

Victorian Landcare

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



A new landmark
for Melbourne?



Harry and Lyn Croll's
work of art



Direct seeding success
at Burrumbeet



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Back issues

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Cover photograph

View across the Lance Creek Reservoir, Glen Alvie, Victoria by Paul Crock.

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From the editors

We received over 800 responses to the reader survey published in the Spring 2001 issue. Many thanks to those readers who took the time to complete the survey – many of them also included detailed and useful comments. The survey results will help to ensure the magazine continues to meet the needs of our readers.

Most survey respondents said they were interested in practical 'how to' stories. Some of the key issues that people wanted to see in future issues include shelter belt design, species selection, seed collection and propagation, wetland rehabilitation and revegetation, pest and weed control methods, weed identification and sustainable farming methods. So if you have a good story about any of these issues please get in touch.

Most respondents said they were not prepared to pay for the magazine, however, a significant number (36%) were prepared to contribute to production and distribution costs. There will be no immediate changes to the way the magazine is produced but money-saving ideas are constantly being considered.

Only 20% of respondents said they would be prepared to read the magazine on the Internet. They cited slow download times and limited access as major problems.

Most respondents said they share their copy of the magazine with other members of the family. This confirms our feelings that the magazine readership is in fact much greater than the mailing list – useful information for prospective advertisers.

Prize winners

All readers who responded to the survey were eligible to win a prize. The winners were selected at random.

First prize, a Nokia 8250 mobile phone: Jeanette Bellchambers of Shelford.

Second prize, a Treemax plant protection system – 100 heavy-duty treeguards, 300 hardwood stakes and 100 Jutemat weed mats: K.N. and F.M. Felmingham of Invergordon.

Third prize, 500 Treemax milkguards and 1000 bamboo stakes: S. Smith and S. Lukacs of Hepburn Springs.

Lyall Grey, Jo Safstrom and Carrie Tiffany



MASS PLANTING at Baynton-Sidonia

By Chris Tautkus

Gerard and Belinda Ryan were the fortunate members of Baynton-Sidonia Landcare Group to benefit from a mass turnout of people for a special tree planting day at their property last October.

The event was organised by the Baynton-Sidonia Landcare Group in partnership with their sponsor, Telstra Country Wide. Local Landcare members, Green Corp volunteers, local primary school students and community council members showed up en masse and between them planted, guarded and watered 1500 native trees on a roadside area.

A young member demonstrates the art of staking at the Baynton-Sidonia Landcare Group special tree planting day.

The area planted on the day is part of a large project being undertaken by the Landcare group to reclaim the high ground by linking the Cobaw Ranges with the Campaspe River with a 1000-acre wildlife corridor. Local landholders, Landcare group members and a contingent of volunteer Green Corp workers have been working on the project for over 12 months and it is expected to continue well into 2002.

The special tree planting day was a great success. Sausages eaten nearly equalled trees planted and just as the tired workers were leaving a good downpour arrived to encourage some good early growth.

State Landcare Co-ordinators Roundup

By Mark Costello

State Landcare Co-ordinators from across the country got together in Western Australia last November.

The major focus of this national conference was strategic planning in the context of the National Landcare Facilitator Project. This theme helped equip participants with strategic planning skills essential in the process of developing regional plans.

Commonwealth representatives presented an update on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and the extension of NHT, with focus on the role of co-ordinators and facilitators. Each state reported on key initiatives, events and innovations relevant to Landcare policy and practice.

I was fortunate to attend the conference along with Max Skeen (Wimmera), Tim Corlett (Corangamite) and Denis Martin, Chair of the Victorian Co-ordinators and Facilitators Network.

State Forum

The Fifth Annual Victorian Landcare Co-ordinators and Facilitators Network Forum was also held last November. Over 100 people attended the forum at Kangarooie, a 2000-acre farming property near Princetown along the Great Ocean Road.

The program included guest speakers, workshops, a facilitated panel discussion, bus tours and opportunities for networking. Forum proceedings are currently being developed.

The format allowed for a high level of exchange between co-ordinators and a proactive approach to tackling issues. The next conference will be held in the Wimmera later this year.

Landcare membership statistics

Preliminary figures from the 2000/2001 Agriculture Commodity Census by the ABS show that 36% of the broadacre



Clare Claydon, Jenny Sedgewick, Gavan Mathieson and landholder Ian McConnell discuss Yellow-bellied Glider habitat.

and dairy industries surveyed in Victoria were members of Landcare.

This data does not include agricultural holdings with an annual estimated value of agricultural operations less than \$5000.

This is the most recent and comprehensive baseline data for Landcare from which we can obtain a clear picture of Landcare membership across the state.

For further information please contact me on 9412 4622.

Top quality, low-cost, **LANDCARE WORKSHOPS**

By Gayl Morrow

Since its introduction five years ago, the Victorian Landcare Centre's (VLC) practical and interactive workshop series for landholders, students and agency staff has doubled in popularity and number.

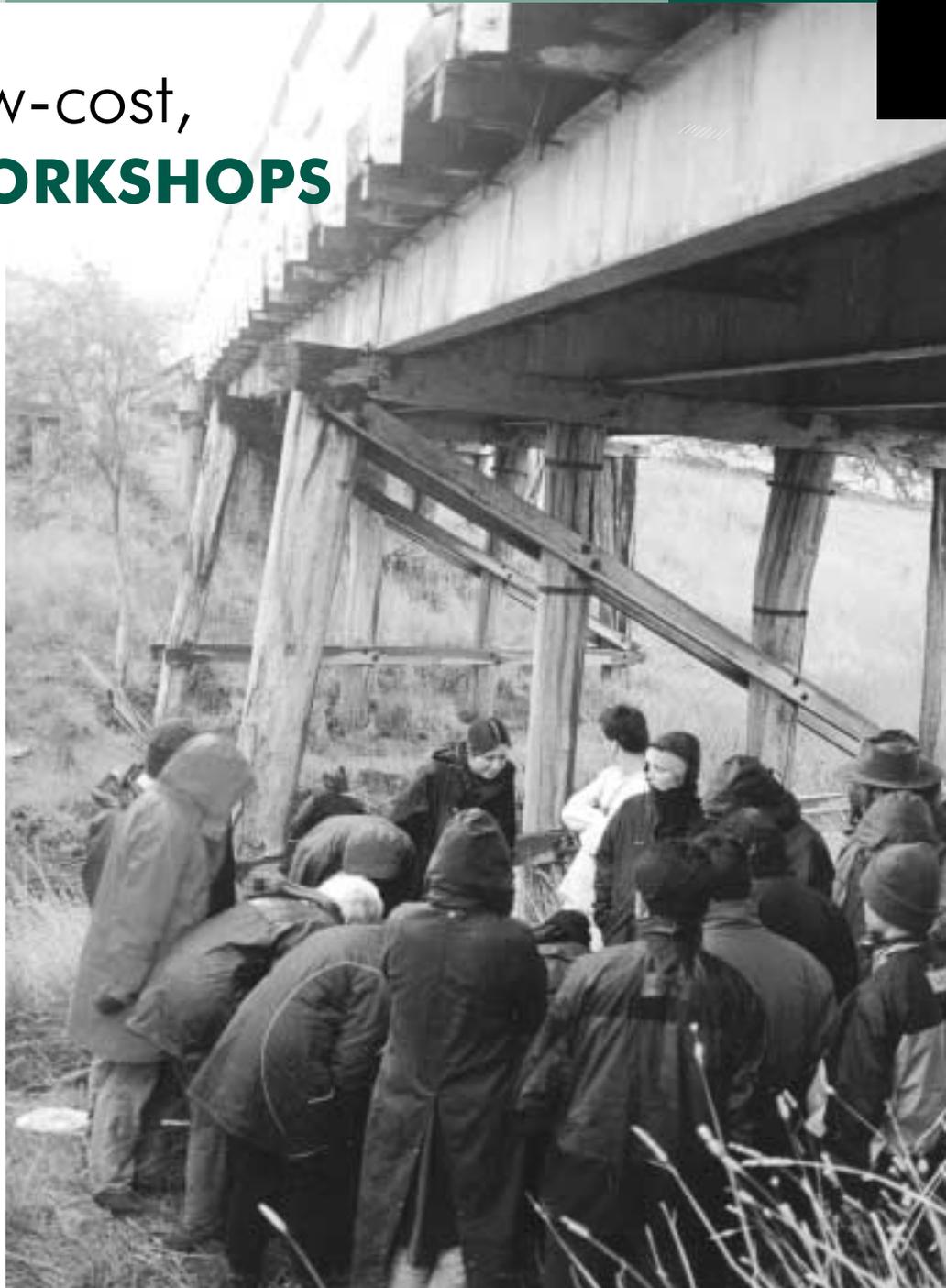
In 2002 the VLC is holding 18 workshops where groups of up to 20 people are taken out into the field for the day and given hands-on experience of some aspects of sustainable land management. This could include seed collection and propagation of native plants, identifying fungi, or implementing more complex functions such as planning a revegetation project or learning how to turn a muddy dam into a wetland wonderland.

All of the workshops are led by experts. For example, field naturalist Roger Thomas helps participants track down native grasses while NRE's Native Grassland Co-ordinator, Vanessa Craigie, provides practical strategies for sustainably managing native grassland.

Some of the workshops take a cultural and historical perspective, looking at how European impact has changed the landscape, such as the workshop that will explore the Barwon River from its Dreamtime origins through to Sea Change. Workshops, like botanist Dr Beth Gott's on Koori bush tucker plants, also raise awareness of how Koori land management techniques not only sustained the indigenous population, but also the environment, for tens of thousands of years.

Many of the workshops are being held in partnership with either the North Central or Corangamite CMAs. North Central is hosting five workshops on all aspects of managing remnant vegetation from mapping to monitoring.

One of Corangamite's workshops will delve into biodiversity indicators for determining whether a particular environment is healthy or not.



A riparian vegetation workshop underway.

In a workshop supported by Central Highlands Waterwatch, nurseryman Tim D'Ombra will lead participants on a tour of Ballarat region's wetlands, introducing them to waterplants and the role they play in the web of life.

Except for the two-day course on native grassland management, all of the workshops and forums are half-day or full-day. The workshops range in cost from nothing to \$45 for the day and include light refreshments, notes and transport by bus.

In addition to the workshops two forums are being held. In partnership with Corangamite CMA, the first forum will present the latest research information on groundwater usage. The second forum will involve Australian Forest Growers debating the pros and cons of certifying farm forest products as emanating from a sustainably managed plantation or private native forest.

For program details contact Gayl Morrow at the Victorian Landcare Centre on 5345 2200.

Last leg for the 444,000 Trees Project

By Helen Keegan and Karen Wales



Keen 444,000 Trees Project volunteers hard at work planting out a gully.

The Hopkins Moyne Land Management and Farm Tree Group is a co-ordinating umbrella for Landcare groups in the Lower Hopkins, Moyne and Merri Rivers catchment areas north of Warrnambool and Port Fairy. Our main Landcare activity is the 444,000 Trees Project, which is in its final year this year.

For the last two years, a community planting weekend has been staged each spring with over half the trees planted during the weekend on private and public land planted by community volunteers.

Last year 300 volunteers braved wet and windy conditions to plant 29,030 trees, shrubs and grasses over nine sites. Many of the volunteers were local but those from further afield stayed at the convent in Koroit and enjoyed free hospitality and entertainment thanks to the volunteer committee of management, the Rotary Club of Warrnambool and staff. Funding came from Alcoa World Alumina Australia, Team Poly and other regional businesses but it was the great organisational efforts of committed locals that made the weekend a huge success.

Kids Caring for Catchments is another program that assists landholders to plant more trees. After an in-class information session children are bused out to various sites for tree planting. Over 950 students and teachers from around the district planted 22,320 trees and shrubs during last September and October.

In total, 54,525 plants went in during 2001. They were planted on 32 sites covering 53 hectares. Forty-two landholders were involved, half of them being new participants. An additional 13 hectares of direct seeding was also completed.

However, the year was not without its difficulties. The continued wet conditions led to 15 landholders withdrawing from the project and the loss of staff during the planting season was unfortunate. Karen Wales has since been appointed as the new co-ordinator and Bruce Mirtschin as project officer.

The group has found that a continual education project is required and that landholders must be contacted to suggest suitable sites and ensure correct

Plantings along the Moyne River completed during a community planting weekend last year.



preparation and maintenance. With less staffing hours an even greater commitment will be required from volunteers to continue this important work.

The group is reviewing the community planting weekends and giving thought to one or two separate community planting days in spring that may be easier to run and also achieve better results. Community plantings will continue as they provide important labour for large-scale plantings and help to educate people on the improvement of the catchment.

444,000 Trees is a remarkable project in both the scale of plantings and voluntary efforts involved and the changes in the landscape we are now starting to see.

For further information contact Karen Wales on 5560 7354.

Yackandandah group links Jack with Big Ben!



By Carole Pettitt

One of the main focuses in a local area plan being developed by the Yackandandah sub-group of the Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group is to retain and increase indigenous plants in its catchment. With this aim in mind, the group is planning to establish a wildlife corridor from Mt Jack to Mt Big Ben in the Yackandandah Valley.

“The establishment of wildlife corridors is an important undertaking and the first corridor planting on such a large scale,” said the group’s secretary Neil Padbury.

“Corridors offer protection to smaller species of marsupials when crossing open ground. These are also needed for birds, butterflies, insects, lizards and snakes.

“It is vital for wildlife to traverse their local habitat as it encourages genetic diversity. Without this happening certain species are prone to interbreeding, reducing their hardiness and eventually leading to extinction,” said Neil.

According to Neil the corridor is already underway and will involve five landholders. It will cover an area three kilometres long by 30 metres wide and will link existing stands of vegetation. The corridor will be planted out with trees and shrubs grown from indigenous seed.

“Plants grown from indigenous seed have a far higher survival rate than seed from another area,” said Neil.

The group has already done a number of successful plantings of indigenous species in the catchment on private property, mostly for erosion control and stream bank protection.

According to Neil the local area plan would help develop other priorities for the group.

“The great advantage of this system is that it will enable continuity of projects irrespective of membership change.

“The need to develop priorities for the local area and reach a consensus of opinion is a very important matter facing the sub-group.”

In recent years much of the Yackandandah area has been divided into smaller holdings.

“A percentage of landholders have different priorities for the area. It is hoped with help and education that a broader view of how to maintain the delicate balance of the land and a full range of biodiversity, both of fauna and flora, will prevail. It is all about sustainable land use.”

An example of the group’s educational focus is the work it has done at the old Back Creek School site near Yackandandah. The site is an environment centre and is used by children from the surrounding district for environment education visits.

“Landcare sees itself as having a responsibility to educate and involve, not only children, who will become the future generations of landholders, but also interested adults,” Neil said.

Accordingly, the group is planning to offer assistance to owners of small holdings.

“The trend in recent years has been to divide larger tracts of land into small holdings. How these new owners operate will impact on the surrounding land. This is not a derogatory look at small holdings but a realistic view to help reduce the impact on the local environment.”

The group welcomes people interested in becoming involved, irrespective of whether they own land or if they have a small or large holding.

For further information contact Neil Padbury on 6027 1824.



Neil Padbury on his property at Yackandandah.

How students would manage

A hypothetical proposal to develop a 300-room luxury resort in the Barmah-Millewa Forest set the scene at two student forums held during the past 12 months to give young people an opportunity to develop their views on the future of the Murray River.



Students from the Upper Murray present a copy of the student vision to Sarah Nicholas, chair of Victoria's North East CMA.

About 120 secondary students from 14 schools in the Upper Murray and the Echuca-Barham region attended the two forums organised by the Murray-Darling Association.

The forums, one at Albury and one at Barham, aimed to encourage and engage students along the Murray River in natural resource management issues through presentations, workshops and environmental problem-solving, drawing on the issues that the students had identified as important.

The hypothetical approach

The luxury development hypothetical was used to help students understand that different groups can have very different views on development and that a balance is required to meet social, economic and

environmental objectives. It also demonstrated that making decisions about the environment is not easy.

The forums listened to what young people saw (without any adult judgements) as the problems, challenges and opportunities for natural resource management. The students then developed their own vision statements about managing land and water resources in their particular regions, giving youth perspectives on how the Murray Valley's land and water resources should be managed into the future.

Despite the seriousness of the issues, the forums were developed and run to ensure that the students had fun as well as access to resources and people that could help them explore a range of environmental and catchment issues.

Public liability insurance update *By Mark Costello*

Right across Australia small business and community groups, including Landcare, continue to feel the pressure of dealing with rising insurance premiums and further increases are likely.

Lachlan Polkinghorne, National Landcare Facilitator, says community groups are feeling the strain of dealing with higher premiums and that the issue needs to be addressed by both State and Federal Governments.

The capacity of State Governments to act in this area is extremely limited. Insurance is a national issue and requires a co-ordinated federal response.

However, the Victorian Government is committed to working with the insurance industry, small business and community organisations to investigate practical solutions to minimise risk exposure and contribute to the containment of premiums in the long run.

The Landcare insurance issue has potential to develop further. To obtain insurance in the future, Landcare groups may be required to demonstrate risk minimisation processes. Such steps could include risk assessment and occupational health and safety training.

We will endeavour to keep Landcare groups and co-ordinators informed as options to address this issue are developed and full implications understood. In the meantime Landcare groups should examine their current insurance policies to ensure that their activities are covered.

Insurance in Victoria

The National Landcare Insurance Program (NLIP), administered by Aradlay Insurance Brokers, provides cover for Public & Product Liability and Members/Volunteers Accident Insurance

In 1997 the committee of the VFF Farm Tree & Landcare Association (FTLA)

agreed to make the NLIP compulsory for groups. Investigations at the time identified the NLIP as offering the best proposal in terms of cover and cost. FTLA Executive Officer, Brenan Wotherspoon, says even with a hefty increase in the 2001 annual premium the FTLA committee believes the NLIP still offered the best deal in terms of cover and cost.

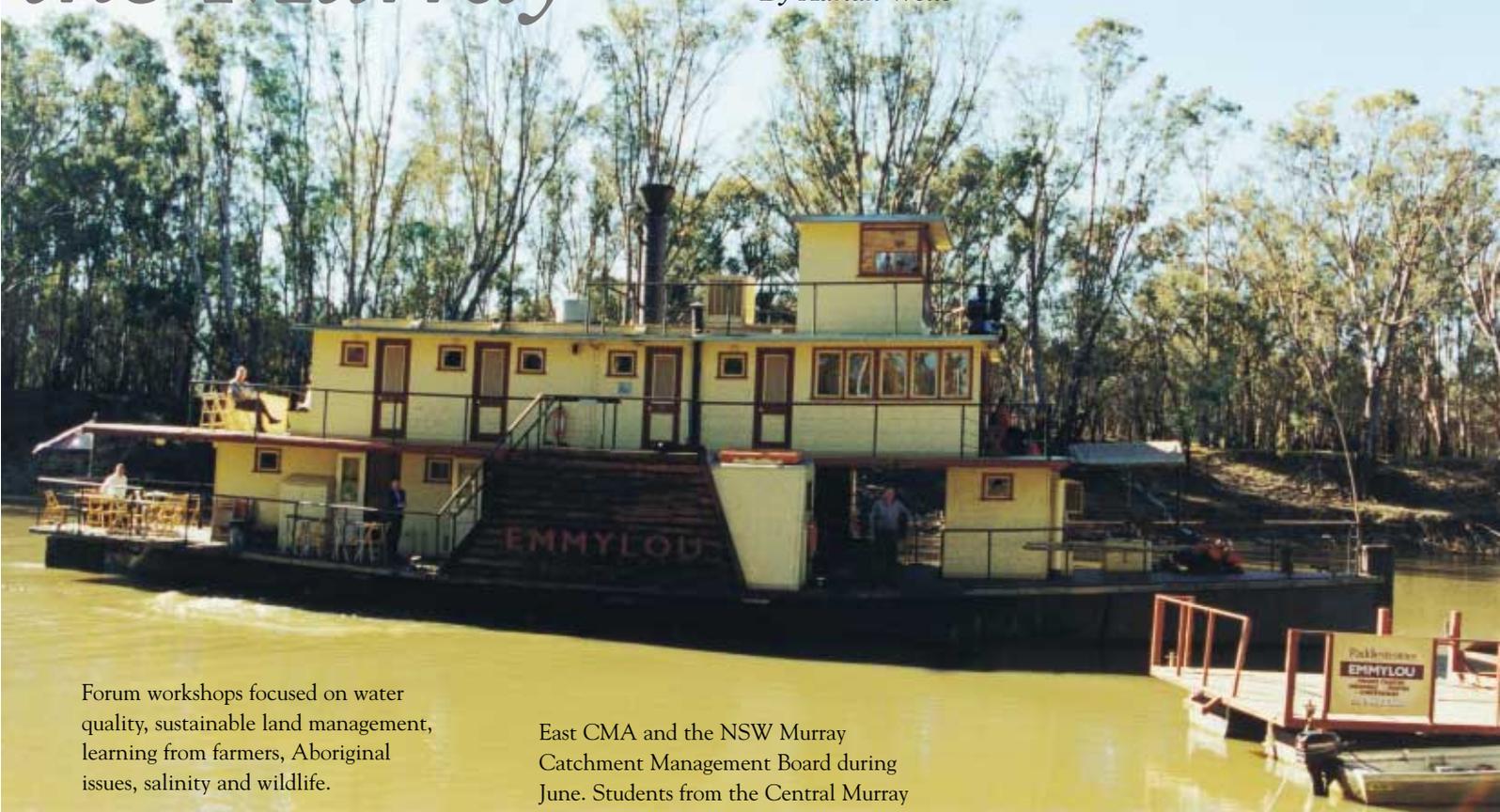
Many member groups of the FTLA expressed concern at the increase and their continuing ability to meet such costs without in turn significantly increasing the groups' own membership fees.

The present national premium pool of 2000 Landcare groups allows Aradlay to negotiate a favourable premium compared with groups acting independently.

Brenan Wotherspoon says the FTLA committee is concerned that if the premium continues to increase, groups will drop off until the pool of groups reduces to a level where the NLIP will cease to be viable.

the Murray

By Adrian Wells



Forum workshops focused on water quality, sustainable land management, learning from farmers, Aboriginal issues, salinity and wildlife.

The forums were supported by Victoria's North East and North Central CMA, the NSW Murray Catchment Management Board, NSW Agriculture and the Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre. Representatives of landholders, Aboriginal groups, local government, the community, catchment organisations, universities, schools and government agencies attended the forums to support the students.

Impressive vision statements presented

A representative group of students from the Upper Murray presented their vision statement to meetings of Victoria's North

East CMA and the NSW Murray Catchment Management Board during June. Students from the Central Murray presented their vision statement to a meeting of Victoria's North Central Catchment Management Authority in early December.

The catchment organisations were not only impressed with the vision documents but also with the interest, enthusiasm and commitment of the students to the environmental future of the Murray catchment. They were also impressed with the students' capacity to understand complex issues and develop solutions. The student visions have been acknowledged in the just-completed draft of the NSW Murray Catchment Management Plan.

Chairman of the North Central CMA, Drew English, assured the students that their views would be incorporated in the CMA's natural resource management plans in the north-central region of Victoria.

Students and schools along the Murray River are involved in some major local, national and international programs addressing

land and water issues in meaningful, innovative and award-winning ways. Despite this, they had very few opportunities to contribute to catchment planning.

Further youth forum planned

Because of the interest, the Murray-Darling Association will be running further youth forums in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Adelaide this year. The Barmah Millewa Forum has asked the association to run a youth forum on managing red gum forests. The association has also been asked by the North East CMA to help plan and run a major regional youth forum in 2002.

The Murray-Darling Association, with membership of 90 local government councils across the Murray-Darling Basin, has a long history of supporting education programs on natural resource management for young people.

More information can be obtained by contacting the association's offices at Swan Hill on 5032 4036.



Students learn about flora and fauna at the Barham Forum during a workshop run by Kerang NRE staff.



Winning with direct

Direct seeding of trees is set to become an annual part of the farming calendar, according to Burrumbeet pastoralist Alan McCartney.

Alan started direct seeding in 1998 with a Greening Australia-sponsored trial to compare direct seeding using the mouldboard plough/hand seeding technique, direct seeding with a Hamilton Seeder and tubestock planting.

“We have seen first hand the ease of direct seeding compared to manual planting and the results in the direct seeded sections are fantastic. Three years down the track and we wouldn’t look back,” Alan said.

Direct-seeded plantations at Burrumbeet providing shelter for livestock.

The challenge

Alan’s property lies five kilometres north-west of Lake Burrumbeet at the foothills of the central highlands. The soil is a light sandy/buckshot loam and the area in general is short of good shelter for stock and pasture.

The challenge for Alan was to try and establish shelterbelts across his farm’s soil types, with minimal fuss and expense. His early attempts at tubestock planting were successful, however, they came with considerable expense and significant manual effort.

“We liked the evenly spaced look that planting tubestock gave us, but we needed to control hares attacking the newly planted trees so we decided to use old tyres as tree guards.”



Alan said the work involved in lugging tyres around the soon took the gloss off the manual planting effort.



seeding at Burrumbeet

By Paul Crock



Alan McCartney inspects the results of his direct seeding efforts.

In 1998, Alan turned to Greening Australia for an easier, cost-effective alternative to his tubestock planting efforts.

Claire Denis, Greening Australia's Corangamite Regional Co-ordinator, introduced Alan to the concept of direct seeding and offered to conduct some comparative trials on his property.

"The trial involved comparing direct seeding with our tubestock planting," said Alan.

The trial

The trial sites were located at both ends of a tubestock plantation established by Alan the previous year.

The area to be mechanically direct seeded with the Hamilton Seeder was ripped in the autumn prior to herbicide spraying in early winter.

Both trial areas had the same spray regime. The first spray was in early winter with Glyphosate and the second just prior to sowing with a combination of Glyphosate and Simazine. Simazine is a residual soil sterilant, preventing seed germination in the top few centimetres of soil.

"In hindsight we shouldn't have sprayed the site to be mouldboarded with Simazine as the mouldboard plough turned over the treated soil," said Alan.

Both trial sites were seeded at a field day in late September 1998.

Alan explained that the mouldboard site was first ploughed and a sand/seed mix was distributed evenly along the plough lines by hand.

"The sand bulked up the seed mix, making it easier to spread out more evenly," he said.

"We ran a four-wheel motorcycle over some of the hand-seeded area to see if the seed/soil contact would make any difference to germination rates – it appeared not to."

The other end of the plantation saw the Hamilton Seeder doing its job, and producing excellent results.

"The only follow-up weed control work we did was in the area seeded by the Hamilton Seeder, where we sprayed Fusillade for the control of grasses, in particular Phalaris."

The results

After three years, Alan has concluded that the mouldboard ploughing/hand seeding method suits him the best.

"We liked the aesthetic look of the regularly-spaced tubestock, but it was too time consuming and expensive. The mouldboard plough/hand seed method is simplest, as we have all the equipment on-hand to do the job.

"We are fortunate that a good species mix of appropriate seed is available if ordered early in the year from the Ballarat Region Seedbank at Creswick."

Alan emphasised that one of the most important benefits of the direct seeding process was that the species that are best suited to that site would establish themselves in the plantation from the mixture sown. When planting tubestock, the species range is often limited and plants are often not always planted in the conditions they will do best.

With direct seeding the species that best suit the conditions on that part of the farm will be the ones that grow. Nature selects the best plants for the mix to suit the conditions.

"The areas around the trial site have benefited greatly from the increased shelter. The stock are doing better with shelter in winter and shade in summer and the pasture is growing better as well – not to mention the increased aesthetics and environmental benefits the plantations have made," said Alan.

For more information contact Alan McCartney on 5344 0541 or Claire Denis from Greening Australia Victoria on 5236 2399.

Footprints Fact Sheets

Many advances in revegetation and land management have occurred through practical experience.

The Footprints Fact Sheet Series are case studies explaining the vegetation and revegetation management experiences of land managers throughout south-west Victoria. The series aims to facilitate the sharing of knowledge with others with similar land management issues.

Topics covered in the current Footprints Series include shelterbelt establishment, revegetation techniques on difficult soil types, indigenous seed collection and remnant vegetation protection.



Alcoa World Alumina Australia proudly supports this Greening Australia knowledge-transfer initiative.

For more information or copies of the Footprints Fact Sheet Series, or if you would like to share your experiences in a fact sheet, contact Dave Warne at the Greening Australia/Alcoa Portland Regional Seedbank on 5521 7856

Harry and Lyn Croll's work of art

By Carrie Tiffany

What turns a farmer into an artist?

In the case of Harry Croll from Longwarry in Gippsland it is 30 years of commitment to the land that he farms. Ask the locals about Harry Croll's farm and they wax lyrical about the frogs, turtles, eels, swans, ducks, coots, egrets, cockatoos and rosellas to be found there.

Harry and Lyn bought the 142-acre property 31 years ago. It was a barren and salty landscape supporting around 20 head of cattle. When it rained water ran down a steep hill on the property scouring the landscape and flooding into the Modella area of Cardinia Shire.

Through the building of a very large dam, which is fed by natural springs and a simple water management system using taps and wells, Harry now controls water movement over the property.



New trees and fencing along the Ti Tree Creek.

Smart but simple water management

With the large dam, several smaller retaining dams and a system of groins, previously fast-flowing water is now slowed and harvested to use during summer months to flush the lower land by means of stable contour drains.

Initially Harry dug many of the drains that direct the water flow around the property by hand, then he got a machine in. He says the science in the system is simple. The contour of the land determines where the drains are placed. The drains catch the outflow of water enabling it to penetrate to where it is needed. The system allows the farm to be irrigated throughout the year regardless of rainfall.

The large farm dam now looks more like a natural lake with plants and wildlife flourishing. There are also a series of wooden bridges giving access to various soil structures and islands enabling maintenance works to be carried out. Harry says he likes the idea of having corridors of water as well as corridors of trees.



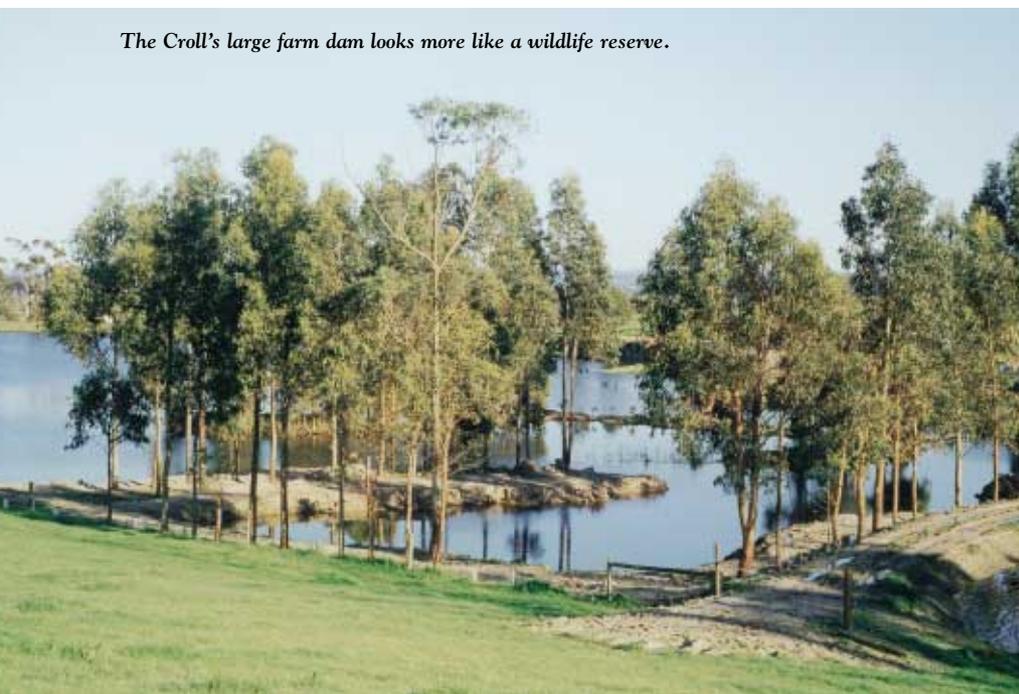
The property now supports around 150 head of cattle. It is 12 years since Harry used super and he doesn't drench, but his cattle nearly always top the market. Harry puts much of this down to the natural springs which bring copper and boron and other soil minerals onto the farm.

Award-winning works at Garfield

Harry and Lyn won the 2001 Cardinia Shire Primary Producers Conservation Award for their ongoing work on a large parcel of land at Garfield. The land, which is in three parcels and has frontage to the Ti Tree Creek, has been fenced off and planted with native trees.

Harry describes himself as a tray-a-day-planter. Meaning that he can plant 48-50 trees a day, taking into account seasonal conditions. Harry says when he first started planting he thought all trees were just wood and he used to lose a lot.

The Croll's large farm dam looks more like a wildlife reserve.



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN *for* Salinity and Water Quality update

The implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) is underway in Victoria. Much time has been spent negotiating details of the NAP between state and Commonwealth officers. The culmination of this work was the October signing of the Bilateral Agreement between the State and the Commonwealth by the Prime Minister and the Premier.

The agreement provides the broad framework for the implementation of the NAP in Victoria. It outlines the regions that are to be included, supports the framework of Regional Catchment Strategies to be prepared by the CMAs and details the broader requirements for successful implementation of the NAP.

A program office for the NAP has also been established in Bendigo at the NRE office at Epsom. The office has seven full-time staff. Peter Headley, Investment Manager; Damien Hills, Planning and Evaluation Manager; Megan Hawke, Evaluation; Dugal Wallace, Resource Monitoring; Jill Karena, Communications; and Shane Saunderson, Executive Support Officer.

The program office staff will work closely with the CMAs to assist them in implementing the NAP over the next six years. For further information on the NAP contact the program office on 5430 4432.



Harry and Lyn check the new trees and feed the water birds.



Lyn Croll's foster family – the swan parents with their five cygnets.

Since getting involved with Landcare he has learnt the importance of planting the right tree in the right place and has enjoyed much greater success.

The Crolls have recently finished fencing-off and restoring an area of cattle-damaged natural vegetation on this area. The Bunyip Catchment Landcare Project Committee of Management has assisted with fencing materials.

Labour of love

Harry says developing the Longwarry property has been a labour of love.

He described his wife Lyn's convalescence from two strokes – keeping one of the swans company as she hatched her eggs. When the five cygnets hatched they considered Lyn their foster mother and followed her around like chicks.

“We have developed this property purely for the pleasure and enjoyment of working with nature. It hasn't been work as such, but rather enjoyable tasks giving us great contentment.

“Every day Lyn and I drive out to feed the water birds and to walk amongst the recently planted trees. We see all sorts of birds (and butterflies in spring) feeding on the bottlebrushes and the insects.

“Even one tree can support an enormous amount of wildlife. I love it when hundreds of white egrets visit in the mornings and roost in the trees.”



Using forestry to repair our

Let's face it – traditionally forestry has craved our best land – the deepest soil, the highest rainfall and the flattest land is ideal. The challenge we face environmentally is that our most degraded landscapes are the ones that need forestry the most – but with lower rainfall, shallow soils, steep or rocky terrain – this land is at the bottom of the forestry development list.

The land that agriculture has failed

Drive around Victoria and it isn't difficult to spot the non-agricultural parts of our landscape. Some parts turn purple, others go yellow and some turn faded bronze – in other words Paterson's Curse (Salvation Jane), Ragwort and Serrated Tussock. All noxious weeds that love land that is not under intensive agricultural use (land too steep/rocky or unmanageable for traditional pastures and crops). Of course forestry is not to blame – but forestry is arguably the only commercial land use that can save these degraded portions of our landscape. Critically, it is often these same portions of our landscapes that are priority areas for salinity, nutrient, pest plant/animal and water quality strategies (few of which ever consider funding farm forestry development).

Test case at Bacchus Marsh

Fifty kilometres west of Melbourne is the Bacchus Marsh region, complete with a mix of rugged, wild and degraded landscapes. Landcare Australia Limited's Rob Youl describes the damaged part of this landscape as probably the most degraded in Victoria.

"Poor soils, steep valleys and lower rainfall (500mm per year) predominates – with subsequent land degradation issues such as major erosion, salinity, rabbits and a myriad of pest plants such as Serrated Tussock. All of these are symptoms of land screaming out for a new and sustainable landuse."

But it's not only the land that is screaming. Landholders in the area are desperately seeking support to help them cope with the huge Serrated Tussock problem.



Beware – noxious weed on the march! Serrated Tussock seed coming from infested non-agricultural lands. The down-wind impact of these infested areas is costing rural communities great heartache and expense. Unless truly long-term options such as forestry or native vegetation are used to replace these weeds on the non-agricultural portion of our landscapes we will see much more of this over the next century.

Many properties are spending from \$5000 to \$40,000 annually on Serrated Tussock control – only to turn around and do it again the following season. It is breaking them – economically and psychologically.

These communities urgently want to see a light at the end of the tunnel. Landowners themselves have already identified at least 3000 hectares of infested/degraded land that they wish to revegetate – with either forestry or native bush – and a project called Grow West is hoping to lead the way.

Grow West

David Buntine of the Port Phillip and Westernport CALP Board says Grow West is all about developing a supportive framework to assist the Bacchus Marsh community to undertake a major landscape change program.

"It's only early days, but Grow West aims to develop improved links and partnerships between all stakeholders (government agencies, local communities, business, corporate, investors, forest industries, etc.) to build one of the largest integrated landscape restoration projects in Victoria. And private forestry development has a big role to play.

Forestry to the rescue! This badly degraded landscape has been planted to commercial trees (on suitable areas) and indigenous vegetation (on steeper lands) thanks to support from the Victorian Government Plantations for Greenhouse Program. The Grow West project at Bacchus Marsh is aiming to scale up this kind of support for the many landholders in the area who are urgently looking for help with their degraded lands.



"The result will be a single landscape project that will deliver outcomes for pest, salinity, nutrient, regional development and water quality strategies – and give landholders and the local community what they want at the same time," says David.

Farm forestry can solve degradation

We keep hearing about the great roles farm forestry can play in beating land degradation – now you can add weed control to the list.

"It is the ability of forestry to provide longer-term control of Serrated Tussock which is the greatest driver for land use change in our area," says local land manager David Watson.

"We have woodlot plantings of both Pine and Sugar Gum which have successfully replaced heavy Serrated Tussock infestations on some of our steeper country – all in less than ten years. We know forestry can fix it – we just need to work out how we get all the key ingredients together to make it happen on a larger scale."

Forestry can turn a degraded paddock that is a liability into a proposition that at least provides a commercial return in later years.

degraded landscapes – **WHAT WILL IT TAKE?**

By Graeme Anderson

It may not be a huge return but it beats the annual losses that landholders currently experience.

Forestry is a critical player for a number of reasons. Landholders explain that they lack the funds, skills and experience to undertake the larger scale of planting that is now required on their farms. Farm forest industry development can potentially fill all of these gaps – they have the establishment/management and investment linkages and experience. But how do we make it happen?

The time has come...

The key lies in developing new and innovative partnerships between all key players. When issues approach a crisis level, such as in the Bacchus Marsh region, that is where we are possibly most likely to find a solution first.

For starters, some landholders would even consider offering low rates or even lease-free land to anyone who could plant it with forestry and harvest it leaving coppiced stumps to be retained by the landowner. It is this type of thinking and compromise that, if matched by other

stakeholders, will see some major changes in how we restore landscapes. It could be a pilot for the nation – where forestry becomes the environmental saviour.

Graeme Anderson is part of the Corangamite Farm Forestry Project at NRE Geelong. He can be contacted on 5226 4821. Carmen Zerafa has just been appointed as project officer to further develop the Grow West proposal. She can be contacted on 5367 2922.

*Enough to make a grown man cry:
wind-blown Serrated Tussock seed heads.*



A new landmark for Melbourne?

By Jason Summers and Rob Youl

Probably, this is your introduction to the Scarps Project on the north-western fringe of Melbourne.

There are over 1000 hectares of escarpment country roughly between Sunbury, Taylors Lakes, Keilor and Bulla, along Deep, Emu and Jacksons creeks and the Maribyrnong River above Brimbank Park. And much of it is spectacular!

Last year we recognised a major conservation opportunity based on these factors.

The 30-year-old Organ Pipes Revegetation Project, though covering a small area, has been very successful and has provided an excellent model for much more extensive landscape re-creation. Brimbank and Hume City Councils have built up their expertise in revegetation in recent years, including good networks of contractors that can expedite works well beyond the pace achievable by volunteers.

This escarpment land cannot usually be built on or roaded and farming is difficult, some would say impossible, because of the serrated tussock and other weeds that abound. However, it is surprising how many remnants there are of indigenous vegetation and good habitat, sometimes associated with cultural relics and often containing rare and endangered plants.

Melbourne airport owns some of this landscape, which it tries hard to keep weed-free.



Woody weed control work underway on the escarpments.

To us there seems two choices – leave the scarps to grow weeds or revegetate them with indigenous species, creating a huge, biodiverse and attractive addition to Melbourne's park system.

Accordingly, we have started to plan a 30-year project, employing volunteers and contractors to restore the majority of this land to native vegetation – and we have made some progress.

An enthusiastic management group comprises representatives of Brimbank and Hume City councils, NRE and Landcare Australia Limited. It is liaising with several community conservation groups.

A Landcare group has formed covering the scarps area; overall, we detect a lot of support for the concept.

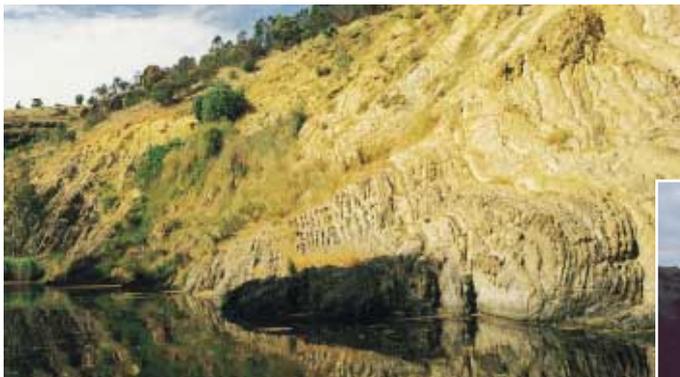
Recent activities include several planting days involving people from Keilor and other parts of metropolitan Melbourne,

with about eight hectares planted north of Keilor Golf Club and along Maribyrnong River. Some 400 hectares have been sprayed as part of an NRE serrated tussock campaign. Vermin control has been undertaken. A field day was a success. Biodiversity monitoring sites are being set up, with some fencing of remnant vegetation, and subsequent regeneration, especially within the stand of callitris pine east of the Organ Pipes. Landowners are coming forward offering extensive tracts for revegetation.

The management group is looking for funding from several sources and is approaching sponsors with strong links to the area and major development projects.

Finally there are some interesting links with the past through Von Guerard's paintings of the 1860s-1880s, which have helped us see what a beautiful landscape these restored escarpments would offer Melbourne.

Indeed there's an opportunity here for a new, vast, relatively inexpensive metropolitan park of world class, with associated green corridors.



Significant geological formations at Jackson's Creek in the Organ Pipes National Park.



The challenge is to revegetate these steep slopes.

The East Gippsland Oscars!

By Lucy Clausen



East Gippsland Landcare award-winners 2001.

East Gippsland celebrated its involvement in Landcare over the last ten years with a dinner and awards night last October. The evening acknowledged the contributions of individuals, groups, schools and agencies to the Landcare movement.

East Gippsland's land systems range from alpine areas to coastal plains and patches of temperate rainforest. This diversity requires a versatile and dedicated community to live and work sustainably. Industries we have include beef, dairy, wool, vines, bush foods, honey, venison and ecotourism. All this is operating in only one-tenth of the state.



Landcare began in East Gippsland with the Bairnsdale Farm Tree group about 15 years ago. This group is still running strong but now there are another 35 groups and four paid staff operating across the region.

This obvious dedication of volunteers was the reason behind holding an awards night and support was clear, with over 170 people attending the evening. Some guests even travelled from as far as Benambra and Cann River to be there.

Guest speaker, Laurie Norman, travelled from Ballarat to join in the evening. Laurie's comments were enjoyed as he recalled the beginnings of Landcare in the region and the importance of it in the future.

Eighteen award categories covered the areas of revegetation, erosion control, Landcare advocacy, pest plants and animals, biodiversity, waterway protection and Landcare in schools.

The presentation of the nominations was comparable to the Oscars. A photo display of each nominee was accompanied by a brief overview of their project, giving the

dinner guests a good idea of the results and the people behind them.

Winner of the Outstanding Landcare Advocate award, Kate Simpson, has been involved in Landcare for over ten years since the formation of the Tom's Creek Landcare Group.

Kate said the awards gave an excellent preview of some of the different type of activities that are happening across the region.

"I hope it may have a motivational effect in that people could take home some ideas they may be able to put in place within their Landcare groups. It would also be good to follow up some of the award-winning groups with a field day," she suggested.

By the end of the evening, ideas, issues, the odd yarn and a few jokes had been shared. Many thanks are due to the sponsors and organisers of the evening for putting on what can only be described as a very successful night.

For more information contact Lucy Clausen at NRE on 5161 1222.

RIRDC Rural Women's

What an amazing group of Victorian rural women the regional finalists for the RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2002 represent. The RIRDC Rural Women's Award: Promoting Women in Agriculture and Resource Management is a national program aimed at supporting women to plan and develop a project that will fulfil their vision for agricultural production, resource management or their supporting industries.

In Victoria, NRE conducted a regional selection process, identifying top applicants from across rural and regional Victoria. Regional representatives and the state winner were announced on 31 January.

Eight regional representatives were awarded bursaries of \$2000 as a contribution to their proposed project and personal up-skilling. The winner, Sharyn Munnerly, a calf rearer from Gordon, and two state semi-finalists, Alison Pitt, an organic olive producer from French Island and Jo Gardner, a herb producer and broker from Horsham, were identified from the regional representatives.

All three finalists are invited to the National Award celebration and the National Leadership Workshop held in Canberra on International Women's Day. In addition, Sharyn received a \$20,000 bursary funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation to assist in implementing her plan to establish the Australian Calf Rearing Research Centre.

In Victoria, the RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2000 attracted the highest number of applicants of any State/Territory. The standard and diversity of the applicants in Victoria was exceptional and the Rural Women's Network wishes them all the best in their future endeavours.

RIRDC Rural Women's

Gippsland region



Joanne Butterworth-Gray

Joanne Butterworth-Gray, full-time mother of six, has created a new-age vehicle for promoting and selling Gippsland's specialty agricultural produce. www.tasteofgippsland.com.au, launched in August 2001, opens up market opportunities previously unavailable to many rural agribusinesses and women in Gippsland. Joanne's vision is to realise Gippsland as a sustainable agribusiness centre offering employment and business opportunities for rural women based on a regional food brand for its raw and value-added products.

Ferial Zekiman

Ferial Zeikman has over 20 years experience in the dairy industry. Her project aims at the Australian specialty cheese-making industry. Ferial established the award-winning Maffra Cheese Company in the 1980s to produce specialty cheeses for the catering and restaurant markets. Her aim is for a study tour to bring back some of the ideas and lessons of European cheese makers and an information exchange with some of the world's premier cheese makers. As well as education for our industry, she also aims to promote the Australian specialty cheese industry outside Australia with a view to tapping its export potential.

Port Phillip region



Carol Mathew

Dr Carol Mathew has been a stud breeder of alpacas in Victoria since 1995 with the second-largest herd size in the world of 20,000 animals. Carol's vision is to see the alpaca industry become a viable agricultural industry. Her project, Converting Australian Alpaca to Australian Products, aims at educating Australian alpaca breeders on the processing techniques and market research of the UK and Italy to make the emerging Australian industry successful. The aim is to utilise as much of the Australian clip as possible, as well as investigate further product and export potential.

Tai Snaith

21-year-old Tai Snaith has been involved in the beef industry for 11 years. Her proposal is to run an annual five-day seminar called Young Beef Elite, that will encourage professionalism of youth in the beef industry, encourage youth to consider the breadth of options open to them and encourage young women in particular to participate at a variety of levels. The main objective is to launch a forum in which young people can access and acquire comprehensive knowledge and find possible challenging career goals.

Award 2002

By Jacqueline George

Award 2002 Regional Winners

North East region



Marion Rak

Marion's project, titled International Women in Horticulture, aims to bring together women from around the world at the Third International Congress for Women, in Spain in 2002 and facilitate an opportunity to network within individual industries and on a broader scale. In bringing these women together, Marion hopes to combine Australian Women in Horticulture with women from around the world in horticulture to communicate and develop ongoing networks for the benefits of their industries at a global level.

Sheryl Sinclair

Sheryl Sinclair has the idea: country life... you've got to laugh! Good humour is part of rural heritage and her belief is that if rural women managed stress with fun and laughter they would enjoy a greater well-being and have more vigour and energy to confront the rapidly changing developments in modern agriculture and their traditional way of life. Through the publication of a book, training video, learning booklets, website and seminars, Sheryl hopes to develop a program to promote and deliver laughter.

North West region



Vicki Hardwick

Vicki Hardwick has been involved in the meat industry for many years. As a director of Hardwick's Meats in Kyneton, Vicki sees the necessity to further utilise women as an important resource in this industry. Her project is based on education and the sharing of knowledge. Her vision is to integrate, through education, the sectors of the meat industry from the production sector, through to processing and sales.

Diane Tregoning

Diane's proposed project, titled Leadership for an Innovative Transitional Forestry Industry, aims at providing leadership in rural communities to create the future through understanding the capacity, capability and value of the resources at their disposal, including people, groups, values and commitment. Diane has pioneered developments such as the Golden Forest Network, a local furniture industry competition with an accent on promoting local craft and furniture industries to enable the community to value the timber resource. She is committed to good economic, social and environmental outcomes and participates in many industry and community organisations to develop the industry and its products.

South West region



Tracey Delbridge

Tracey Delbridge owns and operates a small eco-tourism business called Moonbird Tours, which focuses on innovative interpretation of the natural environment, indigenous culture, ecology and education. The business was established to highlight the beauty and protection of the coastal and bush ecosystems. In 1996 Moonbird Tours was awarded the contract to conduct interpretive programs for Tower Hill in association with Parks Victoria and facilitate the Coast Action summer program. Tracey's vision is to set up a mobile educational facility to pack a river-sea-land journey into a trailer and be able to take the living environment to communities otherwise restricted by their geographical location, with a particular focus on schools and the education system.

Salt success at Upper Lurg

By Martin Doxey

A break of slope plantation on the Tharrat property.



David Tharrat's family has been on the land and involved in Landcare for two generations on their property, Glenwood, east of Benalla.

In late 1998 the Molyullah Tatong Landcare Group saw the need for each particular area to focus on its own problems, so sub-catchments or sub-groups were formed.

David and his father both believe in the benefits of Landcare. David has shown his commitment by becoming the co-ordinator of the Upper Lurg Sub-Catchment for the past two years.

The main focuses for the group are salinity and weed control. Over the past five years members have made a serious attempt to lower the watertable on their properties.

"We have planted probably 50-60,000 trees in our area," said David.

The group has used blue gums for break-of-slope plantations, planted salt-tolerant crops, perennial pasture and red gums in areas severely affected by salinity.

"The salinity is like cancer," said David. "If we don't stop it now it will take more and more of our land."

The Tharrat's 80-hectare farm doesn't appear to have any obvious salt damage. But closer inspection reveals areas of bare dirt covered with a white mist – salt.



David Tharrat with the air compressor pump used to lower the watertable at the base of the valley.

These salt scalds are at the base of a gully from which a saline stream runs. This area is clearly identifiable because the trees either side of the saline stream (five-year-old blue gums) are four metres taller than the trees in its direct path. David has installed a groundwater pump that uses compressed air to push water out of the ground and helps to lower the watertable.

David has planted over 25,000 trees on Glenwood, taking up 10% of the grazing land, but he has a higher stocking than before the trees were put in. With the most recent plantation of blue gums he

also installed a 40-metre bore to measure the salinity levels of the water and the height of the watertable. Since planting the trees the watertable in the plantation area has dropped one metre.

The Upper Lurg Sub-Catchment's focus, for the next few months, is weed control. David and the group will continue salinity and weed control and work to gain the support of other landholders in the area. The fight, for David and many other landholders in the sub-catchment, is not just about revegetation but about their livelihood and their future.

Murray Jones gives blackberries a beating



By Irene Grant

When Murray Jones bought his Mt Alfred grazing property in 1998 a major blackberry control program was the main priority on the long list of improvements.

The 1000-acre property high in the rolling hills of the Upper Murray, was more than 50% covered in blackberries and what good land was available was increasingly being infested.

Even though a large part of his property was covered in the weed, Murray said a control program was a priority if he was to realise the full potential of the land he had bought.

With no experience of blackberry control, Murray decided from the beginning he would beat the problem with “hard work and determination” and today, three years on, he has achieved what most would have considered impossible.

Les Broadhurst, NRE Catchment Management Officer at Corryong, said Murray sought advice from the Department and the Burrowye Landcare Group before undertaking the control work.

“While he had a bit of trouble at the beginning getting the right mixture for the job, once he got that right the results have been spectacular,” Les said.

“He has achieved in three years what normally could have taken five years or more.”

Murray said he tried a number of chemicals before he found the right combination for the control work on his property. With some chemicals he was able to achieve success with mature plants while others were more practical used with young seedlings.

“It was important that if I was to make any difference to the infestation I had to get rid of the seed bank,” he said.

He hand-sprayed from November through until the end of February, however, to achieve any worthwhile success he soon found that he needed to broaden his control methods.

“Because so much of the country here is hard to get at by vehicle and the cover of blackberry was so thick, I decided I needed a helicopter to spray out the large infestations.

“The cost of a helicopter was about \$800 per load compared with around \$2000 to do the same area by hand.”

Murray said the costs of controlling blackberry were factored into the purchase price of the land.

“The place was really run down when I bought it and if I was going to realise its potential this work had to be done.”

After poisoning the areas were burnt and reseeded with a mixture of ryegrass, cocksfoot and phalaris.

Murray said the Burrowye Landcare group had been very helpful and allowed him to recover about a third of his chemical costs.

Les Broadhurst said Murray has shown what can be done if you are methodical about a weed control program. And that he is a good example for other absentee landholders.

Landholders can also obtain advice on chemicals and chemical use from the Chemical Information Service on 9210 9379.

Alan Jones has been serious about blackberry removal on his grazing property at Mt Alfred.



Parrot's Feather – *fast and dangerous*

By *Lalith Gunasekera*

Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) also known as Brazilian Water Milfoil or Thread of Life, is an introduced aquarium plant spreading at an alarming rate in some of the channels and creeks of northern Victoria.

Parrot's Feather is found throughout the rivers, ponds, lakes and irrigation channels of New Zealand, Japan, USA, France, Africa and Java. It was first discovered in Sydney in 1908 and has since spread to the other parts of Australia except the Northern Territory. It has been declared a noxious weed in Western Australia and Tasmania but is freely available in most of aquarium shops in Victoria and some other states.

Originally Parrot's Feather was a moderate sized perennial herb native to the Amazon River in South America. It grows in slowly moving water on and near the banks of rivers and in the mud of shallow ponds. The stems are relatively stout,

particularly submersed but with considerable portions of leafy branches emersed. The stems can grow up to two metres long which form a tangled mass in the water. The garish green leaves are whorled. Each leaf is feather-like and about two to four centimetres long. The flowers are borne in the leaf axils but are rarely seen in countries outside its native range. Propagation is mainly by stem fragments, as fertile seeds are not produced in Australia.

Recent investigations conducted by Goulburn-Murray Water at Tatura found that Parrot's Feather has spread quickly through the channels and creeks of Northern Victoria and has been recorded at Gunbower, Campbell's Creek near Castlemaine, Lake Nagambie and Lake Benalla.

The dense growth of Parrot's Feather stems can impede water movement. The stems are fragile and break readily during storms to form floating mats which can block irrigation canals, pumps and

metering devices as well as shallow streams, causing flooding.

Parrot's Feather tolerates a wide range of temperatures, growing most aggressively in warmer areas. Growth rate is reduced during the winter months and the plants can remain viable but dormant when the water surfaces are frozen over.

Parrot's feather is a significant threat to irrigation systems. The plant mats also interfere with the use of lakes and rivers for recreation and provide an ideal breeding place for mosquitoes. In addition, Parrot's Feather is competing with native aquatic plants and changing the native aquatic environment.

Parrot's Feather has long been considered a potential major weed of waterways in Australia. It is important to prevent its further spread and destroy existing infestations before they cause serious damage to agriculture and the environment in Australia.

Parrot's Feather invading Lake Nagambie.

Parrot's Feather is spreading through northern Victorian waterways at an alarming rate.

