

VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Spring 2016 Issue 67

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



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since 1986



**State
Government**

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

SPRING 2016 ISSUE 67

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Printed by Gunn and Taylor, Glen 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 landcare@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.org.au

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Landcare collage by Kate MacDonald.



From the Minister

It all started in 1986 at Winjallock, north central Victoria, when a group of local farmers banded together to form the world's first Landcare group. There are now almost 600 Landcare groups in Victoria and 64 Landcare networks. Landcare has spread across Australia and to more than 20 countries worldwide.

Back then I doubt anyone could have predicted the success that Landcare has achieved in its first 30 years. Thousands of hectares of Victoria's landscape have been protected, restored and enhanced by committed Landcarers working together in their local areas.

In this *30 Years of Landcare* edition of the magazine some of Victoria's Landcare 'sages' share their impressions of Landcare over the years and consider what the future holds. I'd like to thank Peter Forster, Lyn Coulston, Alice Knight and Andrew McArthur for being part of this special issue. We also hear from some of Landcare's younger members as to how the movement keeps growing.

This edition features contributions from some of Victoria's longest running groups and projects including the Powlett River Project, the Warrenbayne Boho Landcare Group, the Woody Yaloak Catchment Project and the Kowree Farm Tree Group.

We look at how these groups and projects have sustained themselves over the years and how they've evolved.

Speaking of evolution, this 30th anniversary prompts us to consider how Landcare continues to grow with the times and how digital communication tools can help Landcare groups and networks to easily engage, access and share information with each other.

Acting on a key recommendation of the Victorian Landcare Program review we worked with Landcare groups and networks to co-design and deliver a refreshed Victorian Landcare Gateway website, along with a new web-based format for the *Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management* magazine.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation process – I hope the new website serves as an engaging entry point for people wanting to learn about Landcare and a reliable library of resources for the Landcare community. Go to www.landcarevic.org.au

We welcome many international and interstate visitors this month who have gathered in Melbourne to share their Landcare experiences at the 2016 National Landcare Conference and National Landcare Awards.

As we congratulate the winners in their respective categories at the Awards, I'd like to take a moment to recognise the important work undertaken by all of the groups and networks that give their time to care for Victoria's land, water and biodiversity.

Their dedication, enthusiasm and hard work is inspiring, and they too should be celebrated.

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

Celebrating 30 years of Landcare in Victoria – nominations now open

On 25 November 2016, Landcare in Victoria celebrates its 30th anniversary. To mark this milestone, and in recognition of those who have made an outstanding contribution to Landcare, we are inviting nominations for the following categories:

- 2016 Joan Kirner Landcare Award
- Executive Committee Service Award
- Anniversary of Landcare in Victoria Honour Roll

For more information and to submit your nominations go to www.landcarevic.org.au

The Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group – an outstanding example of community achievement

By Debbie Hill

The Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group (WBLPG) was formed in August 1982 after a public meeting indicated concern about dryland salinity in the area.

With a project area encompassing 40,000 hectares, including the Reef Hills State Park, local farmer Angus Howell was appointed as the group's coordinator. Angus facilitated field days and information evenings to increase awareness and understanding about native trees, pastures, fodder trees and their role in salinity control, along with tackling rabbits, blackberries and Paterson's curse. These were the big issues some 30 years ago.

The Rural Urban Links program, funded by the Sidney Myer Foundation, brought school and university students, other Landcare groups, interstate and international visitors, politicians and industry groups to Warrenbayne Boho to learn about the salinity problem. They would assist with tree planting and fencing and enjoy interacting with and learning from our farmers.

In the early 1990s softwood and hardwood farm forestry plantations were established to further address the concern for rising



Members of the Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group have a 30 year history of revegetation projects.

water tables. This sparked the need for whole farm planning workshops using aerial photographs. Some of our early corridor plantings to improve biodiversity were planned using these crude photographs.

Landholders soon became aware of the need to protect riparian habitat by fencing and revegetating rivers and streams to reduce the impact that stock have on bank stability, erosion and water quality. The rock weirs that were constructed on local streams continue to provide deep-water pools for improved habitat of native aquatic species such as blackfish, platypus, long necked turtles and native water rats.

River bank protection also included removing willows and replacing them with native blackwoods and river bottlebrush. These early revegetation projects targeting waterways and roadsides have matured to form valuable habitat connections within an otherwise fragmented landscape.

From 1995 until 2010, WBLPG contributed to the testing of local streams as part of the then Goulburn Broken Catchment Waterwatch program. This helped landholders to understand the effects of good waterway management at a catchment scale.

Pest plants and animals still a priority

The successful introduction of the crown boring weevil and flea beetle for the biological control of Paterson's curse has meant that the surrounding hills are now mostly green rather than purple each spring.

Pest plant and animal control continue to be a major focus for WBLPG. Local member Ken Heywood facilitates the Brush Off Project to tackle blackberries and rabbits. Ken makes sure new landholders are aware of these issues, and organises the spraying contractors to do the work. In recent years an abundance of new weed threats have emerged that require attention.

Our landholders' understanding of the importance of biodiversity and ecology in the farming landscape has been enhanced with the erection and monitoring of nest boxes for threatened species.

The revegetation work we have completed provides suitable habitat for many native species, which is a great encouragement. We have also installed signs identifying significant roadside trees to increase commuter awareness of the value of these natural assets.

“

Now landholders understand the productive and biodiversity value of revegetating with local provenance native shrubs, herbs and grasses over a large area, without being so concerned about the loss of grazing area.

”



A Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group activity to learn which macroinvertebrates will thrive in a healthy farm dam.

In recent years WBLPG has focused on mixing farm production with Landcare issues. Native grasses are now acknowledged for their role in biodiversity and in productive grazing systems. The group has also hosted three supporting sites for Evergraze, a national program to produce more livestock from perennial pastures.

These ideas are also being used in the Green Haystacks Project. With funding from Woolworths, four trial sites have been set up on degraded saline areas to demonstrate how multipurpose perennial shrub and pasture species can be managed in a productive grazing system, while providing multiple benefits to the landscape.

Reasons for longevity

At a recent committee meeting members discussed the reasons for the group's longevity. It was acknowledged that there have been periods where the group has declined, and that regeneration comes from landholders with new ideas and knowledge.

Advances in technology have helped with communication. Exposure to research, social events and a strong connection in the community have all been factors in keeping enthusiasm levels up. Having a core group of very dedicated members has also been critical to keeping the group going.

Plans for an active future

Creating biodiversity hotspots on farms by fencing off dams and natural wetlands is a recent and ongoing project for WBLPG.

Landholders have transformed degraded dams into small, biologically diverse, clean water wetlands connected to surrounding remnant woodlands. The project includes open days, aquatic macroinvertebrate identification, and water sampling to demonstrate how easy and rewarding it is for landholders to create their own wetland.

This project demonstrates a more collaborative approach to project funding and management. It includes WBLPG, the Swanpool Landcare Group, Euroa Arboretum, Gecko CLaN Landcare Network, and Strathbogie Ranges Conservation Network.

A new project for the group is the rehabilitation and revegetation of a section of the Honeysuckle Creek with local native species. The area, known as the Railway Reserve, is the old dam and water supply for Violet Town. By engaging the community in the project we are encouraging local residents, schools and landholders to visit and value this once forgotten area. It is a valuable way of demonstrating the need to protect the habitat of local species including Squirrel Gliders, Brush Tailed Phascogales and the Powerful Owl.

WBLPG still meets monthly for committee meetings and to enjoy social activities including the annual AGM that is always a lovely meal with local wines and an interesting guest presenter. Our annual Clean Up Warrenbayne Day each April is also a great way to socialise over lunch after collecting local roadside rubbish.

There is a great sense of satisfaction that we have been able to improve our local landscape and to encourage other groups down the same path.

The achievements of the WBLPG provide a striking visual history of Landcare. Our early works established the first high density, small recharge plantings on hilltops, using only trees, for salinity control. Now landholders understand the productive and biodiversity value of revegetating with local provenance native shrubs, herbs and grasses over a large area, without being so concerned about the loss of grazing area.

There is a great sense of satisfaction that we have been able to improve our local landscape and to encourage other groups down the same path.

For more information about the group and others within the Gecko Clan Network go to www.geckoclan.com.au or contact Kerri Robson at landcare2@iitnet.au



Pam Robinson (at left) facilitates a whole farm planning field day for the Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group in 1987.



A Kowree Farm Tree Group bus tour in 2012 looked at local native woodland and revegetation sites.

Kowree Farm Tree Group – an enduring legacy

By Annette Jones

The Kowree Farm Tree Group (KFTG) is located in the south west of the Wimmera. The region is home, historically at least, to numerous wetlands and provides habitat for rare and endangered birds such as the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Brolga, Malleefowl, Australian Bustard and the elusive Bush Stone-curlew. The paddocks are peppered with magnificent ancient red gums.

The region's majestic old trees have come under increasing pressure as farmers adapt to our changing climate by moving from grazing to cropping. Less than three per cent of the region's endangered buloke woodland remains intact and much of the remaining woodland is degraded, exists in small blocks, or as scattered trees.

Many of the 48 species of rare and endangered birds and 11 species of threatened mammals (the Swamp Antechinus was added to the list in May 2016) are dependent upon our woodlands. It was concerns over the health of the ancient red gums and alarm at the impacts of land clearing that encouraged the founding members of the KFTG to meet for the first time in 1986.

In the early days, the group concentrated on general farm planting for shade, shelter, erosion control along waterways, and direct seeding trials. In 1999 a project to link the Little Desert to the Glenelg River began.

The Kowree Biolink Project took three years to complete and involved the cooperation of more than 100 landowners in a shire of just 4000 people. This project earned the KFTG the Bushcare Nature Conservation Award at the 2003 Victorian Landcare Awards. The project continues to be a great source of satisfaction for the group as the trees are now reaching maturity and are well integrated into the landscape.

Thirty years on, KFTG remains committed to regeneration projects and to the protection of native flora and fauna species.

According to founding member and President, Andrew Bradey, things have changed over time.

"We moved quickly from farm tree plantings to conservation plantings. This acted as a vehicle to get government money on to private land. In the past ten years, this role has diminished as the CMAs work more directly with landholders to carry out conservation work. KFTG is now more active in supporting other conservation organisations to achieve their objectives in our area," Andrew said.

Over recent years the KFTG has formed many successful partnerships to run projects and coordinate activities. The group has worked with the Bank Australia Conservation Landbank, Trust for Nature, The University of Melbourne, Landcare

Australia Limited, and Habitat 141. Many of these partnerships have also involved wide-scale community participation.

Andrew Bradey believes the group's success can be attributed to a number of people involved in getting the group started who are still active and still driving things today.

"We are in a 'head scratching phase' right now – working out what to focus on next. We need to continue to sell the merits of the biolink to the community and all branches of government.

"Involving local schools and the participation of our local kids is an ongoing priority. Two of our founding members were teachers at Edenhope High School, and farmers, so the group has had good relations with schools from the beginning," Andrew said.

Various local groups have come and gone over the last 30 years but KFTG has endured.

Founding member Sue Close attributes the group's success to the dedication of those involved and the ability to work cooperatively, pragmatically and adapt over time.

"It's multi-generational, it keeps evolving and there will be no 'job done' moment," Sue said.

Annette Jones is Kowree Farm Tree Group's Landcare Facilitator. For further information contact Annette at kftglandcare@gmail.com

The need for a balanced approach

Bairnsdale farmer Andrew (Stretch) McArthur was the inaugural chair of the East Gippsland Landcare Network when it formed in 1996 and the winner of the 2006 National Landcare Program Individual Landcare Award. He shares his thoughts on Landcare, past and present.

The Bairnsdale Farm Tree Group was the first group in East Gippsland working on revegetation. Then, in 1988, some local residents and landholders formed the Tom's Creek Landcare Group and I was the inaugural chair. This group operated very successfully with active members involved in many on-ground projects that were usually followed by a family barbecue on the weekend.

By 1996 the number of Landcare groups in East Gippsland had grown to 12 with one facilitator. In order to secure funding, we got the groups together and formed the East Gippsland Landcare Network. By 1997 there were 12 groups and a full-time facilitator.

The network became a powerful platform to lobby for funding to restore, repair and re-establish flora and fauna over a large area. Today there are three networks covering East and Far East Gippsland with 32 groups employing six staff.

Landcare has benefited the region in many ways. Most farmers are out working on their own and Landcare gives them an opportunity to work with neighbours and be part of a community. Landcare has also been a great source of information and inspiration for the people who have moved into the area for a sea change or tree change.

My involvement in Landcare has confirmed my belief that there needs to be a balanced approach to profitable farming that incorporates Landcare principles and economic viability.

Watching Landcare evolve in East Gippsland has brought me great satisfaction. Today it is an organisation that reaches out to all residents of the region – urban, hobby farmers and primary producers. There has been a recognition that Landcare benefits the whole community: from improved water quality to flood mitigation, wildlife and vegetation.



Andrew (Stretch) McArthur on a visit to the Murray River in 2010.

The future

At the moment I am enjoying the rewards of tree plantations and other projects implemented here on the farm over the past 28 years.

I think environmental issues and weed and pest control will be a big part of Landcare in the future. Landcare also encompasses related rural issues such as succession planning, whole farm planning and sustainable agriculture.

Landcare will continue to be a voice for the health and wellbeing of our land and those living and working on it.

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My involvement in Landcare has confirmed my belief that there needs to be a balanced approach to profitable farming that incorporates Landcare principles and economic viability.

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A corporate group get ready for an integrated pest management planting activity at Paul Speir's property.



Dave Bateman (left) and Geoff Trease inspect innovative revegetation on Lyn Herbert's property established with pre-germinated direct seeding.

Powlett Project – 21 pione

The Powlett Project committee was formed in 1996 after Rob Youl visited the Bass Coast with a five-year project idea that involved bringing corporate sponsorship to a catchment-wide project.

The Powlett catchment covers an area of 60 square kilometres within 90 minutes of Melbourne. Its rich soils were originally covered with one of Australia's largest forests, but after many years of intensive dairy and beef grazing it had become almost totally denuded of native vegetation. The catchment was an ideal prospect for rejuvenation.

The original committee was made up of farmers from the top of the catchment right through to the estuary. Four of the original committee members, Clive Hollins, Brian Enbom, Paul Speirs and Rob Atkinson are still participating in the project after 21 years, showing just how resilient the project has been.

Martin Fuller, now Chief Executive Officer of the West Gippsland CMA, was the Project Officer for the first five years. Martin and Rob Youl worked together to pioneer corporate engagement with the project. Jodie Leggett then took over and was great at engaging with the landholders in the catchment.

Geoff Trease took the helm for the next seven years and his knowledge of indigenous plants and seed collection was an incredible asset. When Geoff moved across to the Leongatha Seed Bank, current Project Officer Dave Bateman came on board. The project has really benefited from the commitment and diverse experience of its staff.

The landholders

The committee directly consulted with landholders in regards to planting on their farms. This worked well for the first few years of the project. Once the project was established, project officers took on this role. Landholders were required to fund fencing, site preparation and ongoing maintenance works, which ensured they took ownership of their sites.

Our work with Landcare groups started with the Archies Creek Reafforestation Group and the Korumburra Landcare Group. The Powlett Project was the catalyst for other groups starting up, including the Kongwak Landcare Group, Three Creeks Landcare Group and the Wonthaggi Urban Landcare Group. The Powlett Project Committee meets bi-monthly to look at and approve all large-scale revegetation projects within the catchment and to offer support to the landholders on best practice revegetation.



A community planting day along the Powlett River.

“

The catchment was an ideal prospect for rejuvenation.

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ering years

By Kellie Nichols

Funding has ebbed and flowed over the long history of the project but we have planted on average 100,000 plants each year, bringing our grand total to more than 2.1 million plants in the ground.

Research and innovation

We have pioneered many different direct seeding revegetation methods in all parts of the catchment. The direct seeding approach has been a cost effective and efficient method of getting many plants in the ground over the life of the project. We have direct seeded over 150 kilograms of indigenous seed which represents over 375,000 plants established.

Our local indigenous plant nurseries have played a major role with nursery operators helping to improve the diversity of species grown by educating landholders. Jill Bird and Barry and Bronwyn Teesdale from Melaleuca Nursery, Ian Starkey from Koorooman Nursery, Barry Hill from Tree Action, and Michael Bolding from the Blackwood Forest Nursery have grown a comprehensive suite of plants to enable high-quality restoration of the catchment.

Community and corporate planting days

We have held between 10-15 planting days each year since 1996. An average

of 25 volunteers attend each day to help with planting. The planting days provide opportunities for social interaction, education on catchment issues and some great lunches together.

Corporate sponsors have been important as additional support for the project. Paul Burns helped facilitate strong corporate links to Edison Mission Energy (now known as ENGIE). This relationship brought 15 years of support.

The Powlett Project also pioneered innovative corporate sponsorship models that involved companies and corporations getting their staff out into the catchment on team building days and involving them in the project their sponsorship dollars were supporting. Landcare Australia Limited brokered our first large corporate sponsorship relationship with BHP.

Local and wider partnerships have been critical to the project's success. The Leongatha Seed Bank, local schools, scout groups, Rotary groups, Greening Australia, Conservation Volunteers Australia, and universities have all been involved. The Bass Coast Shire Council has supported our project from the beginning, providing funding support and the committee with a place to

meet. The West Gippsland CMA has also been a partner for many years. The CMA has helped facilitate the removal of many kilometres of willows from the catchment that has been replanted with indigenous plants provided by the Powlett Project.

The challenges

Weed control continues to be a challenge for the project – especially getting landholders to undertake weed control work before and after planting. The committee and project officers have made many follow-up site visits to give the landholders some perspective on what needs to be done in regards to eradication of blackberry, hawthorn, boxthorn, ragwort and thistles. There is a low tolerance of woody weeds within the catchment so vigilance against this threat is high.

The Powlett Project has now come of age. We have established 2.1 million plants across the catchment, but really we have only just begun in our quest to restore the catchment. If you would like to get involved or to sponsor the project go to www.basscoastlandcare.org.au

For further information contact Dave Bateman, Bass Coast Landcare Network, at david.bateman@basscoastlandcare.org.au

Merriman Creek guardians reflect on a long commitment

By Kathleen Brack

The Merriman Creek Landcare Group has been looking after the health of the Merriman Creek and its surrounding environment for 31 years. Merriman Creek flows from the headwaters of the iconic rainforests of the Tarra-Bulga National Park at Balook in Gippsland's Strzelecki Ranges.

The creek flows approximately 80 kilometres into an ecologically productive estuary system, which opens periodically into the Bass Strait, adjacent to the Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park at the busy holiday destination of Seaspray. The creek also provides drinking water for the population of Seaspray.

In the past, much of the creek was overgrown with blackberries and willows. It was prone to erosion, sediment and nutrient run off. Stock entered the creek which damaged habitat for wildlife and polluted water quality. The farmland around the creek is used for dairy farming and sheep and beef production.

The Merriman Creek Landcare Group evolved from the Stradbroke-Woodside Farm Trees Group which formed in 1985. At that time there was a strong impetus to plant trees for shade and shelter and as a resource for fence posts and firewood as the native vegetation in the area had been heavily cleared.

The group's members have become a driving force in improving the landscape in the area. All of the group members are farmers and they manage an area extending from west of Stradbroke to Seaspray and surrounds.

Nicki Jennings, the inaugural secretary-treasurer, remembers the early days of the group and says it has evolved greatly from its initial form.

"One of our first activities was completing a whole-farm plan using black and white photos of our properties and overlays. We had several meetings at Eddie and Pat Brand's house with yummy suppers. Other memories include planting trees at the Stradbroke Hall, and Fergus Irving getting into large-scale direct seeding of wind breaks."

Since then farmers along the creek have worked to fence the creek from stock, carried out revegetation with indigenous species,



Dedicated members of the Merriman Creek Landcare Group brave wintery conditions at a tree planting event in 2010.

eradicated blackberries and willow trees and reduced sediment and nutrient run off.

In 2014, nearly a quarter of the creek was sprayed for blackberries with support from the Victorian Government's Communities for Nature program. The Wellington Shire also complemented this program by spraying another 30 kilometres of roadside blackberries adjacent to the creek.

Group leader, Melissa Ainsworth, says the group has achieved a great deal through large-scale grants and the hard work of landholders.

"We have protected a lot of the creek by fencing it off from stock and carrying out revegetation and weed control projects. Landcarers have also undertaken substantial works off-creek including creating wildlife corridors, protecting remnant vegetation and improving their soil health and pastures. Improving farming practices has also been important with a focus on perennial pastures and soil carbon.

It's also important to recognise that a lot of Landcare work happens when members do projects on their own properties without any funding," Melissa said.

As the Merriman Creek is the water supply for Seaspray the group has engaged with the Seaspray community to explain the links between what happens further up the catchment and its impact on the quality of water they use. Seaspray Primary School has also been involved in a planting along Merriman Creek with the group.

Melissa Ainsworth believes the group's social side has been the secret to its success and longevity.

"The small, rural community of Stradbroke has a hall and a CFA shed. The Landcare group is an important form of social glue. But things will change in the future. The daughters and sons of many farmers have left the area and aren't returning. We need to think about succession plans for our ageing farmers."

The group is hosting a celebration dinner and bus tour of past and current projects in September 2016 to commemorate its 30 years of Landcare.

Kathleen Brack is the Regional Landcare Program Officer at West Gippsland CMA. For further information contact Kathleen at KathleenB@wgcm.vic.gov.au

The satisfaction of working together

Lyn Coulston from Towong was a founding member of the Upper Murray Catchment Farm Tree Group and the Upper Murray Landcare Network. She has been involved with supporting and promoting many Landcare groups in the region as well as chairing the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and the board of the North East CMA. Lyn shares her views on what inspired her to get involved in Landcare and where she sees it heading in the future.

I've always been interested in sustainable natural resource management. A collective approach, with the aim of engaging everyone managing land, seemed the best way to learn about our particular patch.

I was a founding member of the Upper Murray Catchment Farm Tree Group in 1984. This was before Landcare but we already had a focus on integrated land management, not just trees. I was then a founding member of the Koetong Landcare Group in 1998, and the Upper Murray Landcare Network in 2003.

The most satisfying aspect of being involved in Landcare is the opportunity to engage with people who are interested in better management not only of their land, but the local landscape. Some people want to achieve sustainable production and others want to conserve and manage the land for different reasons.

People see what's happening and are open to approaches to get involved. The phone calls asking for information or a visit are still the most exciting part of Landcare. And, of course, seeing the everyday changes in the local landscape over the last 30 years.

Landcare has taught me a great deal. I have learned what it takes to nurture the interest and involvement of many different people, and how important each contribution is. Being inclusive is a very important lesson.

We need to remember that Landcare is about people doing what they can, whether or not they want to join a group. If I'd known that 30 years ago, then I would have extended support to those who aren't members in order to achieve common goals through promoting Landcare principles.

We now have greater participation than ever in the Upper Murray because we recognise that supporting everyone who wishes to participate makes more sense than insisting on membership.



Lyn Coulston believes Landcare will have an essential role in the future.

The future

The Upper Murray is reasonably isolated and remote from growth centres so it is unlikely to become a commuter district and see a large increase in population. Agriculture and forestry are likely to remain the principal land uses with an increase in horticulture.

Sustainable management of land and water will always be critical issues that will need support from an engaged and knowledgeable community.

I think Landcare will have an essential role to play in the future, but not in the same way it does now. The next generation of land managers are already resistant to joining a group and attending meetings. They want to attend field days or forums that add a practical dimension to their online interaction.

A model that achieves this balance will evolve through changing demographics, reliable internet access and different work patterns.

“

We need to remember that Landcare is about people doing what they can, whether or not they want to join a group.

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Productive catchment management the foundation of Woody Yaloak success

By Cam Nicholson

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Project got underway in 1993 through a collaboration of four Landcare groups, Alcoa Australia, the VFF and Greening Australia. Twenty-three years and \$10.8 million dollars later, the project has more than 150 members who manage nearly 60 per cent of all the private land in the 120,000-hectare catchment.



Spring Creek in 1996, before works commenced.



Spring Creek in 2006, eight years after planting.



Spring creek eight years later, in 2014.

Despite numerous challenges brought about through variable climate, commodity prices and funding, the project has not only remained at the forefront of Landcare, but has achieved measureable improvements in vegetation cover, waterway condition and farm productivity.

According to Kevin Knight, the inaugural chairman of the project, a set of foundation principles has provided important guidance.

"The first principle was recognising that to make lasting landscape change requires the majority of landholders to participate over many years. Designing programs and activities that encourage as many people as possible to 'have a go' and remain involved would be the only way to achieve the amount of work required.

"The second principle was to understand the link between productivity and natural resource management. In a catchment dominated by agriculture, farm profitability would greatly influence environmental action, especially when it was expected that participants would make both a cash and in-kind contribution," Kevin said.

'Productive catchment management'

The term, 'productive catchment management' became the catchphrase of the project.

The final principle was the need for continuous and transparent planning, monitoring and evaluation. This has required five-year action plans and annual planning meetings.

Keeping track of progress has included the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to record every project, producing annual reports of activities and expenditure; conducting 10-year outcome surveys that focus on catchment-wide changes in soils, waterways, vegetation, birdlife and farm profitability; and participant knowledge, skills and attitudes.



Mt Mercer farmer Danny Laffan puts the success of the Woody Yaloak Project down to successful partnerships.

Partnering for success

Mt Mercer farmer Danny Laffan was the chairman of the project from 2008 to 2015. Danny believes that partnerships have been critical for the project's success.

"Maintaining a positive relationship with landholders is everything because nothing gets done unless they are willing to participate, no matter how much funding we have. If we have landholders on board then generally we can find a way to get things done," Danny said.

Landholders have contributed more than 50 per cent of the \$10.8 million invested in the group's projects since 1993.

Approximately 30 per cent of total project funding has come from federal, state and local government, as well as the Corangamite CMA. A further 13 per cent has been through private sponsors, philanthropy, universities and agricultural industries.

According to Danny, long-term relationships with partners are most important.

"We have been fortunate to have had 15 years with Alcoa and now 16 years with Golden Plains Shire. To make lasting change takes time and ongoing commitment," he said.

Stability, innovation and technology

Retaining staff has also contributed to project stability. I've been involved as facilitator from the outset, with part time

assistance from Jennifer Clarke and Helen Sharpe since 2000.

Another ingredient for success has been the constant desire to innovate, trying new things to make participation exciting and relevant. While there will always be the ongoing Landcare issues such as rabbit, fox and weed control, treating erosion and salinity, revegetation and waterway protection, doing new things has kept the project interesting.

The group was the first to develop a low cost GIS system in 2000 and then set up a not-for-profit company called 'Landscapes for the Future' to support other Landcare groups and networks with project planning and recording.

The group has been innovative with how project planning and engagement should be done to make community involvement simple and appealing. For ten years a program that fostered farm activity across boundaries was successfully run.

Major pasture improvement, grazing management and trialling of alternative fertilisers and a biological products project have also been undertaken. The group is currently partnering with Southern Farming Systems in lime, cover cropping and fodder rotation trials.

Exciting development opportunities with the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation have also been pursued including an interactive planning portal,

project website, and development of computer and phone apps to draw together historic soil test information.

Currently the group and the Corangamite CMA are developing a *Horsecare through Landcare* program for small block owners and are a pilot area for the *Women in Farming* program. Both programs will be made available to other networks in the region.

The future

New chairman Evan Lewis believes the future for Landcare is bright, but the movement needs to think about the next generation.

"For three decades Landcare has been an incredible success, but I think we are nearing a point of needing generational change.

"People will remain at the centre of Landcare, but how can we better structure our engagement and support to ensure it still remains relevant in the next 20 years, given people are time-poor, there are new technologies available and community expectations are shifting?"

According to Evan, it's a challenge that the Woody Yaloak Catchment Project is up for.

Cam Nicholson is the Project Manager for the Woody Yaloak Catchment Project. For more information visit www.woodyyaloak.com.au or contact Cam at cam@niconrural.com.au

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The term, 'productive catchment management' became the catchphrase of the project.

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Other factors in our success have been good social events, including the involvement of children, which have helped to maintain the cohesion of the group. Staying on top of the work is also critical.

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Landcare in action at Scott Bentley's farm in 2002. More than 500 trees were planted ready to become a shelter belt and provide habitat for native species.

Biodiversity project a major focus for the Cannibal

In the mid 1990s a group of local residents in the Tynong North area banded together to fight the possibility of a third local granite quarry being developed. When the battle to stop the quarry was successful the locals decided not to disband, but to form the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group.

A dynamic local couple, Anthony Hooper and Julie Weatherhead, were the driving force behind the formation of the group as well as instigating the growth of other Landcare groups from Beaconsfield to Neerim South and the eventual formation of the Bunyip Catchment Landcare Network (now the Western Port Landcare Network), and the Cardinia Environment Coalition.

Gerard Cunningham has been one of the group's stalwarts. Gerard was the inaugural secretary and has been president since 2007.

In its 22 years of operation the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group has run successful planting days on more than 80 properties in the Tynong, Tynong North, Garfield, Garfield North, Bunyip and Iona areas. We estimate that the group has planted more than 90,000 trees, shrubs and grasses.

Direct seeding of native shelterbelts has also been one of the group's major projects. Our members Charlie and Paula Rupe from

Tynong North have carried out several large-scale direct seeding projects that have turned their farm into a showcase.

Creek rehabilitation a major focus

The construction of permanent fencing to protect remnant vegetation and the rehabilitation of the Cannibal Creek has been a long-term commitment, fortunately assisted by various grants. Weed control along the creek, with special vigilance required for blackberry, pittosporums and willows, is ongoing.

In the last year we have been involved in the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project, a major project to clean up and protect all of the Cannibal Creek from its source in the Gembrook State Forest to where it joins the Bunyip River.

This partnership project involves us working with Melbourne Water, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Western Port Catchment Landcare Network,

Friends of Mt Cannibal, Cannibal Creek Reserve, Gumbuya Park, Bunyip Landcare Group, Cardinia Shire Council, Mt Cannibal Preservation Society, and the Cardinia Environment Coalition.

Work is well underway on the project and it will see the group following a new direction – participating in environmental protection works in conjunction with local groups and government agencies whose aims are the same as ours.

Secrets to longevity

Gerard Cunningham puts much of the success and longevity of the group down to having dedicated, proactive and competent people in leadership positions.

“Anthony Hooper, Julie Weatherhead, Linda Byrne, Margaret Evans and Pam Cunningham have been vital in providing leadership in the group.

“Other factors in our success have been good social events, including the



Members of the Cannibal Creek Landcare Group in 2009.

Creek Landcare Group

By Pamela Cunningham

involvement of children, which have helped to maintain the cohesion of the group. Staying on top of the work is also critical. We do regular follow up plantings, infill plantings and weed control and fencing days that keep members involved and keen to continue to participate.

"Competence and experience in preparing grant applications is vital to the continued viability and growth of the group. We have been well served by Western Port Catchment Network in this aspect of our work," Gerard said.

Feral animal control at Mount Cannibal

Over the last three years the group has encouraged and supported the efforts of one of our members, Garry Burns, to reduce the number of foxes, deer and rabbits from properties within a three-kilometre radius of Mount Cannibal.

Through working with competent, licensed local shooters Gary's efforts have seen the elimination of more than 200 foxes, 300 rabbits and 60 deer.

The group's membership has fluctuated over the years but we have managed to retain an active core of 12-15 members. Not all of the people whose properties we have worked on have continued to be active in the group, but we still see these associations as a positive.

We make a special effort to contact new residents in the district, and as a result, we now have several new families with young children actively involved.

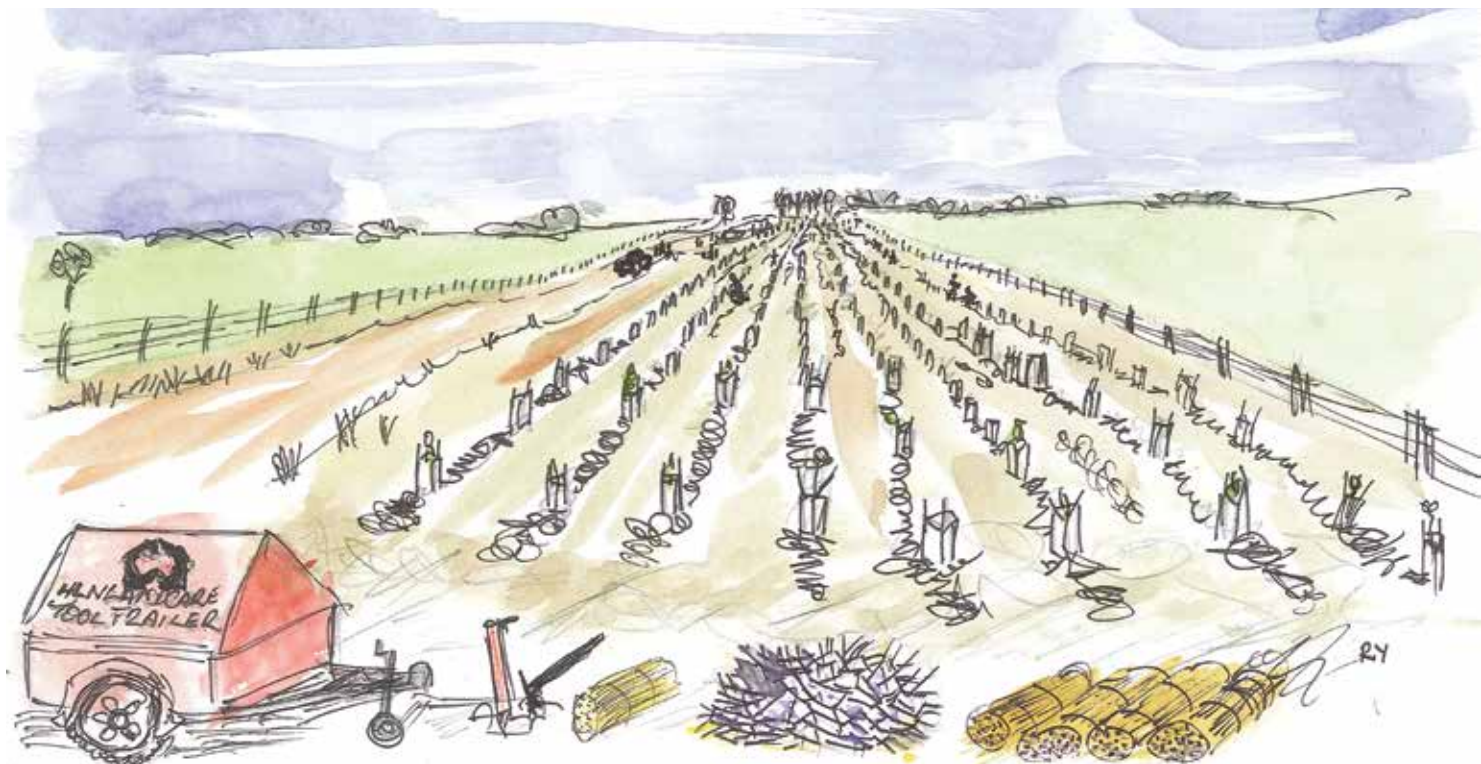
Our recent Clean Up Australia Day event was a great success. More than 35 people worked together to collect rubbish and remove pines and pittosporums from local roadsides and bushland. The work was done in conjunction with Gumbuya Park and our local Holcim quarry.

Our annual general meeting is always a major social event with a delicious meal prepared by members who can relax and enjoy each other's company. The group's future is looking bright. We will continue our works on Cannibal Creek and carry out as many revegetation projects as we can organise and fund. Landcare is in safe hands.

**For further information contact
Pamela Cunningham at
Cannibalcreeklandcare@gmail.com**



Cannibal Creek Landcare Group members at Charlie and Paula Rupe's farm in Tynong North.



A Project Hindmarsh planting day at Nhill in 2012. Illustration by Rob Youl.

Landcare – from local community action to

Numerous rural environmental initiatives, both technical and community-based, appeared between 1970 and the launch of Landcare in 1986, raising awareness and spurring action. The Australian Forest Development Institute fostered small-scale commercial tree growing. Innovative journalist-publisher Geoff Wilson promoted New Zealand-style agroforestry with poplars and radiata pine. A Forests Commission loan scheme supported small pine plantations.

Victorian Premier Dick Hamer and his departmental head John Jack formed the Garden State Committee, which included much-loved television gardener Kevin Heinze, Professor Carrick Chambers and some leading farmers.

John Jack interested his fellow foresters in tree decline, flagged landscape protection along the Hume Highway and launched Project Treecover, replanting several prominent sites. Trust for Nature and a statewide Roadsides Conservation Committee were underway. Salinity was being researched and Albury-Wodonga planted its urban forests.

In Maryborough Terry and Fay White conceived community action to 'halt the salt', and Loddon's Project Branchout emerged, probably Australia's first practical regional revegetation group. Meanwhile the Soil Conservation Authority and staff

from the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board ran local community projects and committees to help meet their charters.

The active eighties

In 1980 Melbourne's fruitful Focus on Farm Trees conference brought many together, including Nan Oates, Peter Langley, Rob Davidson, Peter Greig and creative landowners Sue Campbell, Richard Jamieson, John Fenton and Bill Twigg. It spawned the Forests Commission's Tree Growing Assistance Scheme – the forerunner of Conservation Volunteers Australia – and several independently minded farm tree groups across Victoria, several of which are still in operation.

Land for Wildlife started in 1981 and ecosystem projects were underway at Tower Hill and the Organ Pipes. In 1982 the United Nations Association's Year of

the Tree led to the NSW nursery industry creating Greening Australia. Richard Weatherly, David Debenham and others started experimental direct-seeding. The Salinity Bureau opened in Victoria with a community focus, and urban forestry advocate John French expounded his ideas.

Awareness of tree decline grew with New Englanders declaring it a regional problem, attracting ABC television coverage. In Tasmania commercial tree growing including blackwood and shining gum, was increasing on farms. CSIRO agroforestry researchers collaborated with several state departments.

Western Australia developed its Land Conservation District Committees system, and began to attack the massive salinity problems in its wheat belt. Alcoa assisted generously both in WA and Victoria. A rainforest restoration movement grew in northern NSW.



A farm landscape in Madagascar. Illustration by Rob Youl.

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On 25 November 1986, when Joan Kirner launched Winjallok Landcare Group on Terry Simpson's property 'Stricta Hill', nobody could have visualised how the movement would grow and how well it would serve us technically, administratively, socially, politically and spiritually.

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international movement

By Rob Youl

Starting in Victoria, interest in indigenous vegetation germinated. Tree-growing landowners talked to field naturalists, recalling the abundant wildflowers of their childhood and rejecting species selection from standard nursery lists. New literature emerged on trees and soil conservation philosophy, especially from Nan Oates, Geoff Wilson and Brian Roberts. Government reports revealed the degraded state of our rivers.

Major projects underway

In 1984 the Black Range-Dundas Corridor Group formed to link blocks of major public land across five farms north of Hamilton. Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group near Benalla blossomed and successfully lobbied to increase spending on land restoration.

The Garden State Committee attracted major funding from the Ian Potter Foundation to re-engineer fifteen farms around Hamilton with re-fencing, pasture improvement, revegetation, laneways, better water and shelter management and community involvement. John Fenton's property 'Lanark' was an exemplar. The emergent Potter Farmland Plan – eventually attracting hundreds of visitors, plus international attention – showed us what was possible.

Victoria's six land management agencies had generally worked separately, but were co-operating, thanks to the Land Conservation Council, Ministry for Conservation and Garden State Committee. Then the State Government Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands was formed and its second minister, Joan Kirner, a long-time state schools' activist, personified community involvement. Minister Kirner wanted a multi-disciplinary community-based land management program. Horrie Poussard, Dennis Cahill, and Joan Kirner herself, supported by VFF president Heather Mitchell, came up with Landcare.

On 25 November 1986, when Joan Kirner launched Winjallok Landcare Group on Terry Simpson's property 'Stricta Hill', nobody could have visualised how the movement would grow and how well it would serve us technically, administratively, socially, politically and spiritually.

Landcare across the world

Landcare went national in late 1989 and then it leapt the country and headed overseas. It flourishes in Iceland where it was initiated after a visit from Andrew Campbell in 1993. In 1994 visiting New Zealanders repatriated the idea to their rabbit-plagued South Island.

In 1997 Sue Marriott and colleagues brought 12 South Africans to southern Australia. This led to the launch of Landcare in the Republic of South Africa and the concept spreading across East Africa.

After Horrie Poussard met Denis Garrity from the World Agroforestry Center, the Philippines came next. There are also many small projects elsewhere including the Pacific, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. We have hopes that Landcare will expand into Japan and the Caribbean.

Why has Landcare reached so far? Because it is multi-disciplinary, democratic, flexible, non-hierarchical, honest, bipartisan and respectful. Groups gather into efficient networks capable of managing major projects. Landcare devolves responsibility, enhances community solidarity, attracts youth and artists, cleverly employs co-ordinators, encourages planning and effective partnerships, and attracts government and corporate funding – just what our climate-challenged Earth needs!

Rob Youl is President of Australian Landcare International. For further information contact Rob at robmyoul@gmail.com

Dunns Creek Landcare Group marks 25 active years

By Dave Gibb

The Dunns Creek Landcare Group was formed in 1991. A few of us on Dunns Creek Road had become concerned about high salinity readings and decided that we needed to work together if we were to have an impact on the salt. I called a meeting of neighbours at my house and the Dunns Creek Landcare Group was born.

The group had several inspirations. The previous year, Wally Shaw from the VFF had launched VFF Peninsula Landcare in McIlroys Rd, Red Hill. We were hearing about the activities of the Warrenbayne Boho Land Protection Group and the Bass Valley Landcare Group that was underway with large-scale roadside spraying of blackberry and ragwort.

We were also haunted by photographs of the white, salt-encrusted moonscapes on the outskirts of Kerang that had been blighted by severe salinity.

The original membership of the Dunns Creek Landcare Group was only open to people with properties that fronted Dunns Creek Road, Wallaces Road, Harrisons Road or Gibb Road in the Red Hill and Dromana area. I was able to letterbox each property.

Later, at the urging of the then Department of Sustainability and Environment, the group expanded to include all properties within the catchment area of Dunns Creek and its tributaries, upstream from Moats Corner. This took us right up to the saddles of Arthurs Seat Road and Red Hill Road, beyond which many years later other Landcare groups would form. Road representatives were appointed to letterbox each road.

I insisted that I was not going to be the group's president, but a president didn't step forward. We solved the problem by having a rotating chairman. The member that provided the house for the meeting had to chair the meeting.

We later evolved to meeting in wineries on a Sunday night after the cellar door closed with the vigneron having to chair the



Dave Gibb spraying blackberries on Dunns Creek prior to the removal of willows and fencing of the creek.



A Dunns Creek Landcare Group annual working bee to remove weeds on a high conservation value roadside.

meeting. I took the minutes and called the meetings and Bill McDonough became the treasurer. We weren't great at succession planning. It took 23 years for Bill and me to find the capable Roger Stuart-Andrews and Les Coleman to take over from us as president and treasurer.

The initial objectives of the group were to encourage land management practices that promoted sustainable agriculture. We focused on tree planting, protecting remnant vegetation, salinity and drainage, soil erosion, ragwort, blackberries and rabbits.

Early work included exchanging information and circulating fact sheets. We've had some major successes with roadside spraying of blackberry and ragwort, annual weeding of high conservation value roadside reserves, a group fox control program, and fencing off livestock from a section of Dunns Creek as well as removing the willows and replanting native vegetation.

The group currently has a membership of more than 25 properties in Red Hill, Dromana, Safety Beach and Merricks North. We are a small, but active and sociable group. We have an annual dinner and different speakers at our annual general meetings.

A few of our members attended the 10th Anniversary of Landcare Conference in Ballarat in 1996 (I still have the coffee mug!) and we look forward to attending the 2016 National Landcare Conference in Melbourne this year to celebrate 30 great years of Landcare.

Dave Gibb is one of the founders and long-term members of the Dunns Creek Landcare Group. For further information contact Dave on gibbddd@gmail.com



"The Woody is a great group to be involved with," says Alice Knight.

The Woody is my passion...

Alice Knight is the current chair of the Corangamite CMA board. She has been involved in Landcare in the Woody Yaloak catchment for nearly 30 years. Alice shares her thoughts on the past and the future.

My family has a long history and interest in this area. Around 50 years ago we purchased a bush block that had been relatively untouched since the gold rush and gave it to the Australian Conservation Foundation to preserve. Children love it, and it's a great place for walks.

My brother Kevin was the inaugural chair of the Pittong Hoyles Creek Landcare Group, and shortly after, the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group was formed. What a great success story this has been. We have supported local landowners to be involved in projects across their boundary fence and worked with neighbours to change the landscape and improve productivity.

We believe people become involved in Landcare to do Landcare, not to attend meetings. We make it as easy as possible to support members to participate in on-ground activities and invite all members to tell us what they would like to do. The committee then goes about finding the funding to support their plans. No landowner gets 100 per cent funding for a project, as we believe co-investment is the key to our success.

We are fortunate to have a good working relationship with the Corangamite CMA. Landcare as a whole needs better relationships with regional bodies. Regional bodies understand local issues and are the major source of our funding.

Hundreds of people have visited our catchment over the last 20 years and we really enjoy telling our story. Do we tell our story well enough to government? I'm not sure, but we have a great human-interest story that everyone loves to hear. We need to keep telling this side of the story.

We support members when things are tough. We have run very successful social events where members get to see they are not the only ones hurting and can speak about their problems with others. This community spirit has improved relationships over the years in the same way it has improved the landscape.

The future

The last 30 years have flown and I guess the next 30 will do the same, although I won't be around to see them. I will always be passionate about supporting Landcarers to increase their productivity and farm sustainability and encouraging the next generation to do the same.

Wherever we travel in the world people want the same things – a cleaner environment, more opportunities for their children, and farmers managing the landscape in the best possible way for the future.

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This community spirit has improved relationships over the years in the same way it has improved the landscape.

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Millewa-Carwarp celebrates a long history

Landcare has a long history in the Millewa-Carwarp area. Both Mildura Shire winners of the 1945 Hanslow Cup for soil conservation were from Karawinna. Local rabbit action management groups were also up and running in the 1940s and farmers were sharing knowledge about crop rotations, effective weed control, fertilisers, seasonal information and natural environmental factors including native flora and fauna.

Many farmers were using sustainable land management practices and most were involved in a group. Before Landcare was introduced in 1986, these groups tended to concentrate on single issues like rabbits, weeds or soil erosion.

Millewa farmer and conservationist Allan Scown introduced Landcare to the region in 1987. In 1988 the Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group was officially incorporated, becoming the 57th Landcare group in Australia. For the first six years Ron Hards was the President and Colin Hunt the Secretary of the group.

Several members of the group, including Ron Hards, travelled to Western Australia for an early Landcare conference where

they had observed the rehabilitation of farming land using a grader board. They also saw a Chatfield tree planter in use in an area where thousands of kilometres of farmland had been planted with trees.

The group decided to purchase a grader board and a Chatfield Tree Planter to undertake its first major projects, which were to reclaim land laid waste by soil erosion, and plant trees on farmland and along barren roadsides. Erosion in the sand hills had taken these areas out of cultivation and created a breeding ground for pest plants and animals. Once these areas were rehabilitated they became some of the Millewa region's most viable and sustainable cropping country.



John Cook (from left) with Ron Hards and Craig Bildstein at the launch of the kangaroo fence in 1993.

The tree planting campaign was also a great success. The group collected seed, propagated and planted thousands of trees on farms and roadsides.

In 1993 the group embarked on a project to build an electric kangaroo barrier between the Sunset National Park and farming land. This fence is now 160-kilometres long and also restricts access to the area by emus and goats.

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More than 85 per cent of the farmers in the area are now members of the Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group.

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Long-term member of the Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group Lyn Harmer watering trees in the mid 1990s.

of sustainable land management

By Sonya van Heusden



The Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group provided a barbecue at the 2015 cull-a-carp competition.

In recognition, the group has received a number of awards including the 1993 Victorian Community Landcare Award, the 1994 Victorian Landcare Award and the 2000 Hanslow Cup for Sustainable Agriculture.

Millewa-Carwarp today

More than 85 per cent of the farmers in the area are now members of the Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group. Maintaining this high level of membership and community involvement have led to a staggering amount of work under the Landcare banner.

The group has an impressive collection of machinery that members have worked hard to purchase and maintain. It includes three different rippers, five bait layers and a grader board. The machines are always in high demand for Landcare activities.

The group's current secretary was one of the founding members of the Greater Mallee Landcare Group, an informal group that was formed with surrounding Landcare groups to manage pest plant and

animals on a larger scale to ensure that these programs are more effective.

In 2015 a successful rabbit management program was conducted along approximately 1000 hectares of roadsides with more than 90 per cent of the farms along those roads participating. Plans are in place to complete a similar scale program this year.

The Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group also supports local farmers in an annual feral animal shoot and an annual cull-a-carp festival.

Landcare has been an important meeting ground for the farmers of the Millewa-Carwarp area to combine and employ their sustainable farming practices. The group has a rich history with many success stories, thanks to some very committed and passionate members. I am keen to be a part of their plans for the future.

Sonya Van Heusden is the Treasurer of Millewa-Carwarp Landcare Group. For more information contact Sonya at millewalc@outlook.com

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Landcare has been an important meeting ground for the farmers of the Millewa-Carwarp area to combine and employ their sustainable farming practices.

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The Walkers Lake Management Plan aims to ensure that the inherent value of the lake as a wildlife refuge is not compromised with shared recreational use.

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Carrie Jesse (left) with fellow Landcare members Fiona Burchell and Jenny Guthrie at Walkers Lake.

Inspirational member galvanises the Avon Plains

The Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group, west of St Arnaud, is just a stone's throw from 'Stricta Hill' at Winjallok where, in 1986, Joan Kirner and Heather Mitchell formalised the grassroots movement we now know as Landcare.

Our area comprises a valuable chain of wetlands including Lake Batyo Catyo and the Avon Plains Lakes, Avon and Richardson Rivers, Rich Avon Weir, and the York Plains. The area was once home to thriving Indigenous communities whose stories are written on the landscape in the scar trees, middens, grinding stones and ovens, and vast stone scatters. Now it is cropping country with lone-paddock trees and remnant vegetation concentrated along the waterways and roads.

In the 1980s the then Lands Department alerted the farming community to the threat of salinity and soil degradation in our area. The Avon Richardson Catchment Improvement Scheme was formed. The catchment was divided into local cells that formed the basis for all future Landcare groups. In 2013 the Avon Plains and the Banyena Landcare Groups merged with a strong vision of sustainable agriculture.

The group worked to fence off much of the Richardson River frontage, stock were excluded from the lakes and a flurry of tree

planting took place as whole-farm plans were implemented. Lucerne was tested, bores were installed to monitor the water table, and locals came together to explore more efficient crops.

One of the group's most active and passionate members was Carrie Jesse. A young schoolteacher from Melbourne, Carrie had married a local farmer and was there on 'Stricta Hill' with a baby in pusher, adding her voice to the cause.

Carrie was a founding member of both the Avon Plains and the Banyena Landcare Groups. She was secretary-treasurer of the Avon Plains Landcare Group from its inception in 1986, and inaugural secretary of the amalgamated Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group from 2013 until 2015.

A plan for Walkers Lake

Lake Batyo Catyo was a major focus for the Avon Plains Landcare Group. This water body, part of the Wimmera Mallee water supply, was home to over 70 species of birds and was an important

breeding and nesting site for migratory birds.

Carrie was the project manager for a major funding initiative that established boardwalks along the edge of the lake, planted thousands of trees and created a corridor to nearby Walkers Lake. The long drought of the early 2000s, and the piping of the Wimmera Mallee System, saw the demise of Lake Batyo Catyo when it reverted back to an empty swamp.

The group campaigned to have Walkers Lake established as a permanent water body and Carrie Jesse helped to develop a management plan for the lake. Now filled with a piped recreational water allocation, it is a magnet for birdwatchers, walkers, boaters, campers, water-skiers and duck shooters.

The Walkers Lake Management Plan aims to ensure that the inherent value of the lake as a wildlife refuge is not compromised with shared recreational use. Unfortunately this continues to be a challenge.



Carrie Jesse at Walkers Lake with her son Andrew and dogs Pippy and Belle.

Banyena Landcare Group

By Fiona Burchell and Prue McAllister

There are ongoing issues with the destruction of habitat for birds, animals and frogs from the pressure of campers, motor bikers, kayakers and shooters.

In memory of Carrie Jesse

Carrie Jesse was a staunch advocate for Walkers Lake. Carrie died earlier

this year. The Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group will continue to work towards protecting the beauty, cultural and environmental assets of this precious drop of water in the Wimmera and we do this in memory of our friend Carrie. Her extraordinary contribution to the land

and wetlands that she loved are an inspiration to us all.

For further information contact Prue McAllister, President of the Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group at prue3388@gmail.com and Fiona Burchell at mandfburchell@gmail.com



Tori Simpson, Jenny Guthrie and Prue McAllister from the Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group conduct a site survey at Walkers Lake with Dr Diana Smith from the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

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This community spirit has improved relationships over the years in the same way it has improved the landscape.

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Reflections of a young Landcare leader



Kate McKenzie (third from left) on a pedal to paddock Landcare bike ride as part of the 2015 Prom Coast Sea Change Festival.

Kate McKenzie (nee Williams) is Network Coordinator at the South Gippsland Landcare Network and was the winner of the Manpower Young Landcare Leader Award at the 2015 Victorian Landcare Awards.

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In my mind, that's what Landcare is all about – enabling the community to address issues local to them by providing an efficient framework for the sharing of information and resources.

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I got involved with Landcare unofficially in 2006 when I worked with local government in Broadford. I remember attending a group meeting near Tallarook and being really impressed by the knowledge and passion members had for their patch.

I've always been a great believer in enabling genuine community participation in the management of natural resources, and I thought to myself at the time: this is something I want to be involved with.

Four years later, a position came up with the South Gippsland Landcare Network in Leongatha and I jumped at it. The most rewarding aspect for me is following the journey of new landholders moving to the area. When they are new to the area they come to Landcare for advice. Then, after a number of years, it's the other way around and they are the ones giving Landcare advice to the next batch of landholders.

It's fascinating to watch people grow, develop their land management skills and become valued, integrated members of the local community. In my mind, that's what Landcare is all about – enabling the community to address issues local to them by providing an efficient framework for the sharing of information and resources.

Landcare has taught me about flexibility. I have learnt to adapt my approach

depending on the group and the issue that I'm dealing with. There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to working with community groups. What works for one will not necessarily work for another.

The future

South Gippsland is fortunate to be a tree change and sea change region as well as being highly productive from a farming perspective. Social capital and natural capital are interdependent. You cannot sustain one for long without the other.

As a consequence, I strongly believe that Landcare in the region will remain vibrant, and that in 30 years time, sure, land use and technologies will change, as will the people who make up the community. However, the need to raise awareness, build social capital and facilitate community engagement will always exist.

New technology is moving at such a rapid rate I expect to see robots in paddocks controlling weeds, virtual fences and drones mapping out project sites.

The prospect of new technologies and thinking – including greater cross-cultural participation – to solve current and emerging land management challenges makes it an exciting time to be involved in Landcare.

For further information contact Kate at KateM@wgcm.vic.gov.au

A more resilient future

Pioneer carbon-farmer Peter Forster was a driving force behind the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group and the Ararat Urban Landcare Group. He shares his vision for Landcare in 30 years.

Christine and I returned to the family farm at Ararat during the severe drought of 1982. The whole district was a dust bowl by the end of the year. We realised that we needed to rethink how we managed stock to conserve our most valuable resource, the topsoil. Other severe weather events causing stock losses showed the need for shelter.

Whole farm planning was important for providing us something to work towards. Once implemented, a whole farm plan makes your farm more efficient and sustainable. We did the course twice, with a ten-year interval, and it showed us that not much had changed in our thinking over that time.

With hindsight we would have increased the width of some of our early revegetation projects and selected different species. The spacing between plants would also increase as severe dry spells naturally cull trees planted too close together.

The work that we've done has been very satisfying. There is real enjoyment in watching our farm environment improve. Before fencing, revegetation, and a small amount of earthworks, Captains Creek was an actively eroding ugly scar. Now we can bush walk along the creek on our own farm starting from the back door. Watching the birdbath on a hot day from the kitchen table is also hard to beat.

In 30 years time...

I'm looking forward to a future in which we will have high-quality biolinks along



Ararat farmers Peter and Christine Forster have been involved in Landcare, catchment management and sustainable farming at a local and national level since the early 1980s.

waterways and in marginal farming and hilly areas. The catchment and associated biodiversity will be more resilient to climate extremes. Land use will more accurately reflect land capability. For example, arable land will be mostly cropped. Carbon farming, of trees, will increase on granite and sedimentary country where soil types are poor but trees grow well.

Renewable energy options (wind and solar) will be an important farm income

source especially on marginal farming land. Landcare will concentrate increasingly on sustainability issues such as integrated pest management, soil health, animal welfare and fire planning as the standard Landcare work of fencing waterways and revegetation is completed. In some areas this is already happening. We will also need to return to older projects and keep improving the revegetation and dealing with the pest plant and animal issues as they come up.

Correction

The article, *Controlling environmental weeds by herbicide wiping* in issue 66 of the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine requires several corrections.

The term 'block' was incorrectly inserted into the text. The headings in the results section of the second last

paragraph on page 15 should refer to treatments 1-4, not blocks 1-4.

When referring to experimental treatments (also on page 15) it was stated that the herbicide mix was applied twice. This was not the case, and is not recommended. The text should have stated that only one application of herbicide

was used on the plants in September 2014 and that other plants were also treated once in October 2014.

Orchids were incorrectly referred to as having corms. Orchids have tubers.

These mistakes were made in the editing process.

Deep Creek Landcare Group fuelled by the effort and dedication of its members

By Hayley Goodman and Ken Allender

The Deep Creek Landcare Group was one of the first Landcare groups to be established at the beginning of the Landcare movement. Since its inception it has been an active group in the communities of Lancefield, Romsey, Goldie and more recently Monegeeta.

Originally the group also encompassed the Rochford, Newham, and Cobaw areas, which have been included in the Newham and District Landcare Group since it formed in 2004.

The group's area of 24,000 hectares is on the edge of the Victorian volcanic plains. The Wurundjeri people are the traditional owners and the area has a rich Indigenous cultural heritage with significant archaeological sites including the Mt William stone axe quarry. Early European land clearing had led to fragmented remnant vegetation.

Early rabbit success

In late 1986, or early 1987, a public meeting arranged by local councillor Kevin Tully and founding member Robert Green was attended by 40 people, and led to the formation of the group.

A Rabbit Busters Program in the early 1990s was one of the group's first projects. An area of Mt William had a significant rabbit plague with spotlight counts showing as many as 77 rabbits per spotlight or transect kilometre. After three years of warren ripping, fumigation and regular monitoring, rabbit numbers were successfully reduced to two rabbits per spotlight or transect kilometre.

After the rabbit results were published locally, many new landowners joined the group to learn the strategies for successful pest control.

Weed identification and education workshops and publications to assist landholders and community members to get on board with pest and weed control were the next priority. Other early projects included the release of the dung beetle

and assisting livestock farmers to control nutrient run off into waterways.

Repairing stream frontage

As land degradation was repaired and better farm practices were adopted, the health of the Deep Creek, which is a major tributary of the Maribyrnong catchment, became a significant issue for the group.

Much negotiation and education was required to encourage landholders to revegetate their stream frontage and restore biodiversity to areas whose loss and fragmentation of habitat due to land clearing and overgrazing were an issue.

The group also developed a project to preserve the endangered pygmy perch in Deep Creek. The group worked in partnership with Melbourne Water and Western Water to survey isolated populations and target habitat protection

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After 30 years of dedicated work, the Deep Creek Landcare Group has a long list of successful projects behind it.

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Deep Creek Landcare Group Treasurer Steven Hendy (left) and then President John Anderson during a weed and rubbish removal working bee at Sheehans Crossing in 2010.



Deep Creek Landcare Group Member's (from left) Hayley Goodman, Donna Buckley-Foster, Stephen Hendy, Robin Ford and John Blamey after a successful revegetation project at Doggetts Bridge, Lancefield.

and revegetation projects to protect this vulnerable species.

Revegetation has been a long-term focus for the group. Tens of thousands of trees and shrubs have been planted through extensive revegetation projects on public and private land. A significant number of these plants have been purchased through TreeProject – a not for profit organisation where volunteers propagate native tubestock from seed, and these plants are sold at low cost to landholders and Landcare groups for revegetation projects.

Critical funding support has come from Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program that has assisted landholder and group projects along the Deep Creek and its tributaries. Support from the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Western Water, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and our Community Bank has also helped us to deliver successful projects.

Diverse and award-winning projects

Some of our recent projects include a Landcare anniversary garden showcasing native plants in the grounds of Lancefield Park, a collaborative project to revegetate the Romsey Wastewater Treatment Plant, support for Junior Landcare, helping to protect a local site of archaeological significance, and community education workshops on bees, monotremes,

Indigenous food and fibre, plus the threatened native plant species *Dianella amoena*.

The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA awarded Deep Creek Landcare Group the 2012 Caring for Public Land Award for the revegetation and stream frontage protection works conducted at one of our major project sites, Sheehans Crossing.

The project at this six-hectare public land site started on Clean up Australia Day with the removal of a massive volume of illegally dumped rubbish. We then removed weeds by brush cutting and spraying.

The final stage of the project saw local community groups and volunteers plant 700 tubes of understorey and overstorey plants and trees. Sheehans Crossing is an ongoing project with much effort placed on maintaining pest control and replacing plant losses. It is also a pygmy perch habitat site monitored by Melbourne Water and the group.

Good reputation

According to founding member Robert Green the demographic of the local area has changed a lot since the group first started.

"It was a farming community when the group started, but it is now primarily a community of residents commuting to Melbourne and other places for work."

It's a community-wide effort where everyone involved is appreciated and respected.

Robert believes the group's success has been underpinned by its reputation in the community.

"The community view has been, and continues to be, that the group is doing a good job and that it gets things done. The Rabbit Buster Program at Mt William and the tree planting projects on public roadside land are good examples of big impact projects.

"We could have done more publicity or promotion work in the past to inform the community and get people involved. The group used to have a stall at the monthly Lancefield Farmers Market, which helped it connect to the local community. In recent years we've had a Landcare marquee at the annual Lancefield Show, which attracts a big crowd. Our regular columns in the Romsey and Lancefield town-based local papers have also been good for spreading the word," Robert said.

After 30 years of dedicated work, the Deep Creek Landcare Group has a long list of successful projects behind it. The group is keen to continue its work of enhancing the region's natural environmental values and agricultural productivity. It's a community-wide effort where everyone involved is appreciated and respected.

For further information contact Ken Allender at k.allender@bigpond.com

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The group's vision is to provide the whole community with leadership and education for a sustainable and productive environment through coordination, cooperation and communication.

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Fish Creek Landcare Group – landscaping the

The Fish Creek Landcare Group formed in 1992 and has been working actively since then. It grew from the closure of the South Gippsland Farm Trees Group. When this group wound up, its funds were shared between the new Lower Franklin and Fish Creek Landcare Groups.

Membership grew rapidly after several successful field days around the catchment showed landholders the benefits of improving the landscape. During the last 24 years, the group has been successful in receiving grants for many projects. All members are encouraged to be involved in the planning of activities at a committee of management level, or as individuals.

The group's vision is to provide the whole community with leadership and education for a sustainable and productive environment through coordination, cooperation and communication. The motto on our signs and car stickers is: *Fish Creek Landcare, Landscaping the Future.*

Approximately 50 families make up our membership. The group began with a focus on broad scale agriculture – dairy, sheep and beef farming. It has now widened to also embrace the smaller landholders who have chosen to make the Fish Creek area their home or weekend getaway.

A welcoming and cooperative spirit

Initially the group focused on revegetating the Fish Creek, downstream from the town. Many Fish Creek waterways were protected from extensive damage during the floods of 2011 due to our early riparian management projects.

More recent works have been of a broader nature on both public and private land. The Great Southern Rail Trail project, the Strzelecki Lyrebird Link, facilitating the revegetation and protection of the Battery Creek Reservoir catchment, improvements to the town environment and the construction of an information rotunda display, are good examples.

Cooperation with neighbouring Landcare groups has been a feature of our group. Over the years we've worked with the Tarwin, Foster North, and Promontory Plains Landcare Groups. We are always happy to include members, non-members and neighbouring groups in any activity that we run. We have also worked on projects

with the Fish Creek Primary School and the West Gippsland CMA.

The group runs a range of outdoor activities to cater for different interests. Most activities attract between 15 and 35 people. Activities have included summer farm walks showcasing different farming enterprises, a farm dams walk on a dairy farm looking at the integration of wildlife with a productive farming system, and whole farm planning activities aimed at smaller landholders where fencing, revegetation and weed management techniques were demonstrated.

Assisting with a community walks initiative on the Hoddle Range mountain trail has been worthwhile. Interesting guest speakers are good for attracting members and the general community. We've had speakers with expertise in marine biology, local reptiles, geology, dung beetles, climate change, resilient dairy farming systems and planning for dry periods.



Revegetation work undertaken by the Fish Creek Landcare Group helped to reduce erosion in the floods of April 2011.

future for 24 years

By the Fish Creek Landcare Group Committee

Communication is important

The local newspaper is an important avenue of communication for the group, along with the South Gippsland Landcare Network newsletter. These publications allow us to promote upcoming events as well as report back to the wider community on what we have achieved.

More recently the group uses an email update to send members information on upcoming events and items of interest.

Occasional letterbox drops help to get the message out to the wider community.

Landcare displays at local events, including the 2009 Back to Fish Creek celebrations, have also been a good way for us to showcase what we are doing and attract new members.

According to the current President, Robin Stevens, group numbers are prone to fluctuation.

"We seem to have lost the larger dairy, beef and sheep farmer members, probably because they have done their Landcare thing, but over the past 10 years our numbers have swelled with sea and tree changers. They are keen to become part of the community and Landcare has been popular.

"Our role in the community has also changed. We used to be a resource for trees and revegetation works, but now we have a more educational role. Our new members are very enthusiastic. In the last 18 months we sent out a survey to gauge what they would like to gain from their Landcare membership. This will have an impact on how the group develops in the future," Robin said.

As the group approaches its 25th year of activity it is in good health. We are looking forward to a future of fruitful collaboration with other groups, agencies and organisations, and involving all landowners in our community in positive landscape change.

For further information contact the Secretary, Merran Wilde at merranwilde@hotmail.com



The Fish Creek Landcare Group helped to organise a Hoddle Range mountain walk in the summer of 2006.

Around the State – News from the Regional

East Gippsland

East Gippsland had a good planting season, although heavy rains and floods in July caused some problems.

The Landcare community has been very active. Harriet Shing, Member of the Legislative Council for Eastern Victoria Region, visited East Gippsland recently. The Eastwood Landcare Group showed her their rainforest revegetation at Granite Creek in Bairnsdale and the Friends of Picnic Point Reserve showcased their successful projects.

Emma Orgill, the Regional Landcare Facilitator for East Gippsland, ran a successful primary producer bus tour across NSW in late June. Participants visited the properties of Martin Royds at Braidwood, David and Mary Marsh at Boorowa, Nigel Kerin at Yeoval, and Norm and Pip Smith at Wellington.

The region celebrated 30 years of Landcare in early September, sharing videos of the fabulous achievements of the East Gippsland Landcare community.

For further information contact
Amanda Bartkowski on 5150 3851.

Goulburn Broken

Nineteen community members from the Goulburn Broken and North East CMA regions recently graduated from the 2016 Community Landcare and Agriculture Leadership Program.

A joint initiative of the two CMAs, this seven-day program involved a mix of field trips and workshop sessions.

Feedback from participants was very positive with participants reporting increased confidence to lead others, adapt to change, and communicate effectively. Plans are underway to run the program again in 2017.

Eleven community Landcare and farming organisations were awarded \$230,000 in grants through the Goulburn Broken CMA's Beyond Soilcare Project. The funds will assist with delivering events, training, and paddock demonstrations to promote soil health and sustainable farming. Projects cover a range of topics from the role of compost on processing tomato production, to refining deep soil nitrogen testing, and reducing environmental losses in the grains industry.

For further information contact
Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

Glenelg Hopkins

The south-west Landcare community celebrated 30 years of Landcare at a successful gathering at Willaura in June. The event, co-hosted by the CMA and the Upper Hopkins Land Management Group, was focused on sustainable farming. Landcarers from Portland to Ballarat learnt about current thinking on crop and pasture management.

Landcare legends, Peter and Christine Forster from Ararat, gave an inspirational presentation on their long history with Landcare groups and on-farm works. Despite rain and sleet, the 75 participants courageously finished the day with a tour of local projects.

The CMA monthly Landcare email newsletter continues to increase its distribution. The newsletter has information on funding opportunities, upcoming events and news stories. Please get in touch if you would like to be included on the mailing list.

For further information contact
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

North East

The CMA is currently undertaking consultation to renew the Regional Landcare Support Plan. This will identify the new priorities for supporting Landcare and other community groups.

The CMA is assessing and identifying potential projects for development into grants from expressions of interest received for its 2016-17 Incentives and Community Grants for the North East.

Winners of the North East Natural Resource Management Awards will be announced in November during the celebration of 30 years of Landcare in the region. As well as Active Service Awards, a photographic competition award will also be given. Entrants in the My Favourite Place Photographic Competition, including a People's Choice Award, are on the CMA website at www.necma.vic.gov.au

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

Corangamite

The Corangamite Rural Women's Network gathered on the Bellarine Peninsula in August with 50 women visiting a sustainable goat farm that supplies gourmet cheeses to local wineries and restaurants.

At the Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, the women learnt basket-weaving methods using spiny-head mat-rush from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

Landcare in the region is buzzing with events and activities to celebrate the 30-year anniversary. The *Faces of Landcare in Corangamite* storybook provides an insight into our inspiring and passionate volunteers.

Events and activities are listed on the Landcare Gateway at www.landcarevic.net.au

For further information contact
Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.



Students from the Snowy River campus of the School for Student Leadership are working in partnership with Snowy West Landcare Group planting the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Landcare Coordinators



Citizen science was the focus of the 4th Annual Water Science Forum in Bendigo in June 2016.

Port Phillip and Western Port

Thank you to all of the Landcare groups and networks that completed the recent 2015-16 Landcare Survey. The data collected through this survey will be used to prepare a regional report card, contribute to the statewide Landcare report card, and inform and support the case for continued investment in Landcare.

At recent meetings of two regional forums convened by the CMA – one for Landcare network leaders and the other for Landcare facilitators – each determined the purpose of their respective forum and there was remarkable similarity between the two purposes.

At both forums, participants wanted to learn from each other, connect with agencies such as the CMA, DEWLP and Melbourne Water, and identify opportunities for collaboration. The forums are held twice a year.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 8781 7920.

North Central

The Future Farming Expo held in Swan Hill in April was attended by 140 people from a variety of agricultural, business and community sectors. This was followed by our annual volunteer recognition event.

The 4th Annual Water Science Forum, in partnership with the North Central Waterwatch program, was held in June. The forum focused on citizen science and featured the launch of a free app, allowing budding citizen scientists to capture biodiversity observations. Look for NatureBlitz in your app store.

For more information on the coming North Central Victoria Soil Health Guide, the 2016 Inspiring Women in Agriculture course and the 30 years of Landcare celebration event visit www.nccma.vic.gov.au

For further information contact Tess Grieves on 5440 1890.

West Gippsland

The region has faced a difficult period with the recent dairy crisis. Several regional events have been run to support local dairy farmers through this tough period. The Tarwin Valley Development Group ran a dairy support day at the Fish Creek versus Kilcunda Bass footy clash, offering farmers and their families moral support and an ear to bend over a banana smoothie.

Wet conditions have helped the planting season, with a wide range of large and small-scale projects underway across the region.

Groups with ideas for revegetation, remnant protection, soil health or sustainable agriculture projects are invited to inform their local Landcare network through the regional expressions of interest process. Application forms are available at www.wgcma.vic.gov.au

For further information contact Kathleen Brack on 5613 5966.

Wimmera

Wimmera groups and networks completed another successful series of large-scale community planting events over the colder months. Congratulations to the groups and other volunteers involved in these events.

Local Landcarers will be involved hosting the Victorian Tidy Towns Awards in Horsham on 14-15 October 2016. The event will showcase a number of Landcare achievements including the work of the Horsham Urban Landcare Group. Last year Horsham won the Environmental Education category in the awards

The relationship between the Landcare community and the Barengi Gadjin Land Council continues to strengthen, with several school programs underway this year. Aboriginal culture and biodiversity was also the theme of the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar held on 1 September.

For further information contact Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

Mallee

Landcare groups across the Mallee are still active and enthusiastic after almost 30 years of projects. In the last two years alone Mallee Landcare groups have obtained approximately \$2 million in grants for works.

Pest plants and animals are still the main priority, but tackling the problems of land and water degradation with a focus on community wellbeing and agricultural sustainability is the core work of our groups.

Landcare has become a beacon for best practice land management in the Mallee. Congratulations to everyone who has been involved over the years. We now have a strong foundation for those leading the way into the next decade and beyond.

For further information contact Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

In brief

FTLA looks to the future

By Susi Johnson

In 1986 a collection of farm tree groups and early Landcare groups formally incorporated as the Victorian Land Management and Farm Tree Group Incorporated. By 1992 this had grown to 100 member groups. Now, 30 years later, the Farm Tree and Landcare Association supports over 600 groups.

At our recent annual general meeting more than 75 FTLA members discussed the challenges and opportunities ahead for the next 30 years of Landcare.

The points discussed included the positive aspects of an ageing population – more retirees with a lifetime of wisdom and experience will have more time to volunteer with Landcare. Longer life spans mean we need to concentrate on being active and healthy. An increased pressure on resources could drive innovation and efficiency.

Greater numbers of small landholders will provide an opportunity for Landcare to share knowledge and make connections, while larger commercial farms involving a single landholder could have a bigger impact, enabling more complex, large-scale projects.

Improvements in technology will assist with monitoring and mapping, enabling smaller groups to have a bigger impact. Getting involved with climate change adaptation (surveying the impacts of climate-related species movements and assisting with crisis recovery) was also seen as an opportunity, as was carbon farming.



Heather Mitchell and Joan Kirner at Winjallok celebrating the 10th anniversary of Landcare.

Participants were enthusiastic about these new opportunities, while acknowledging the importance of Landcare continuing to work on its core issues of rabbits, weeds, revegetation, soils and waterways. More than 5800 people joined FTLA member groups over the last three years, and 91 new groups joined the FTLA. The next 30 years of Landcare are looking good!

**For more information contact
Susi Johnson at ftla@vff.org.au**

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Next issue

The next issue of the magazine will be a feature on Landcare – Connecting Nature and Community.

If you or your group has a story to tell about projects that have forged closer relationships between people and the environment – both bushland and farms – we would like to hear from you. Our readers are keen to learn about the successes of different projects as well as what hasn't worked and the insights and reflections of the group along the way. Please contact the editor with your story ideas.

Contributions for the next issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 11 November 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

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

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The Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine is available online on the Victorian Landcare Gateway website www.landcarevic.org.au both as web pages and pdfs. Back issues (pdfs) of the magazine can be found at www.landcarevic.org.au



Published on recycled and recyclable paper