

Summer 2001

ISSUE 22

Victorian Landcare & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

The Phillip Island story

Managing the Mallee

Focus on FarmBis



*Victorian Landcare Awards
Special feature issue*



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Australia's Growing Edge

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Phillip Island coastline by Paul Crock.

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From the editors

Victorian Landcare Awards

Congratulations to the entrants, winners, sponsors and organisers of the 2001 Victorian Landcare Awards. The awards were announced at a fantastic ceremony at Government House in late October. See pages 12-23 for stories on all of the winners.

Treemax winner

Ann Jelinek from the Acheron Landcare Group has won the Hamilton Treeplanter for returning a survey coupon in the Treemax Hamilton Treeplanter Competition. Congratulations Ann, we have no doubt it will be put to good use.

Reader survey

Thanks to our readers for returning the survey form in the last issue. Many people took the time to write detailed comments and suggestions. We are currently collating all of the returns and will have a breakdown of the results in the March 2002 issue.

Apology

Our apologies to journalist John Quinlan and researcher Dr Murray Unkovich for several mistakes in the Mallee article in the last issue. We mixed up Murray's first name throughout the article and incorrectly captioned a photograph of dust



Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, presents the Westpac Landcare Education Award to (from left) Justin Millard, Jeff Millard, Cameron Bonk and Pat Millard from Lockington Consolidated Primary School.

storms over Melbourne in 1983. The dust came from the Wimmera, not the Mallee.

Lyall Grey, Jo Safstrom, Carrie Tiffany

Groundworks 2001

By Frank Carland

An enthusiastic crowd of around 150 people, including groups from as far afield as Dookie and Bendigo, attended Groundworks 2001 – a comprehensive revegetation field day held at Snake Valley, west of Ballarat, in May.

Frank Carland tries his hand at tractor planting at Groundworks 2001.



Left: Jenny Sedgewick demonstrates some hand tree planting equipment at Groundworks 2001.

The event was a collaborative effort between NRE staff from Ballarat, Creswick, Ararat and Colac, the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA, Greening Australia and local Landcare groups. Groundworks 2001 featured demonstrations, activities, speakers and trade displays covering all of the major aspects of planning and implementing revegetation projects.

Of the ground preparation equipment featured, the massive Savannah plough and 385 horsepower crawler tractor stole the show. Various methods of tree establishment were also demonstrated and displayed, including a mechanical tree planter, a direct seeding machine, hand-direct seeding and a range of hand-planting equipment and tree guards.

Credit is due to the Snake Valley CFA Ladies Auxiliary for a terrific lunch, to hosts Neville Oddie and Anne Ovington and to all of the stakeholders involved. The day was a resounding success and planning for Groundworks 2002 is now underway.

IN BRIEF

Landcare legends recognised

Fifty-four shining lights in the Landcare movement in the Goulburn-Broken catchment were recognised recently at a celebratory luncheon.

The men and women have all made an outstanding contribution to Landcare at a local level and often at a regional and catchment-wide level. They were each presented with a certificate from the Federal Government recognising their contribution in this International Year of Volunteers.

Federal Members Dr Sharman Stone and Fran Bailey were both on hand to present the awards at the luncheon at Avenel. Dr Stone, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Heritage, paid tribute to the far-sightedness of the people of the catchment who were years ahead of much of Australia in tackling natural resource management issues.

Tax for Landcare groups

Do you really know how the New Tax System affects your Landcare group? The ATO's GST Non-Profit and Charities Team can offer help for the non-profit sector through running special information sessions.

The sessions cover –

- How correct ABN registration will help protect and safeguard all your income.
- The advantages and disadvantages of GST registration explained in simple, easy to understand terms.
- How are grants treated?
- Can your organisation be endorsed as a charity? What are the advantages?
- Fundraising options and how to maximise income.
- Does your organisation need to fill out a Business Activity Statement (BAS)? If so, what are the tips and tricks of completing the BAS?
- What procedures are necessary when office-bearers change?
- Bookkeeping made easier for volunteer treasurers.

It is also possible to arrange a free, confidential visit from a Tax Office Advisor who specialises in the non-profit sector. Advisors can visit at a convenient time and place to help with preparing the group's Business Activity Statement, recordkeeping, general GST issues and those specific to the non-profit sector.

For bookings and further information contact Janet Micallef on 0401 702 150.

Churchill Fellowship for Fran Sorenson

The Regional Waterwatch Co-ordinator for NECMA, Fran Sorenson, has been awarded a prestigious Churchill Fellowship. Fran will travel to the US in 2002 to study community volunteer systems in water quality monitoring.

The study tour will take Fran to Washington State, Missouri, Massachusetts, Alabama and Colorado. The study will have implications for Landcare groups participating in and benefiting from the collection of water quality data from across Australia.

We look forward to publishing a detailed account of Fran's findings on her return.

Landcarers honoured at Government House

Alison Teese and Alex Arbuthnot had the honour of representing Landcare volunteers and meeting Victoria's new Governor, His Excellency Mr John Landy and Mrs Lynne Landy, at a function at Government House recently.

The function was organised to celebrate the Queen's Official Birthday and to recognise the work of Victorian volunteers. The Queen's Birthday function is usually attended by Melbourne dignitaries but the Governor chose to recognise the work of volunteers instead.

Alison and Alex said it was great to be part of the event and to catch up with the thousands of wonderful people who are involved in volunteering across the State. John Landy is Patron-in-Chief of Landcare in Victoria.

Alex Arbuthnot and Alison Teese representing Victorian Landcare volunteers at Government House.



MEET *Mr Landcare*

Mark Costello has been appointed as NRE's new State Landcare Co-ordinator. Mark is responsible for co-ordinating the Second Generation Landcare Grants and 21st Century Landcare programs and providing general support to Landcare across Victoria.

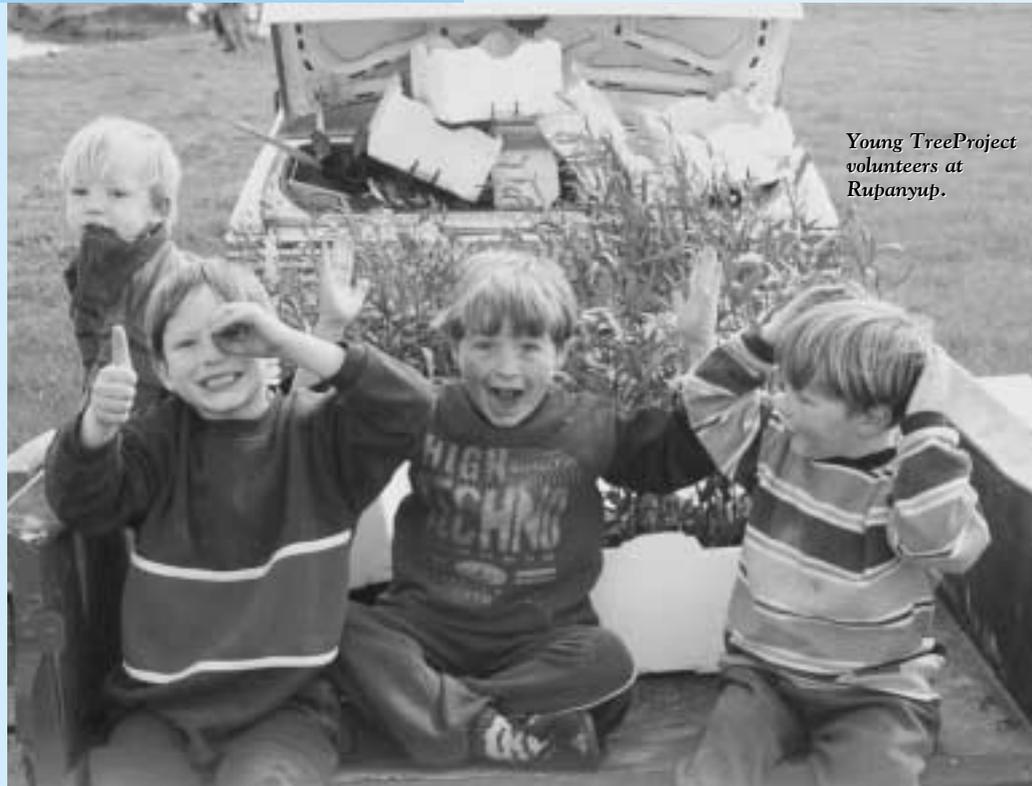
Mark has worked for NRE in various capacities for six years. Most recently he was involved in strategic pest management at Warrnambool and Camperdown.

"The pest plant and animal program provided me with excellent development opportunities and a broad insight into strategic natural resource management, however Landcare has remained my primary interest," Mark said.

Mark's Landcare experience has been both personal and professional and includes community involvement with Project Hindmarsh and the 444,000 TreeProject.

Mark is looking forward to meeting with Landcare groups and networks across the State. He can be contacted on 9412 4622.

*New State Landcare Co-ordinator,
Mark Costello.*



*Young TreeProject
volunteers at
Rupanyup.*

TreeProject – *branching the rural urban divide*

TreeProject is an urban-based, non-government organisation that recruits urban and regional volunteers to propagate and plant out thousands of indigenous seedlings each year. Through its Re-Tree scheme, TreeProject has grown over 1.2 million trees, shrubs and grasses for planting in shelterbelts, along creeks, rivers, erosion gullies and for wildlife habitat in rural areas.

TreeProject's underlying philosophy is that the entire community is responsible for protecting our natural resources, including the farmland that produces our food, fibres and other essential items.

Annette Salkeld from TreeProject says by encouraging people in urban areas to become involved in revegetation it will help the environment in the long term and take some of the pressure off landholders.

Farmers, Landcare groups and other landholders register to have locally indigenous seedlings grown to order. Landholders provide their own seed to ensure it is local.

The seed is then packaged up and included in a growing kit which contains all the necessary propagation materials for a volunteer grower. Growers set up a backyard nursery, propagating and caring for the seedlings until they are ready to be planted out.

Volunteer growers are also given detailed instructions and can contact an experienced TreeProject grower for ongoing advice. Many of the growers will follow through with their seedlings by going out to the farm and planting them out.

TreeProject volunteers come from all walks of life – old, young, city, suburban and regional, schools, groups, able and disabled. The common thread is that they want to do something tangible that will help our rural environment.

TreeProject takes orders for indigenous seedlings from August to October. They are grown from November onwards and are ready for planting the following autumn or spring. For more information contact TreeProject on 9659 9477.

Landmark tests farm practices in the Goulburn-Broken

The Landmark research program now underway in the Goulburn-Broken region is looking for combinations of dryland land uses and farming practices that will help producers to make a good living and also maintain a healthy environment.

Landmark researchers are working with producers and farm advisers in the upper Goulburn and Broken catchments to document, map and test Current Recommended Practices (CRPs) in the region. CRPs are ways of managing physical, financial and human resources of the farm that are recommended by industry and are being adopted by leading local producers.

CRPs include practices such as business planning, establishing perennial pastures to maximise use of soil moisture and reduce recharge, retaining and active management of native vegetation, integrated pest management, matching



Kulaba West, a grazing property east of Seymour, showing fenced and revegetated riparian areas, fencing to landclass, shelterbelts and highly productive pastures on lower and mid-slopes. Steep hill slopes are managed conservatively to maintain groundcover.

fertiliser application to pasture needs, and liming to overcome acidity and maintain soil health.

The Landmark team is developing and testing methods to determine if these CRPs actually achieve the environmental, economic and social outcomes they are supposed to. They are also mapping how widely the CRPs have been adopted across the region.

Chris Doyle, a producer and a member of the Upper Goulburn Implementation

Committee of the Goulburn-Broken CMA, says the community needs to know the consequences of doing nothing about the ongoing causes of land degradation such as salinity. He sees local involvement in Landmark as positive because it will help give a clear understanding of where land management changes will have to occur if dryland farming is to be sustainable.

For further information about Landmark contact David Clarke on 5348 4900.

Dhurringile group greens a community drain

By John Laing and Daniel Hunter

The Dhurringile and District Landcare Group is an active group of about 25 local landowners working together in the Shepparton Irrigation Region. The group may be small but its members are both enthusiastic and determined.

This year, the group began a long-term project to plant trees along an existing community surface drainage scheme. The scheme provides drainage to around 2200 hectares of highly productive, irrigated farmland and forms part of the Rodney Irrigation District of the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region is located in northern Victoria and includes major towns and cities such as Shepparton, Echuca, Tatura, Cobram and Rochester. The region covers over 500,000 hectares of which just over 60% are irrigated for a range of agricultural and horticultural enterprises.

The long-term benefits of the project will include the restoration of wildlife habitat for the local area, wind and sun protection for domestic stock and salinity management for the whole catchment.

John Laing, a local landowner, has been employed on a part-time basis to approach landowners, organise tree collection and co-ordinate the tree planting activities within the catchment. A community planting day was organised where 60 people planted nearly 2000 trees. Three local primary schools, a Work for the Dole crew and a Green Corp team have also been involved in the project.

More than 230 people have been involved in planting over 8000 trees, with plans for another 2000 to 3000 before the year is over.

Nearly five kilometres of drainside has been planted. More than 90% of landowners who received a visit have agreed to participate in the project.

The project is an inspiring example of effective partnerships between Landcare, NRE, the local community and volunteer labour sources in which they are working together to build natural and social environments.

For further information contact Daniel Hunter on 5826 5363.

Three local primary schools are involved in the Dhurringile and District Landcare Group's projects.





Managing

At 4,000,000 hectares the Victorian Mallee comprises approximately one-fifth of Victoria. The Mallee is a semi-arid landscape bordered to the north by the Murray River. The Mallee is home to a unique assemblage of flora and fauna that have adapted to its conditions.

Though the Mallee has been referred to as a catchment, its permeable, sandy soils and low rainfall mean that surface drainage patterns are absent for most of the region. The region supports major cereal growing and irrigated horticulture industries.

Native vegetation

Around 40% of the Mallee's original native vegetation remains across the region. Most of this occurs in the west of the region on soils unsuitable for agriculture, resulting in an uneven distribution of public land and a skewed representation of vegetation communities across the landscape.

Only 3% of private land in the Mallee supports remnant vegetation. Much of this is in small and fragmented patches which are threatened by over-grazing. The decline in the quality and extent of vegetation has meant the loss of critical habitat for many of the Mallee's wildlife, including species that are unique to the landscape and considered icons by locals. The Mallee is home to 26% of Victoria's rare and threatened flora and 40% of threatened fauna.

The management of native vegetation has been tackled using a strategic approach to planning and implementing on-ground works in partnership with landholders and the broader community.

In partnership with the community, Landcare groups and NRE, the Mallee CMA is co-ordinating seven large vegetation projects of regional significance. Funded by Bushcare and other State support, these projects encourage landholders to enter into management agreements with the Mallee CMA and undertake works to protect or re-establish habitat for threatened vegetation communities and fauna.

Corridors for smokers

This project aims to increase the population size of the regent parrot to 1000 pairs by securing habitat within the current range. Known as smokers by locals, the main limit to the parrot's population size is thought to be access to feeding grounds during breeding season.

With a preference to flying along vegetated corridors from their breeding sites on the Murray River to remnant Mallee blocks up to 20 kilometres away to feed, the birds have been affected by both clearing of habitat and fragmentation of flight paths. The Regent Parrot Habitat Protection project is addressing these issues by securing and revegetating feeding grounds and corridors on both freehold property and along a network of roadsides within the 20 kilometre zone.

Tyrrell Creek home to the carpet python

The Tyrrell Creek in the southern Mallee has been identified as one of several important areas of habitat for the carpet python. With the creek frontage bordered by freehold land, the success of the Carpet Python Habitat Protection project is reliant on grassroots participation.

Regent parrots are known as smokers by locals.



Inspecting native grasslands in the Birchip district. These grasslands are important habitat for the plains wanderer.

Twenty landholders have entered into management agreements that will see a large proportion of vegetation along the creek fenced and protected. A recent initiative has employed local crews through the Mallee Rural Farm Support Pilot (a new partnership between Greening Australia Victoria, NRE and the Mallee CMA) to work with selected landholders to erect 60 kilometres of fencing along the creek. Conservation Volunteers Australia and Landcare groups are also assisting by planting 12,000 tubestock along the creek.

Grasslands for the plains wanderer

With few native grasslands retained in conservation reserves and less than 5% of grasslands remaining in the Mallee region it is not surprising that some of Victoria's and Australia's most endangered grasslands are located within the southern Mallee. Already 60 hectares of freehold land have been secured under voluntary management agreements.

Landholders are adopting new management practices, such as pulse grazing in autumn. These practices provide favourable habitat for the plains wanderer which prefers sparse grassland and unimproved pastures.

the Mallee

By Bushcare Officers from the Mallee CMA



Walpeup landscape. The Recreating the Links project takes advantage of existing roadside remnants to reconnect large public land blocks in the Mallee.

Recreating the Links

Recreating the Links aims to protect and revegetate six major corridors between existing major public land blocks. These linkages will play a significant role in connecting areas of remnant vegetation, whilst also benefiting native wildlife by providing habitat for feeding, shelter and movement.

Where possible Recreating the Links will enhance the network of existing roadside remnants. Improvement of one of the main linkages between Murray Sunset and Wyperfeld National Parks has been a great success, with NRE and Landcare groups revegetating 35 kilometres of roadsides by direct seeding and tubestock planting.

Protecting threatened vegetation communities

Twelve of Victoria's 31 threatened vegetation communities occur within the Mallee. With the vegetation on the better soils mainly cleared for agriculture, the remaining Pine, Buloke, Belar woodlands and grassy woodlands that once dominated these fertile soils are now not well represented across the Mallee landscape. There are two projects underway that focus on securing

remnants of these threatened communities and, by doing so, conserving vital habitat for plants and wildlife.

Plantations for Greenhouse

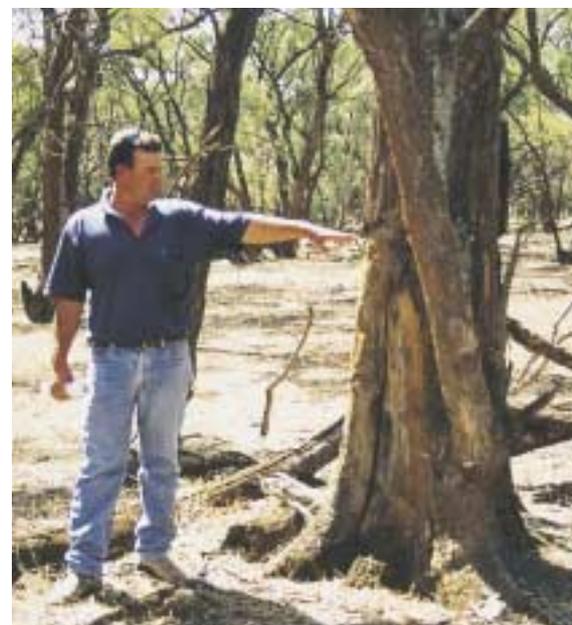
Developed as part of a statewide initiative to help combat climate change, this project is aiming to protect and increase the amount of native vegetation across the Mallee, which in turn will increase the amount of carbon fixed from the atmosphere. Strategic revegetation to connect and enhance remnants is providing the added benefits to flora and fauna and is helping tackle land degradation. Already more than 550 hectares of freehold land is currently protected or revegetated within this project and more than 60,000 trees have been established.

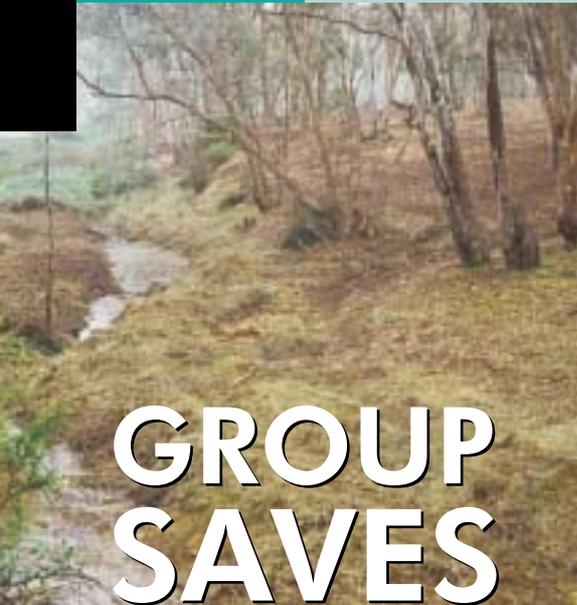
Community action

Although driven by funding from the Natural Heritage Trust together with funding from the Victorian Government, the current success of all of these projects is very much due to local communities taking action and ownership of issues that are of a regional concern.

Importantly, such action has not only been about protecting and enhancing the quality of remnant native vegetation, but also about creating and enhancing relationships between community groups such as Landcare and other government and non-government organisations involved in native vegetation management. If similar projects are to succeed, then a great deal of co-operation, collaboration and goodwill between all groups interested in native vegetation management is required.

The black box woodlands of the Tyrrell Creek provide important habitat for the endangered carpet python.





GROUP SAVES local creek

By Joan Brookshaw

The Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Group is an active set of volunteers from Welshmans Reef near Maldon. Recently one of the group members raised the problem of blackberry infestation along a section of a local road. The group did an inspection and discovered blackberries up to two metres high that were impeding the flow of a small creek.

The job was too big for the group on its own so we contacted the North Central CMA to see what could be done. After a few more discussions and inspections a grant of \$14,500 was made available to rehabilitate the site.

The NCCMA sent in a machine called a groomer which removed the blackberry infestation. Sandy Creek Catchment Landcare Group will now plant trees and grasses along the creek banks.

The site is a nice place to visit as it is not far from the historic town of Maldon and there are some old ruins nearby. The project has been a great success and we encourage other groups to contact their local authorities when they see a worthwhile project.

Above: The creek near Barham Road flows once again after the removal of a blackberry infestation.

FarmBis helps sustain

The new FarmBis

The new FarmBis program which commenced in July, will provide about \$6 million of grants each year for the next three years in Victoria to subsidise training for farmers, land managers and wild-catch fishers to improve their self-reliance and ability to manage change.

The program is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments. Natural resource management training is a priority of the new FarmBis.

Courses pay off for Korumburra dairy farmer

Jon Christopher is a dairy farmer in the lush green hills near Korumburra in south Gippsland. His farming system and production were impacted on significantly after attending the FarmBis-subsidised Healthy Farming Systems course.

“FarmBis made the course so cheap, that to me you’d be an idiot if you didn’t take it up. For the \$500 it cost me, if you look at in purely commercial terms, the return on that investment would be a hundred-fold.

“I’m getting in the high 40 cents a litre for my milk now and that will be all year round, not just part of the year. Doing that course has dramatically spring-boarded us into organic production,” said Jon.

Chemical cold turkey

“We followed the conventional line for the first three years we were here but it just wasn’t making any sense. The soils to me were going backwards. Pasture species and pasture density were failing and worm numbers were disappearing. So in 1994 we went cold turkey and stopped using chemicals, because it seemed the right way to go.”

The Healthy Farming Systems course that Jon Christopher attended is the first course of its kind in Australia. It develops an understanding of the Albrecht principles of balancing soil minerals.

The course provides good basic knowledge and gives farmers the confidence and knowhow to work from there.

Jon said there were more conventional farmers doing the course than those who were already organic.

“It was a very popular course. I think one reason for the good response is that a lot of farmers are questioning the use of chemicals. A lot of farmers are more organic than they realise, but because organics has been seen as the fringe and alternative, it’s not been accepted. Now I think we’re moving from the pioneering stage to the commercial stage.”

Brushing up on business skills

While Jon was focusing his energies on various issues on the farm over the last few years, he realised that a lot of his other skills were disappearing and felt he needed to improve some business management skills in bookwork, business planning and computers.

“I’ve used FarmBis to brush my business skills up too. I did the Dairy Business Focus course, so I could plan the business better and see where I was headed. Before I did the Healthy Farming Systems course, I did the Phosphate for Dairy Farmers course to keep an open mind – that was also FarmBis-funded. I’ve also completed Cashbooks and the GST using FarmBis funding.

“I think what most farmers don’t realise is that they are managers of a whole lot of different systems. I think they underestimate the skills they have got.



healthy farming systems

By Greg Smith,
FarmBis Co-ordinator

I can remember one farmer saying at the start of a course that by the time she'd got there, she'd already been a vet, a business manager, a stock handler, a teacher, a negotiator and a mechanic. That is, about six different professions that she'd been involved in just in the couple of hours before she'd got to the computer course. Then she instantly became an information technologist."

Jon believes that farmers are starting to recognise the benefits of training and improving their skills.

"It's not just the learning, being with other farmers, exchanging ideas and problems and learning informally with each other are also major benefits of ongoing education."

Jon Christopher on his dairy farm at Korumburra.

Finding FarmBis in your region

Farmers often comment about the apparent competition and confusion associated with finding training courses and other learning opportunities. To address this problem, a team of FarmBis Co-ordinators have been appointed by NRE to assist potential FarmBis participants to identify and access the training activities best suited to their needs. The co-ordinators appointed to-date are:

SW Region

Sam Simpson Colac 5233 5584
Janine Allen Ballarat 5333 6789

NW Region

Mary Bignell Horsham 5362 2111
Steve Vallance Ouyen 5092 1322
Jim Moran Bendigo 5430 4479
Shannon Williams Bendigo 5430 4537

NE Region

Peter Botta Benalla 5761 1647

Gippsland Region

Don Shaw Bairnsdale 5152 0637

A further five staff are being appointed to FarmBis Co-ordinator positions in Leongatha, Warrnambool, Wodonga, Swan Hill and the Goulburn Valley.

For more information about FarmBis, contact the NRE Call Centre on 13 61 86.



Victorian Lan

Honouring Victorian Landcare achievers

The Governor of Victoria, John Landy and Mrs Lynne Landy, joined the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, in announcing the winners of the 2001 Victorian Landcare Awards at Government House in late October.

The Governor, who is also the Patron-in-Chief of Landcare in Victoria, hosted the ceremony in the ballroom at Government House with both he and Ms Garbutt presenting prizes to the winners.

In this the International Year of the Volunteer, Ms Garbutt acknowledged the volunteers who have supported the Landcare movement for 15 years.

Ms Garbutt said that the work being undertaken by a largely volunteer

The original Hanslow Cups dating back to the 1940s.



movement was an outstanding contribution to improving Victoria's environment.

"The winners of the 2001 Landcare Awards are role models for the future," Ms Garbutt said.

"They are the innovators and leaders in natural resource management and their efforts are greatly appreciated."

This year's award winners are drawn from a variety of sectors including education, local government, catchment management, media, business, research, nature conservation and primary production.

Individual Landcarers and community groups also featured among the winners' list.

In presenting the awards, Ms Garbutt also commended a range of groups and businesses which support Landcare in Victoria, including those who provided sponsorship for the awards.

Ten of the Victorian Landcare Award winners will become the State's representatives in the National Landcare Awards, announced in Canberra in March 2002.

Award winners and sponsors with the Governor, John Landy, Mrs Landy and the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, at Government House.

Karen Jones and Dennis Gallagher from Indigo Shire Council receiving the APN Landcare Local Government Award from Peter Marshall of APN.



Winners of the Hi Fert Regional Victorian Landcare Awards with Paul Duckett (centre) from Hi Fert.



John Carson presents the Stock and Land Landcare Primary Producer Award to Robyn, Bruce and Sarah Dalkin.



Landcare Awards



Stock and Land Primary Producer Award

At the cutting edge...
STOCK & LAND

Hi Fert Landcare Award – Wimmera

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Bruce and Robyn Dalkin

The judges of the Rural Press Primary Producer Award determined that the Dalkin's farm at Armstrong in the Wimmera is "a very successful, sustainable and diversified commercial operation, resulting from a very high standard of on-farm and regional planning".

The Dalkin family has been farming Westgate since the 1860s and the land was progressively cleared by the turn of the century. During the early 1900s the farm's main income was from oat crops, cut for chaff, and then in the '50s the Dalkins took advantage of the wool boom and also ran beef cattle and fat lambs. The first vineyard was planted in 1960.

Times got tough in the 1990s for the Dalkins when wool prices plummeted. It got to the point where they faced a major decision – to farm or not to farm!

Diversification and a positive approach was the turning point and today Bruce and Robyn have 35 acres of grape vines, operate a small winery, offer a bed and breakfast and small conference facility, run 3000 merino sheep for wool production, are trialling olives and considering other Mediterranean crops such as lavender.

The Dalkins completed a whole farm plan, which identified the small pockets of land suitable for high production like vines and the marginal land, which meant that intensive sheep grazing could be avoided in those areas.

The Dalkins irrigate their vineyard using water from the Ararat/Great Western Wastewater Reuse Scheme, vines are straw-mulched and winter active pasture grass weeds are sown which provide good soil cover and minimal competition.

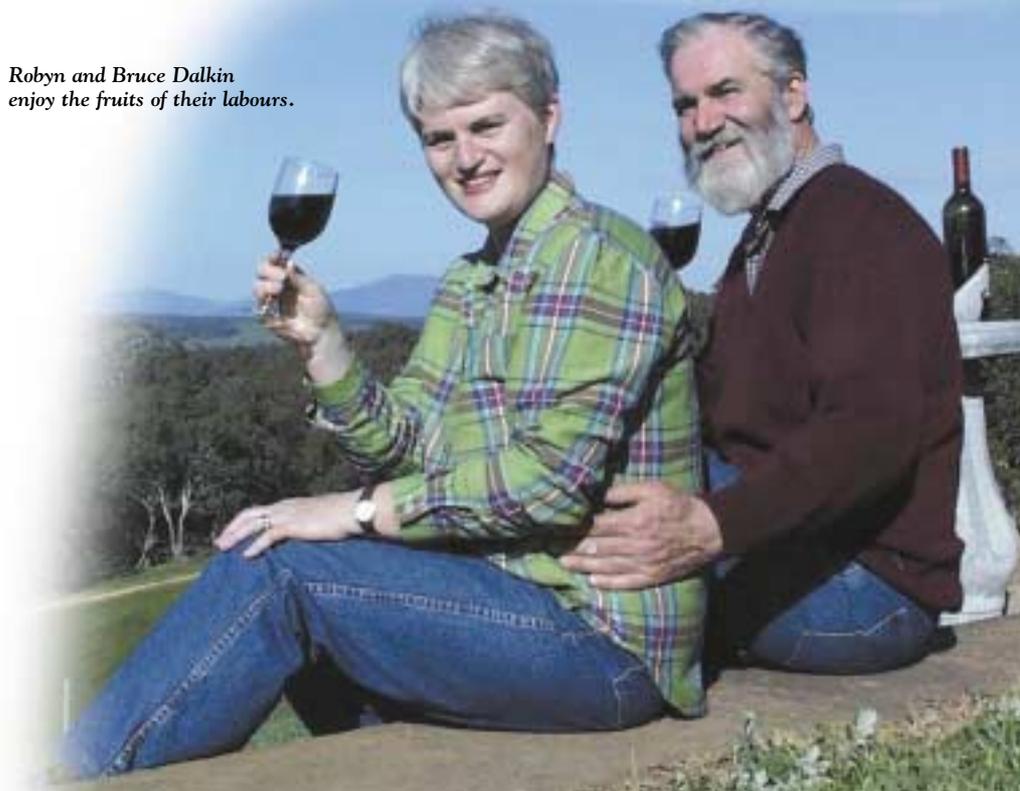
Sheep are rotationally grazed on predominantly phalaris, curry cox foot and sub-clover pastures. Deep-rooted perennial grasses have been established to bind the soil and avoid erosion of exposed soil by summer storms. Lucerne is planted on hillsides to take advantage of summer rainfall and to reduce watertable recharge.

The Dalkins have maintained areas of remnant vegetation and encouraged regeneration. They have revegetated steep country with native grasses and vegetation and planted tree corridors to control salinity areas and link existing tree blocks. A previously non-productive saltpan has been restored to pasture. A major drainage line has been grassed and timbered to provide a nutrient sink for water leaving the property.

On the back of changing their farming practices, Bruce and Robyn have ventured into farm tourism and offer bed and breakfast accommodation in a 1950s farmhouse on the property. A picturesque location, boutique winery and a diverse farming enterprise make Westgate an attractive and relaxing spot for city dwellers to retreat.

The judging panel for the Victorian Landcare Award – Wimmera commented that not only do the Dalkins have a long history of Landcare, but they display a great deal of initiative in thinking outside of the square to work with the natural environment, rather than against it. Obviously a successful and sustainable approach to farming.

*Robyn and Bruce Dalkin
enjoy the fruits of their labours.*





Victorian Lan



Trevor Ward explains how farm dams can be easily converted to wetland habitats.

Phillip Island has had a long and distinguished involvement in the Landcare movement since forming in 1987. Local landholders established the group in response to the encroachment of salinity in farming areas, the threat of weeds and rabbits and the decline of native vegetation and habitat for the koalas on the island.

Over the years, the issues have remained the same, however the group has evolved to embrace new technologies and ideas, learned from previous experiences and trials and built an inclusive structure to ensure milestones and goals are achieved.

An inclusive approach

Morag MacKay, the group's co-ordinator, explained that earlier committees had established strong foundations for the group and set ambitious plans.

"In the early 1990s the group established a committee structure to focus on key areas of activity such as salinity, rabbits, weeds, wildlife corridor, communications and publicity and administration," she said.

Morag explained that this structure has proven highly effective in developing a wider representation and participation in group activities and has enabled more members to become involved in setting the future directions.



Scouts and their families busily planting a section of the wildlife corridor during one of the group's many planting days.

"Our sub-committee structure allows for others to be co-opted from supporting organisations or those with similar land management issues, which helps build the skills within the group while opening doors to valuable in-kind resources," she said.

"The technical input we receive from the Shire's environment officer, or the Ranger representatives from the (Phillip Island) nature park are all crucial in helping group members identify different approaches to site or project issues."

Achievements

Mary O'Keefe is the current president of the Phillip Island Landcare Group. She believes that the inclusive approach and the issue-based committee structure have helped the group remain targeted and effective.

"Since the group formed in 1987, we have achieved a great deal in terms of landscape change as well real attitudinal change within the community.

Alcoa Land Phillip Island

"While the list of projects completed and areas fenced is impressive, the strongest attribute of the group is our networks," Mary said.

"The Landcare group involves people in Landcare work – all sorts of people.

"We have overseas students, conservationists, farmers, school and university students, involvement volunteers, scouts, business people, tourists and retirees all involved in some form of Landcare-related activities," she said.

The group's list of on-ground outcomes is very impressive: over 200,000 indigenous plants established; at least 80 hectares of remnant bush and salt marsh fenced off; large areas of saline land reclaimed with salt-tolerant pastures; a network of piezometers installed and monitored monthly; sand dune stabilisation projects; drainage projects completed; over 150 hectares of rabbit and fox harbour destroyed and a 16 kilometre stretch of wildlife corridor established; a key role in an award-winning regional Landcare newsletter; and hosted two State Landcare conferences.

Action planning

These on-ground outcomes are a result of careful forward planning by current and previous committees.

Mike Cleeland, the group's first environment officer, and now vice-president, explained that key planning sessions in the early years had helped establish parameters for activities.

"The first major project we undertook was to develop the Phillip Island Salinity Management Plan.

Landcare Awards



Landcare Community Group Award Landcare Group

By Paul Crock



“This was launched in 1989 and gave group members a framework and general understanding about the issues relating to salinity.”

The group used the Salinity Management Plan as a means to attract funding to conduct all sorts of trials from pasture species to sub-surface drainage and pumping trials.

“We converted these sites into a salinity awareness tour, so we could help educate local farmers and visiting tour groups from the mainland,” Mike said.

The rate of adoption of many of these trials both with members of the group and other island farmers has been excellent.

The group now boasts a series of action plans for weeds, rabbits and foxes and the management of the wildlife corridor.

Networking priorities

Morag MacKay believes that investing in networks and people is the key to the group’s success.

Each year the group recognises individual efforts and contributions from partnering organisations at the annual dinner.

“We see the building of meaningful relationships with our partners as paramount to ongoing success.

“It is not just about patting them on the head and saying thanks, and giving them another opportunity to present the group with a cheque, but more a case of building trust and mutual respect for our joint activities and showing them genuine gratitude for their contributions,” she said.

The group has strong support from the Bass Coast Shire, Edison Mission Energy, the Phillip Island Nature Park,

Westernport Water, NRE and Dame Elisabeth Murdoch.

The future

The group intends on building on its success and moving into the urban areas of the island with a Weeds Out – Natives In campaign in partnership with the Bass Coast Shire.

Kelly Nichols, the group’s pest plant and animal officer, is working to develop an innovative urban landcare project to promote indigenous plants and destruction of rabbit harbour.

“The aim is to give residents of the various estates the chance to participate in a Landcare project by removing potential garden escapees and rabbit harbour and replacing them with indigenous species.

“As an urban Landcare member they will receive 30 free indigenous plants and advice on how to position them in their garden,” Kelly said.

The group also plans to tackle the issue of rabbits in urban areas in the coming rabbit season in an attempt to rid the island of the pest over the summer period when the holiday-makers are on the island.

For more information about the Phillip Island Landcare Group, contact Morag MacKay or Kelly Nichols on 5952 5403.

Morag MacKay shows a visiting school student how to install a tree guard during a wildlife corridor tree planting.





Victorian Lan

Bushcare Nature Conservation Award



Henry's Creek Sanctuary

Joan and Gordon Henry own and operate Henry's Creek Sanctuary at Loch in south Gippsland. The sanctuary consists of 40 hectares of fully fenced remnant native vegetation. It is the largest surviving example of tall forest which once covered the whole Bass River watershed.

The forest was spared from clearing as it was too dangerous for farmers to drive bullocks through. The small pocket of forest is almost completely surrounded by cleared farmland.

The Henrys first took action to protect the remnant native vegetation in the sanctuary in 1975 when they erected a cattle-proof fence. Since then the fence has been upgraded and is now predator-proof.

The Henrys' planting of indigenous plants and control of introduced pests and weeds

has produced a remarkably diverse range of flora and fauna. The sanctuary contains over 200 native and naturalised plant species. Native animals roam freely, including wallabies, possums, goannas and echidnas. A sighting of the yellow-bellied glider is of great significance as it represents the only surviving colony of this species in south Gippsland.

As founding members of the Loch/Nyora Landcare Group, the Henrys have worked to fence remnant vegetation adjacent to the sanctuary to create and link wildlife corridors.

The Henrys have entered into a conservation covenant with the Trust for Nature to safeguard this precious environment for future generations.



National Landcare Program Individual Landcarer Award



Vanessa Drendel is a partner in a farm at Netherby in the Wimmera, but her Landcare activities extend well beyond the farm gate. Vanessa was one of the founders of the Netherby Lorquon Landcare Group and the co-ordinator of their weed and rabbit campaigns. Through her encouragement the majority of landholders in the area are now actively working together to tackle these issues.

It is not possible to list all of the committees and projects that Vanessa has been involved in over the past 10 years – there are too many, but without a doubt she has been a driving force in implementing sustainable natural resource management in the Wimmera. Her interests include pest plant and animal management, revegetation, sustainable agriculture and Junior Landcare.

Vanessa Drendel, Nhill

Vanessa is someone who sees the big picture of Landcare and understands the need to link people and issues. She has been heavily involved in the West Wimmera Tree Group and is the current Chair of the Hindmarsh Landcare Network.

At a recent welcome for a Green Corp team Vanessa said: "Landcare isn't about glory, it is about love of our environment. There is no right or wrong. We have to adapt management practices that balance the scales between the need for farmers to make a living and our need to protect, enhance and enjoy the environment in which we live."



Vanessa's approach is about drawing people in to Landcare. Her Junior Landcare activities at local schools, public speaking at scouts and Apex, vegetation seminars and regular spots in the press and on radio are all aimed at convincing people they have a place in Landcare in the Wimmera. She is a generous and inspiring Landcarer.

Landcare Awards



**APN Outdoor Media Group
Local Government Award**



Victorian Roadsides and Linear Reserves Award

Indigo Shire Council



Creating a recreational area from one of Beechworth's weed wastelands.

The Indigo Shire Council, situated in north-east Victoria, has made a commitment to actively preserve and manage its local environment and encourage Landcare action by focusing on five key areas:

- roadside management and weed control;
- Landcare groups and networking;
- publications;
- roadside contractors; and
- waste management.

Indigo Shire has established a strong environmental framework and prepared products that have been used as models for managing roadside vegetation by local governments across the State. Council has provided training to roadside workers and developed a Code of Practice for Road Construction and Maintenance Workers and a Roadside Management Plan.

Council's Environment Officer regularly attends Landcare meetings and visits groups to offer support and emphasise the importance of protecting roadside vegetation. In particular, the council worked closely with two local Landcare groups and adjoining landowners to

protect and improve roadside habitat for the endangered grey-crowned babbler. Over the last 18 months, with Natural Heritage Trust funding, 17,000 indigenous understorey species were planted and guarded along babbler habitat roadsides.

In partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia, Indigo Shire worked with a Green Corp team for six months to remove 50 tonnes of woody environmental weeds from high and medium conservation roadsides. Native seed was collected from 40 different understorey and overstorey species to be used for future council and Landcare direct seeding and planting projects.

Green Corp teams also worked in Sir Isaac Park in Yackandandah and Lake Sambell at Beechworth to remove weeds, build and improve infrastructure, replant and develop interpretative signage.

The council is a member of the North East Regional Waste Management Group and is currently upgrading its existing resource recovery and transfer station facilities and has adopted a Waste Wise Education Strategy for the municipality.

**Dr Sidney Plowman
Travel/Study Award**

David Ziebell

Well-known west Gippsland Landcare co-ordinator and native vegetation officer, David Ziebell, is this year's recipient of the Dr Sidney Plowman Travel/Study Award.

Over the last 12 years, David has worked tirelessly on addressing land degradation problems in west Gippsland, particularly combating native vegetation decline leading to tunnel erosion and landslips in the high rainfall Strzeleckis and salinity-affected plains of south Gippsland.

David introduced extensive trials and demonstration sites of direct seeding and has been instrumental in getting the South Gippsland Indigenous Seed Bank and the regional Landcare network up and running.

He has contributed to the production of the nearly-completed South Gippsland Salinity Management Plan, set-up WaterWatch in the region and re-established the South Gippsland Groundwater Monitoring Project.

David's passion for revegetation has led him to explore ways of improving direct seeding and his work has provided many local farmers with a low-cost alternative to vegetation establishment.

David Ziebell (kneeling) at a salinity field day.





Victorian Lan

Sigma Landcare Media Awards



The Weekly Times

The Weekly Times has been getting the news out to Victoria's farmers since 1869. The paper covers a broad range of rural and agricultural issues and is read by around 75,000 people each week.

In December 2000 *The Weekly Times* ran a feature on the growing threat of agricultural and environmental weeds on farmland and native bush. The public response was huge. The paper was bombarded with letters, phone calls and e-mails.

The paper grasped the issue and ran with it. Over the next four months it ran an in-depth Weed Out campaign. A mixture of stories, pictures and reader feedback took the issue to the highest level in Victoria. Complementing the news and features the paper ran editorial in the education pages and detailed technical information on specific weeds and their control.



White Pages Landcare Catchment Award

White Pages

Cornella Local Area Implementation Plan Committee

In 1999 the Mt Camel Landcare Group and the Corop Lakes Action Committee called two public meetings to gauge public interest in the formation of a local area action plan for the Cornella area. Located along the mid-western border of the Goulburn-Broken catchment between Heathcote and Rochester, the Cornella sub-catchment covers an area of 46,400 hectares and supports 800 landholders.

The public meetings generated a great deal of interest and identified some serious issues of concern from watertables to weeds and vermin, soil erosion and the health of Lake Cooper. Thirteen volunteers nominated to form a Community Planning Group (CPG) which spent 12 months nutting out a plan that would solve problems across the catchment.

Valuable technical advice and input was sought from agencies to validate the group's thinking. The planning process involved identifying the extent of the problem, working out cost sharing arrangements and estimating the financial resources needed to deal with the issues.

Funding from the Natural Heritage Trust made it possible to contract a local community links person who has marketed the plan and facilitated community involvement.

The planning phase came to a close in September 2001 when the community and agencies committed in writing to undertaking the actions of the plan over the next 20 years. The plan is now underway and has already led to significant new works on waterways and creek frontages.

The success of the Cornella Local Area Implementation Plan lies in the strong partnerships that have been formed between the community and agencies. These partnerships include detailed actions and timeframes and a realistic estimation of the cost and effort needed to make a difference.

The plan allows for inputs to be measured and progress to be monitored, with everyone concerned having input into the future health and sustainability of this sub-catchment.

The Cornella Local Implementation Area Plan is, in essence, a business plan that allows the community to attend to the business of managing its natural resources.

Community consultation is a key feature of the Cornella Local Area Implementation Plan.



Landcare Awards



Hi Fert Landcare Award – Corangamite



Neville and Marlene Page

Neville Page pruning his agroforestry plot.



In 1991 Neville and Marlene Page helped form the Happy Valley Land Management Group. The group has fenced off and revegetated the Ross Creek and, with the help of the Simpson Primary School and the Timboon Venture Scouts, 30 kilometres of fencing has been erected and 5,000 trees and understorey vegetation planted.

The Pages did a whole farm plan in 1992, purchased the farm next door, fenced creeks and gullies and revegetated. A saline area has been fenced off and planted with tall wheat grass and other areas have been drained with underground collector drains and mole drains.

The Pages have also placed a covenant, through the Trust for Nature, on eight acres of natural bush. They are members of Land for Wildlife and are involved with the Grampians Biolink Project.

The Pages have also volunteered to be one of the first farms in Victoria to participate in NRE's Environment Best Management Practice on Farms Project.



Neville and Marlene Page

Hi Fert Landcare Award – West Gippsland



James and Marged Goode

James Goode with new trees on his property in the Strzelecki Ranges.

James and Marged Goode only purchased their property in 1997 but have already made remarkable improvements and demonstrated a great dedication to sustainably managing their steep and difficult land in the Strzelecki Ranges.

The Goodes have ceased all grazing on their 86 acres to encourage regeneration of native vegetation and established 4.5 acres of pinot noir, riesling and traminer vines.

They mow between the rows of vines rather than using herbicide, spread hay as mulch and follow organic viticulture principles.

A Landcare consultant developed a plan for the Goodes to rehabilitate the land, protect a fern gully and encourage native birds and animals to return to the area.

Extensive replanting has been done with seedlings propagated from seed collected on the property. Around 5500 blue gum, mountain ash and messmate trees have been planted since 1999 and the property is part of the Land for Wildlife scheme.

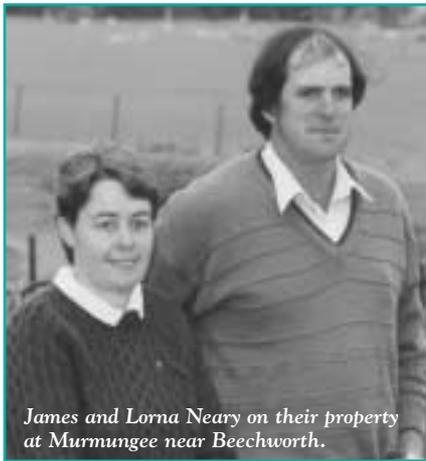


Victorian Lan

Hi Fert Landcare Award – North East



James and Lorna Neary



James and Lorna Neary on their property at Murrungee near Beechworth.

James and Lorna Neary have made extensive improvements to their 124 hectare property since the late 1980s and are actively involved with the Burgoigee Creek Landcare Group.

Following their whole farm plan, they have done a lot of work to improve livestock management, increase production and sustainability and control degradation.

The Nearys have fenced and treed approximately seven kilometres of waterways to improve water quality through reduced erosion and run-off.

Since 1991, 60 hectares have been sown with a variety of permanent perennial pastures and lime and fertilizers have been used to address soil acidification and nutrient reduction.

The Nearys have improved their dry sheep equivalent rating from 10 to 20 per hectare while reducing their overall grazing area by 12 hectares. They have noticed increased biodiversity with more varieties of bird life, worms and frogs and have also been part of a dung beetle release program in conjunction with their Landcare group.

Hi Fert Landcare Award – North Central



Peter Vanrenen

For more than 50 years, Peter Vanrenen and his father before him have practised sustainable farming at Avoca Forest near Logan.

In the 1950s the land was cleaned up of dry timbers and stumps and extensive sheet and gully erosion was treated. During the 1960s deep-rooted perennials such as phalaris and lucerne were planted in conjunction with contour cultivation to control erosion, better utilise rainfall, increase production and prevent salting.

Since the 1970s the farm has been extensively developed with an estimated 6000 bulldozer hours spent on earthworks. Gullies were battered and grassed, silage pits created and dams cleaned and enlarged.

More land has been purchased over the years, in particular 740 acres last year on the western boundary. Peter has

transformed this area, marking out contours for cultivation, setting aside 80 acres for a bush reserve and repairing a major scour by filling and construction of two gully blocks to redirect water.

The Vanrenens were winners of the prestigious Hanslow Award in 1972 and 1997. According to Peter, Avoca Forest has proved to-date that investment in Landcare principles can be economically sustainable.



Managing water on the Vanrenen's farm, Avoca Forest, near Logan.

Landcare Awards



BHP Billiton Research Award



Mallee Sustainable Farming Project

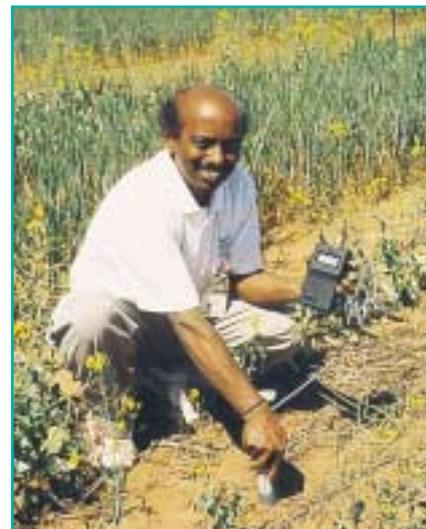
The Mallee Sustainable Farming Project (MSFP) was developed in 1997 out of a need to address wind erosion due to farming practices on dryland Mallee farms and later the pressing need to address the salinity problems of the region.

Farmers from the NSW, South Australian and Victorian Mallee formed an incorporated body to work with the researchers and extension officers.

Research and educational institutions involved are NRE through the Victorian Institute of Dryland Agriculture, CSIRO Land and Water and the University of South Australia.

Initially farmers' practices and attitudes to conservation farming were benchmarked. It was decided the best way forward was to develop on-farm trials (plots). The results were then validated at a commercial scale on focus paddocks spread throughout the Mallee.

MSFP uses the principles of participative research and action learning to tackle the challenges and identify better ways of farming. Through field days, bus tours, research forums, newsletters, articles in the media and two-way communication between researchers and farmers, results have rapidly been adopted on-farm.



Dr VVSR Gupta, CSIRO Land and Water scientist, measuring microbial activity in the soil.

The Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship

Glennis McKee



Natural Resources and Environment



Glennis McKee receives her award from the Governor, John Landy, and the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt.

The 2001 Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship went to Glennis McKee, the VFF Landcare facilitator for Murrayville in the State's far north-west.

Despite a heavy workload on the family farm and the demands of raising three children, Glennis has embraced working with the 130 farms in the 175,000 hectare Murrayville area. She has organised and facilitated a number of vital courses, forums and projects.

Glennis believes Landcare activities must focus on all aspects of sustainability,

including the social, environmental and economic issues facing rural communities.

Murrayville Landcare workshops and information sessions are well attended and initiatives are well supported thanks to Glennis' hard work, enthusiasm and facilitation skills.

Groundwater management is one of the crucial issues facing the Murrayville region and Glennis intends to use her fellowship for training and a study tour on groundwater management and salinity issues.



Victorian Landcare Awards

Westpac Landcare Education Award



Lockington Consolidated School Junior Landcare Group

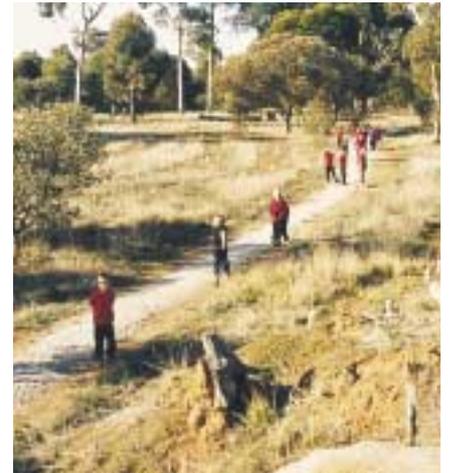
Lockington Consolidated is a primary school of 220 students in north-central Victoria. The school started a Junior Landcare Group in 1993. The group has focused on projects that relate to the local issues of irrigation and dairying.

Twice yearly the school undertakes water management field trips, where the children learn from local farmers about best practice in irrigation farming. They also view environmental planting and a wetlands project on a local dairy farm.

Students are actively involved in Water Watch and Saltwatch, where they use the school's salinity meters and learn to test samples from their properties and from local test wells.

The school has its own greenhouse and students recently completed the planting of a 1.5 kilometre corridor of green along a disused railway line. The trail has now been extended to link in with others and create a popular circuit around the town.

Two local Landcare groups work closely with the school to encourage, nurture and prepare students to be future farmers and community leaders. The activities undertaken by the junior Landcare group are broad and hands-on. Because the children are involved in planning and decision-making they get to experience success and a real sense of ownership.



Students from Lockington Consolidated School Junior Landcare Group in an area they are working to revegetate.



Natural Heritage Trust Rivercare Award Hi Fert Landcare Award – Glenelg Hopkins



John and Judy Fyfe

(L to R), Trevor Brown, John Fyfe and Brad Spring take a break on the banks of the Surry River.



John and Judy Fyfe run a 600-head dairy enterprise in the Portland coastal district at Heathmere. The Fyfes started out 45 years ago with 41 cows. They now operate a property that is an outstanding example of sustainable agricultural management.

John Fyfe was inspired in his works on the Surry River, which runs through the middle of the property, by the early settlers of the area who maintained the valuable riparian vegetation. Through John's farm management practices the riparian areas have been substantially increased, fenced and protected by a conservation covenant.

In 1999 John worked closely with consultants on the development of the Surry River Restoration Plan – one of only two such plans in the Glenelg Hopkins region. He continues to work

closely with the Glenelg Hopkins CMA to monitor the best outcomes for the river, the sub-catchment and the landholders in developing and implementing the plan.

John has a very strong Landcare ethic, he has been a key player in the Surry River Landcare Group, Junior Coastcare and the Narrawong Primary School Olympic Landcare Group.

More recently John and Judy have been providing opportunities for people with disabilities to work on Landcare and river restoration projects on their property. Brad Spring has been collecting native seed in the Surry catchment, growing seedlings and planting the tubestock along the Surry River and the district beyond. Trevor Brown, an enthusiastic farm assistant, supports Brad in the revegetation works.



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