. It can reduce crop yields by up to 40 per cent by using moisture and nutrients over summer and autumn that could otherwise be used by crops. Silverleaf nightshade is a Weed of National Significance and a Regionally Controlled Weed in north central Victoria.

I found out about a major project to control silverleaf nightshade at the 2014 National Landcare Conference in Melbourne. The project, run by Murrumbidgee Landcare, is trialling a dual action approach to controlling the weed on farms and roadsides. The aim is to stop the weed flowering early in the growing season and to follow up by targeting rootstock later. Herbicides are applied and then stem counts conducted to measure their effectiveness.

I worked with Murrumbidgee Landcare to organise and run two silverleaf nightshade workshops in Calivil and Mysia in February 2015. The workshops were a way of assessing interest in rolling out the trials in the area. Support from East Loddon Landcare Group and other farmers in the region saw 30 participants attend.

Trial sites on farms and roadsides have now been set up across 50 locations in the Loddon Shire, and will be monitored over the next 18 months. The information about different control practices used in each area will be analysed and used to refine the best management practice for the local region.

Anthony Gallacher is Loddon Plains Landcare Network's Landcare Facilitator. For further information contact Anthony at facilitator@lpln.org

A new strategy for rabbit control on the Bass Coast

By Rob Gray

When the Bass Coast Network's telephone rings there's a good chance someone will be asking for help with rabbits. An early dry summer saw an increase in rabbit numbers, especially in urban areas.

The need for a coordinated effort to control rabbits was identified through strong working partnerships between the Bass Coast Shire Council, Bass Coast Landcare Network, and the Phillip Island Nature Parks. Other stakeholders are Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, South Gippsland Water, VicRoads, and Westernport Water.

A working group was formed in 2014 and terms of reference set to steer the development of a new five-year rabbit

strategy. The working group's vision is for community, agencies and organisations collaborating to strategically reduce rabbit numbers in order to protect biodiversity, agricultural and social amenity assets in the Bass Coast Landcare Network area.

The new strategy guides organisational and community rabbit control actions, work programs, and funding applications. The strategy is already bearing fruit. Agencies are coordinating rabbit monitoring (using a standard monitoring method) and rabbit control, and focusing efforts on areas identified as a high priority.

The vast majority of land in the Bass Coast Shire is privately owned, and some of the highest densities of rabbits are in coastal urban areas. The working group quickly recognised that control programs will rely heavily on successful engagement with the local community.

The Bass Coast Landcare Network has received funding through the Victorian Rabbit Action Network to host a series of community workshops. The workshops will raise awareness, talk about the recipe for successful rabbit control, facilitate the creation of new rabbit action groups and/or promote rabbit control activities within existing groups.

There's a big job ahead, but with a strategic approach, and pending the release of the new rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, the working group is confident a momentum for change can be sustained.

Rob Gray is Bass Coast Landcare Network's Environmental Services Coordinator. For further information contact Rob at robbie.gray@vic.chariot.net.au



Landholders in peri urban areas on Phillip Island have resorted to rabbit proof fences.

Around the State – News from the Regional

Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator

A Cultural Insight Training day held at Benalla last November was well received by more than 50 participants.

The day was coordinated by Anita Larkin from Multicultural Arts and supported by the Victorian Landcare Program. A good mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people attended. Koori Education Support Officers hosted the groups and assisted in facilitating activities.

The day included a smoking ceremony and introduction to Aboriginal lore, a discussion on values, kinship systems, connection to country and the Biambi creation story.

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

North Central

A Chicks in the Sticks event held along the Campaspe River in November 2015 was attended by more than 130 women. Guest speaker and Rural Industries Development and Research Corporation Woman of the Year, Katie Finlay, discussed sustainable agriculture, on-farm value adding and the importance of business and communication planning.

A drought relief family fishing day held at Donald in late January 2016 was a great success. Community groups and local businesses worked together on the event, which included entertainment, a barbecue and the release of Golden Perch into the local lake.

A Future Farming Expo is planned for Swan Hill on 14 April 2016. Full details of this innovative and free event are on the North Central CMA website.

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

North East

More than 70 people attended a deer forum run by the Upper Murray Landcare Network. Other forums have also been held in the Mitta, Kiewa and Ovens catchments.

Landcare and related groups are now delivering their Victorian Landcare Grants, with 12 on-ground projects and 17 maintenance grants receiving funding.

A new Green Army project is operating in the Upper Ovens area near Bright. Three teams will work for the next 18 months to improve the environment of the Ovens River and Alpine National Park.



Yorta Yorta Nation's Shane Charles conducted a traditional Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony for participants attending a Cultural Insight Training Day at Benalla last year.

The CMA released the *2014-15 North East Landcare Report Card*. The report showed significant increases in participation due to outstanding urban community work by groups in the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network. To read the report go to www.necma.vic.gov.au

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

Wimmera

Dry conditions continue to challenge farmers and put pressure on waterways. The State Government's announcement of funding for a CMA drought crew employment program is a welcome opportunity for groups to tap into an extra source of labour and expand their Landcare activities.

Junior Landcarers in the region are getting involved in the Caring for Our Watersheds competition thanks to a partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia. This year the competition is open to grades six to eleven, so senior primary school students can also investigate ways of improving their local catchment.

New groups are continuing to grow. The Horsham Urban Landcare Group, under the stewardship of Local Landcare Facilitator Wendy McInnes, has gone from strength to strength in the last 12 months.

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

Goulburn Broken

Implementation of the 2015/16 Victorian Landcare Grants are now well underway with 20 individual projects kicking off across the catchment.

The Goulburn Broken CMA and local community members recently shared their knowledge and experience of community fire recovery works with members of the Leigh Catchment Group and the Corangamite CMA.

Training in the use of social media has been successful in the region. In 2015 there was a more than 50 per cent increase in groups and networks using social media like Facebook as a communication tool. This data came out of the recent Community Natural Resource Management Report Card survey that provides important insight into group development and project delivery.

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

West Gippsland

The West Gippsland Landcare community welcomes John Crosby as coordinator of the Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network. John has been involved in Landcare for more than 20 years and is a member of the Tanjil Valley Landcare group. John replaces Megan Hughes who has moved to north east Victoria.

A two-day intensive governance training workshop held in Leongatha and run by John Mero was attended by 25 members of the five West Gippsland Landcare Network boards.

Victorian Landcare Grants are being rolled out across the region. Projects are focusing on on-ground works that improve biodiversity and Landcare capacity. All projects are being delivered via a new GIS

Landcare Coordinators

mapping system that aims to create a comprehensive region-wide database of Landcare works that will assist with future planning.

For further information contact Kathleen Brack on 5613 5966.

Port Phillip and Westernport

Congratulations to all the individuals, groups and networks that were honoured at the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards presentation at Government House in September 2015. Our region's winners included Rob Fallon from the Northern Yarra Landcare Network, Kate Williams from the South Gippsland Landcare Network, Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group, and Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills from the Lardner and District Landcare Group.

Commendations were awarded to Jacqui Salter from the Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network, Newham Primary School, St Louis de Montfort's School, Wandooon Estate Aboriginal Corporation, Gio Fitzpatrick from the Port Phillip Ecocentre, Friends of Braeside Park, Wallan Environment Group, Bass Coast Landcare Network, Peter Ronalds from Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, and Port Phillip and Westernport CMA.

The energy, passion, innovation, leadership and commitment of these people and organisations is at the heart of what Landcare is achieving across our region.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

East Gippsland

East Gippsland Landcare hosted the Victorian Landcare Council Forum held in October 2015. Landcarers from across Victoria gathered on Raymond Island to participate in workshops, bus tours, presentations, networking and entertainment. The forum was a great success.

Training in making short films and iFARM planning has been run in Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale and Orbost. James Maund of Creek-link ran a session on waterway mapping at the Regional Landcare Forum in Lakes Entrance. Weed (Tambo Crossing) and native grass identification sessions have also been held at Tambo Crossing and Kalimna West.

The annual East Gippsland Field Days will be held on 29 – 30 April 2016. More than 600 visitors are expected through the marquee hosted by Landcare staff and volunteers.

Succession Planning training will be conducted by Isobelle Knight and Tim Lane in Bairnsdale on 7 June 2016 and a farmer bus tour of NSW food and fibre producers will be held from 21 – 24 June 2016.

For further information contact Amanda Bartkowski on 5150 3851.

Mallee

The Kulkynne Way Landcare Group was close to disbanding due to low participation levels and difficulty in filling executive positions. As a latch-ditch effort the group invited all landholders with covenanted properties in the Mallee to become members of the Mallee Conservation and Landcare Group. This new group now has an increased membership dedicated to the preservation of biodiversity across covenanted properties.

The Mallee Conservation and Landcare Group's first project is an investigation into localised hopbush dieback and its impact on the threatened Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly. Hopbush is an important habitat for sugar ants that build their nests at the base of living hopbush. The butterfly then utilises these sugar ant nests to feed and raise its larvae and pupae. By stopping the dieback, the group hopes to help save the butterfly.

For further information contact Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

Corangamite

The region was greatly challenged over summer by severe bushfires at Scotsburn and along the Great Ocean Road. The resilience, courage and commitment of the community and the landholders impacted by the fires and their ability to pull together has been inspiring.

The Leigh Catchment Group is coordinating support, educational events and post-recovery activities to help with fire recovery in Scotsburn, in partnership with local shires, state government, the CMA and community groups.

Over the past two years a group of passionate Landcare members has been walking the length of the Barwon River from its source in the Otways to the mouth at Barwon Heads. The walk will

raise awareness of waterway health and help connect people with the landscape. The latest stage of the walk was through the Barrabool Hills from 16 – 18 March 2016.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

Glennelg Hopkins

The Lake Bolac Eel Festival was held on 8 – 10 April 2016 and attracted a large and appreciative audience. The festival has an Indigenous focus and explores cultural and environment issues along with music, art and a huge variety of community displays and stalls.

The CMA sponsored a presentation conducted by the Perennial Pasture System Group on managing resilience in tough times. The event was held in Ararat in February 2016. It addressed the personal stress farmers and other land managers experience when they worry about livestock health, water and feed supplies on farm, as well as the financial burdens of the farm business.

The *CMA Landcare Newsletter* is an important monthly source of information on funding opportunities, community events and Landcare stories. The newsletter is delivered by email and has a growing distribution list of more than 1000. Contact the CMA to be included in the list of recipients.

For further information contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.



The new Mallee Conservation and Landcare Group is looking to help save the threatened Arid Bronze Azure Butterfly.

In brief

New tools to help with early invaders

A series of new publications to assist with the management of weeds at the early stage of invasion has recently been published by DELWP.

The benefits of prevention and of nipping new weeds in the bud before they become widespread are considerable.

DELWP's Weeds at the Early Stage of Invasion (WESI) Project focuses on high-risk invasive species that threaten biodiversity when they are at the early stage of invasion on public land anywhere in Victoria.

The series of six guides provides step-by-step information to plan and undertake the following work: search and detect; name and notify; assess the risk; delimit the invasion; decide the response; and implement eradication. The series will benefit land managers and groups. WESI is funded through the Weeds and Pests on Public Land Program.

Search for early invaders at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/early-invaders

Weed conferences

The Weed Society of Victoria Incorporated is holding its sixth biennial weed conference from 7–9 June 2016. The conference will celebrate 50 years of invasive species management in Victoria and consider the past,

present and future challenges for weed management. For more information go to www.wsvic.org.au

An Australasian weeds conference will be held in Perth from 11–15 September 2016. For further information go to www.20awc.org.au

Opt-in to receive a printed copy of the magazine

The Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine will continue to be available in print format. However, to keep receiving the magazine by post you will need to complete and return the opt-in form included in the next issue.

You can also send an email with your subscription number (see the front of the magazine envelope) to ftla@landcarevic.net.au requesting to continue to receive a printed copy of the magazine.

The magazine is also available on the Victorian Landcare Gateway in PDF format. More details on the opt-in process will be included in the next issue.

Next issue

30 Years of Landcare!

The next issue of the magazine will feature 30 years of Landcare, which began in 1986. If you or your group has a long history of involvement in Landcare, especially if you were featured in one of the early issues of the magazine,



Kate Blood (left) and Bec James from the Weeds at the Early Stage of Invasion team with the new guides.

we'd love to hear from you. Please contact the editor with your story ideas.

Contributions for the next issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 1 July 2016.

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Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management Magazine

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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.



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