

Winter 2004

ISSUE 31

# **V***ictorian* **Landcare** & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

**The philosophy  
of water**

**10 years of  
Woody Yaloak action**

**Win a beaut  
new book**



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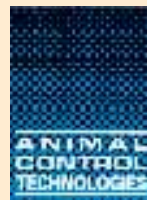
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# From the editors

Making community Landcare even stronger was the theme of the 2004 Victorian Landcare Forum held in Bendigo on 3-4 June.

The State Landcare Team, the Victorian Landcare Network and the Victorian Catchment Management Council invited the Landcare community to reflect on almost 20 years of success and consider Landcare's role in natural resource management in the years ahead.

According to Statewide Landcare Facilitator Mark Costello the forum had a strong community focus.

"We set up the process and the participants ran with it. It was the first time I'd really seen empowerment in action at this scale and type of event and it was inspiring to watch it unfold," he said.

Over 300 people attended the forum, around 60% directly representing community Landcare or other natural resource management groups.

The forum kicked off with a deeply moving welcome to country from Dja Dja elder Brien Nelson.

Mark Costello said hearing Brien speak about his connection to country opened up a whole new window on the meaning of Landcare.

"Brien, and Koorie Ranger Bambi Lees, put everything into context. They showed us that Landcare is about more than the environment. It is about our sense of place and purpose in life."

The forum was designed as a three-step process. Participants looked at the strengths and successes of community Landcare, listened to speakers who identified future trends and then worked as individuals, local area groups and finally networks to identify what actions they could take to make community Landcare stronger in the future.



*Enthusiastic participants at the recent Victorian Landcare Forum.*

Mark said there was a strong sense of enthusiasm and optimism at the forum.

"Groups of people worked together on tasks of common interest and achieved some really concrete outcomes. The Landcare movement has some highly skilled people who are great thinkers, speakers and leaders. These skills really came to the fore."

Participants identified ten major priorities at the forum, these included increasing the engagement of indigenous communities with Landcare, increasing the commitment to curriculum-based Landcare education for young people, integrating Landcare as part of the sustainable farming business and working towards the formation of a Statewide

peak body to represent community Landcare groups.

Mark said a key component of the forum saw participants identifying what support and/or partnerships would be required to make their future actions possible. The forum will reconvene on 16 July and prospective partners invited along to discuss how the actions can proceed.

For further information contact Mark Costello on 5430 4526.

We will cover future developments with the Victorian Landcare forum in upcoming issues.

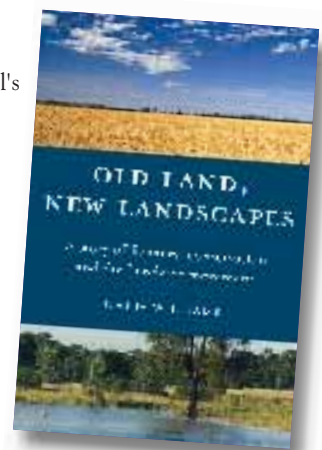
Mathew Guy, Carrie Tiffany and Joanne Webber

## Book prize for best letter

Healthy debate is an important part of any community movement. Do you have an opinion on David Mitchell's piece on the philosophy of water, or maybe you'd like to add something to Fergus Irving's history of direct seeding?

We are offering a prize for the best letter to the editor. Letters should be sent to Carrie Tiffany at the address on the page opposite. They should include a name, address and telephone number and be less than 300 words. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

The closing date for letters for the next issue is 13 August 2004. The prize for the best letter is a copy of *Old Land, New Landscapes* by Chris Williams. See page 23 for a review of this excellent new book.



# Endangered species update

## ***Good news for a shy honeyeater***

Rob Price, DSE's Manager of Flora and Fauna for north-western Victoria reports that one of Australia's most critically endangered birds, the Black-eared Miner, is on the road to recovery,

According to Rob, the Miners' habitat is mature stands of mallee, unburnt for at least 40 years. Following European settlement, fire regimes in the Mallee changed with a trend towards less frequent, hotter fires that burn out very large tracts of country.

"We know that large areas of mature mallee have been cleared and fragmented since European settlement," Rob Price said.

Rob says the birds are very shy and that they are difficult to breed in captivity. But they have had success at Healesville Sanctuary and Adelaide Zoos, and the captive-bred birds were released and appeared to be doing well.

"Over the last five years we've also had very successful reintroductions into Murray-Sunset National Park with wild-bred birds trapped at the Bookmark Biosphere Reserve in South Australia."

The program has succeeded in establishing separate breeding colonies of the Black-eared Miner, which reduces the chance of the species being wiped out by a single wildfire. Recent fuel reduction burning in the Murray-Sunset National Park has also reduced the risks to areas of known Black-eared Miner habitat.

Rob Price said the program to rescue the species took another important step last summer, with the release of captive-bred birds into the Bronzewing Flora and Fauna Reserve, south of Ouyen.

## ***The one flower of the McIvor Spider Orchid***

The McIvor Spider Orchid (*Caladenia audasii*) is one of the most endangered native orchids in Australia.

According to Geoff Nevill, DSE Threatened Species Project Officer, only a single flower of this species appeared last year – out of a known population of three plants near Bendigo and a single plant near Stawell.

Geoff Nevill is working on recovery plans for a number of nationally endangered plant species and some Victorian endangered or vulnerable plant species as well.

The recovery plans include various actions such as surveys for new populations, managing threats to existing populations, determining the growth rates and viability of populations, and attempting to increase the size of existing populations through fine-scale habitat management and propagation.

Geoff Nevill said DSE has commenced the long haul of collecting data over a period of 10 to 15 years, and established permanent monitoring sites where the orchids are known to grow. Every individual orchid is marked so its life cycle can be followed over the years.

"Many orchids may sit dormant for several years between flowering, so we're building up a body of information that will help us make decisions on the best management for each species," Geoff said.

According to Geoff an important part of the work is minimising threats.

"We have fenced off vulnerable species, and in some cases caged individual plants to protect them from grazing, which is one of the most serious threats.



***The McIvor Spider Orchid is one of the most endangered native orchids in Australia.***

"We also work closely with other agencies, such as Parks Victoria, local governments, and community groups such as Field Naturalists, and the Australian Native Orchid Society.

"The Bendigo Field Naturalists brought the McIvor Spider Orchid population in Bendigo to our attention, and they continue to contribute to the management of this species."

According to Geoff a significant threat to orchid populations is simply the lack of knowledge about how they should best be managed.

"We still have a lot to learn, but hopefully by carefully documenting all our work, we can learn how to manage them better."



# Natte Yallock tour

## highlights partnerships

By Jill Karena and Sandra Volk



Partnership was the theme of a recent bus tour around the Natte Yallock area of north central Victoria.

The aim of the tour was to show the existing and potential partnerships that are necessary to achieve sustainable use of our natural resources. The projects visited were undertaken with funds from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust.

The tour started at a site at Mt Hooghly, near Timor West, which has a history of diverse partnerships working together to address land management issues such as rabbits and erosion. Tour participants also witnessed a direct seeding success story.

The bus then moved into the Natte Yallock targeted salinity area, where schoolchildren involved in the Waterwatch program shared their national and international achievements at conferences and natural resource management forums.

Further sites visited at Natte Yallock included lucerne intercropping on Darren Ross's farm and a look at a nearby wetland that has been direct seeded for revegetation.

Local natural resource management partnerships were illustrated at an integrated paddock planning site that will incorporate erosion control works by the North Central CMA, and vegetation protection and perennial pasture establishment through the dryland salinity program implemented by DPI.

The tour then moved on to Redbank where several groundwater discharge sites were visited. Peter Hekmeijer from Primary Industries Research Victoria described the technical processes underlying the groundwater problems in the area and a local landholder described the difficulty in trying to eradicate spiny rush, which is a symptom of saline discharge sites.

The final site of the day showcased the

works of the Kooreh Landcare Group in conjunction with the North Central CMA. This partnership approach has effectively managed erosion on creeks and sloping farmland on the Proctor and Wandel properties in Kooreh.

The tour involved North Central CMA and DPI project staff as well as representatives from the North Central CMA Board, local government and Landcare, and landholders from the dryland salinity targeted areas.

According to North Central CMA Board member Jill McFarlane the bus tour was an excellent way of looking at onground works and fostering strong and effective partnerships.

"Given the enthusiasm of the tour participants, we are looking forward to holding other tours to different parts of the north central catchment," Jill said.

For more information contact the North Central CMA on 5448 7124.

*Tour participants look at the North Central CMA river works on the Avoca River at Natte Yallock where rock structures have been built to halt the deepening of the river bed, which was affecting river health and habitat, and upstream infrastructure.*





# A history of direct

*Direct seeding underway at Woodside.*

*This is an extract of a talk Fergus Irving gave to the Yarram Yarram Catchments Network Annual Dinner earlier this year.*

Direct seeding has a long history in Victoria. The sugar gum plantations of the western district were direct seeded between 1870 and 1930. John Lang Currie (Elephant Currie) who owned Larra at Lismore and Mount Elephant at Derrinallum was the first to direct seed eucalypts by mouldboard ploughing then broadcasting the seed by hand.

The 1913 edition of *Victorian Agriculture*, after noting that our fathers rather despised the gum tree, had a chapter on direct seeding. It suggested windbreaks should be one chain wide and one sixteenth of the farm should be sown to trees.

An article in the November 1980 edition of *Landscape Australia* by John Clemens sparked renewed interest in direct seeding. The article was reprinted in a number of publications and widely circulated.

## **Seed collecting attracts police attention**

Jim and Elizabeth Bell were possibly the first people in the Yarram district to try direct seeding. The Bells had been propagating their own seedlings using seed which they had collected. Jim, while collecting seeds, was questioned by the local police when a nervous widow living in Station Street reported a suspicious character up a tree near the Yarram Railway Station.

In September 1982 the Bells contracted Richard Grice to direct seed two kilometres of windbreaks around their new property, Banyula, opposite the Yarram Golf Course. They used the Western Tree Seeder which had been developed by a Western district syndicate. Richard Weatherly later took over development of the seeder and it became the Eco Tree-Seeder.

On our property, Tramore, at Woodside we direct seeded shelterbelts in 1983 and

1985 by broadcasting seed on a well-cultivated seed bed. We were very encouraged by the results and were keen to do more.

A Gippsland syndicate was formed in 1986 to produce a lightweight direct seeding machine to be called the Gippsland Tree Seeder and to research and promote tree seeding.

We wanted a small, easily manoeuvred machine that could be pulled by a light tractor. Bob Macleod from Giffard had the machine operational within nine months. The parts were scrounged from old farm machinery and a Morris 1100 which had been dumped in the bush.

## **Tree seeder showdown**

In spring 1987 the machine was trialled on 11 properties. Some sites had very good tree establishment but the dry spring and competition from weeds led to very poor results on other sites.



# seeding

By Fergus Irving

At the Gippsland Landcare Conference, which was hosted by Woodside in 1992, we had a tree seeder showdown. We pitted the Gippsland Tree Seeder mkI and mkII against the Eco Tree-Seeder and a newcomer, the Hamilton Tree Seeder, which had been developed at the Pasture Research Institute in Hamilton. We had the four machines line abreast in a trial alongside Balloong Road. The machines all produced similarly good results.

The Gippsland Tree Seeder syndicate was wound up in 1993. Under Jim Lane's leadership the syndicate had achieved its aims of constructing a direct seeding machine and promoting the technique of direct seeding. Commercially manufactured direct seeders were by then readily available for hire and advice and assistance with direct seeding could be obtained through Greening Australia and the Landcare movement.

We have now direct seeded about 25 hectares of windbreak on our property, Tramore, mostly using the Gippsland Tree Seeder. In good seasons we quickly establish thick, natural looking bush

with a good variety of species. In dry years there may be poor germination and the wattles dominate and we sometimes then have to re-seed the following year.

As we learn more about our local trees and collecting seed, our windbreaks have increased in diversity. On quiet evenings we can sit in our kitchen and hear the koalas grunting away in the shelter belts we planted along Ballong Road 15 years ago.

## *Different techniques succeed*

Surprisingly not everyone has been seduced by the Gippsland Tree Seeder. The 1870s technology of mouldboard plough is still popular in heavy soil. Ian Nicol and Graeme MacLennan have tried it and the Flemings at Fish Creek have used it very effectively.

Gordon Graham at Flynn uses a delver to scalp the soil before broadcasting seed. He has had outstanding results. Bill Bodman used a delver along Hyland Way at Won Wron and has now grown a forest. David Boddy scratched the verge of Cascade Road with a set of discs, scattered on some seed and got magnificent results.

Over the last 15 years we have had a lot of seminars, field days, demonstrations and talks on direct seeding but the technique



*Fergus Irving.*

has not caught on. Direct seeding is cheaper and quicker than using tube stock and can easily produce a greater diversity of plants of local provenance, but so far the results are not as consistent for all soil types and in all seasons as those for tube stock.

The Landcare movement may have hindered the development of direct seeding and limited the extent of revegetation by its policy of subsidising the cost of tube stock used in revegetation projects.

We must question the subsidising of nurseries and using volunteers to plant those seedlings as the most effective use of our resources. If more of this money was spent assisting direct seeding projects I feel sure we would have revegetated more country with thicker, better adapted, more diverse plants of local provenance.

*A recent direct seeding project at Tramore. A field day was held to demonstrate direct seeding on a dry stream bed.*



# The philosophy

The lack of a shared responsibility amongst the Australian population for the management and use of water is a critical issue, according to one of Australia's leading wetland scientists and advocate for improving the quality and use of water, Professor David Mitchell.

David Mitchell, Adjunct Professor with Charles Sturt University's School of Environmental and Information Sciences at Thurgoona, NSW, believes that water needs a national perspective.

"Most concern is directed at managing rural water supplies, where there is the greatest demand. Yet, the urban population, with the largest number of users and the most cash wealthy, is not directly involved. The rural population seems to be carrying the burden of corrective change for the whole country yet it is much smaller and cash poor."

## ***Environmental levy needed***

To this end David Mitchell supports the concept of an environmental levy so everyone contributes to the ecological

health of Australia and that these funds should be administered by a special trust at a minimum bureaucratic cost.

"The ecological footprint, in Australia, has been estimated at seven hectares per person. In other words, a typical family of four needs 28 hectares to sustain its lifestyle.

"We need to spend money on the environment to save money rather than to make money. We need to spend money to stop the system worsening yet all we are doing is spending money to correct the errors of the past."

David Mitchell's paper, 'The Philosophy of Water – Water Is Life' presented at the 21st Commonwealth Agricultural Conference in Albury earlier this year, argues for an inclusive planning approach.

"The main difficulty for the management of Australian water resources is the largely unpredictable and hugely variable nature of the distribution of water in Australia over time and space, in terms of both quantity and quality," David Mitchell said.

## ***The ethics of water***

"Sustainable management of water is a complex matter that impacts profoundly on the welfare of all Australians, and of their environment, now and into the future.

"Moreover, all forms of life that are known to science require water for their continued existence and in a very real sense, therefore, water is life. And, if life is sacred, as many human cultures believe it to be, then water resources should be treated ethically, as well as economically and ecologically."

Most of the water extracted from natural systems is used for agricultural production. By 1996/97 annual water use had risen to 24,058 gigalitres or 1000 million litres (79% surface water, 21% groundwater), an increase of 65% from 1983/84. Most of this was due to a 76% increase in irrigation water and a 55% increase for domestic and industrial use. Also, huge amounts of water are used to produce export crops and products.

In 2001 for example, when Australian wheat exports totalled 16,406 kilotonnes (1000 tonnes), it can be calculated that 11,730 to 12,304 gigalitres of water contributed to its production. Rice exports between 1996 and 1999 averaged 601.5 kilotonnes per year. Water used to produce this rice is estimated at 932 gigalitres. As more water is used for agriculture, less is available for the environment. The ecological impact is considerable.

"Environmental costs will be most marked when water-hungry agricultural or forestry products, which are derived from non-native species, draw down water more rapidly than native vegetation in dry periods, thereby extending and exacerbating drought conditions," David Mitchell said.



*Professor David Mitchell says the challenge for water management is to control further growth in consumption and to provide a balance between water for the environment and for society.*



# of water

By Margrit Beemster



## ***Balancing water needs***

The challenges are to control further growth in consumption of water and to provide a balance between water for the environment and for society.

“The reasonable assumption that a long-term average value [rainfall] would represent the ‘normal’ condition has been shown to be seriously misleading, though it prevailed for many years and is still used as a basic point of reference by the general population,” David Mitchell said.

“In reality, rather than being normal, the mean value is a rarity.”

According to David Mitchell sophisticated modelling has helped develop a more realistic understanding of the highly variable nature of Australia’s water resources, but many misconceptions still linger among landholders.

“The problems presented by the unusually high variability of Australian water supplies calls for the development of a strategy based on variability being the normal condition, rather than a calculated average figure,” he said.

“Instead of developing plans for average water supplies, landholders should prepare contingency plans for a wide range of scenarios.”

First preferences for water allocations should be to agricultural production in dry years as the natural Australian environment was equipped to cope with these conditions.

For example, wetlands should be protected except in dry years when they could be grazed providing the wetland soils have dried sufficiently to prevent pugging.

This would require the removal of non-essential levee banks so that natural floodplain ecosystems are recharged regularly. This would also improve water quality.

“Farming practices should relate more closely to ecological processes rather than being based on converting Australian landscapes to suit practices that were developed in significantly different climates and conditions,” he said.

To prepare for future growth, David Mitchell suggested Australia should focus research funds on cost-effective means of desalinisation of sea water.

“The benefits of this for the whole of humankind far transcend any foreseeable benefits that would accrue from finding water on the planet Mars.”



# Ten years of Woody Yaloak

Kids were the focus at the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group's ten-year celebration. And appropriately so, this is a group committed to long-term community action.

More than 200 local primary students and 350 adults joined Environment Minister David Kemp in Pittong for the recent celebration.

It was a day for reflection, but also a day of action – the students painted a mural to commemorate the work of the group. Each student's drawing focused on a section of their local waterway.

When joined together the paintings created a 100-metre-long mural representing the Woody Yaloak River. The mural captures each student's vision of waterways for the future.

The students were entertained by the Connies, a performance troupe made up of former Melbourne tram conductors, who cited poetry and sang in the old-fashioned 'trammie' tradition. Dressed in uniforms that span the eras of tram fashion, the troupe produced tickets in the form of



*Environment Minister David Kemp (middle) joined sister and brother team Alice and Kevin Knight at the celebration. Alice and Kevin have been central to the success of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Project and their commitment and capacity to get things done has been an inspiration to others.*

collectable swap-cards promoting native fish in the Woody Yaloak region.

## ***A different approach***

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group was formed ten years ago by local farming families keen to tackle land degradation in the catchment caused by tree decline, soil erosion and rabbit infestation.

Through innovation and strong community spirit, the group has pushed

the boundaries of Landcare and is one of the few groups to tackle land degradation on a whole catchment basis.

The establishment of neighbourhood groups across the catchment has been instrumental in supporting local farmers to change the way they manage their land for future generations. It has also increased the social interaction between farmers and the sharing of ideas and skills resulting in a stronger community.

*More than 200 local children painted the river mural. The current chairman of the group watched this scene and reflected that ten years is a long time, and that the children painting the mural were all born after the project started.*





# action

The group was the first in Victoria to attract a major corporate sponsor in Alcoa World Alumina Australia. However, it was Alcoa's unique approach to funding (\$810,000 since 1990) that broke new ground in sponsorship support by providing no strings attached and allowing landholders to set their own priorities for the funds.

## *Building community capacity*

Cam Nicholson has been the group's project officer since the beginning. He has been instrumental in encouraging local landholders to have a go. As a result almost 70% of farmers in the catchment are involved in the project.

According to Cam, over the past decade the project has strengthened community capacity.

"We have seen individuals become more willing to share information about their farm situation and the successes and failures of various actions they have tried.

"Landholders have also grown to take on the challenges of natural resource management and appreciate the ways in which they live and farm within the catchment. For example, planting trees in strategic locations on the landscape, creating shelterbelts and aiding in sustaining biodiversity, not just along their driveway," Cam said.



*A Connie discusses native fish with local children.*

## *Recognition for effort*

Woody's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2003 the group won the Catchment category of the Victorian Landcare awards for outstanding achievements in the

sustainable management of Victoria's natural resources. They are now representing Victoria in the national awards later this year.

Interest about Woody's environmental achievements in farmer productivity has even spread as far as the United States. Jim Moseley, the Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture, visited the Woody catchment during early February to see first hand Australia's success story in sustainable Landcare management.

For further information on the Woody Yaloak Catchment Project contact Cam Nicholson on 5258 3860.



*Environment Minister David Kemp addresses the crowd at Pittong.*



# Julie Weatherhead's New Zealand

Julie Weatherhead, Facilitator for the Bunyip/Cardinia Catchment Landcare Network, spent part of last February in beautiful Dunedin at the Taieri Waterways Symposium.

Julie's invitation came from Gretchen Robinson from the Taieri Trust – a community-based organisation focused on the sustainable management of the Taieri River.

## ***Trust aims to restore Taieri Catchment***

The Taieri Trust evolved out of University of Otago community-orientated participatory research conducted in the late nineties. The Taieri Trust aims

to develop closer community-university ties in the Taieri Catchment, while encouraging environmental action on the ground.

One of the trust's key projects is the restoration of one of the Taieri tributaries – the Owhiro Stream. At the moment the stream is degraded, and migratory fish like the rare giant kokopu are having difficulty making their journey to the sea.

Landowners along the stream margin have agreed to fence areas of their farms and transform sections once grazed to the water's edge into models for what can be achieved within the lower Taieri Catchment using native vegetation.

## ***The economics of sustainability***

Julie Weatherhead was invited to the Dunedin symposium as the keynote speaker on the economics of sustainability. The purpose of her speech was to convince the local sheep and dairy farmers of the farm productivity benefits of fencing and planting waterways and shelterbelts with native species.

According to Julie, the Bunyip/Cardinia Catchment Landcare Network has found that the economic and ecological benefits of these works start to become apparent to landholders as soon as they are completed.

"A lot of research has been done in Victoria and NSW which supports our

*One of the streams that the Taieri Trust is hoping to regenerate with indigenous native plants.*





# adventure

By Carrie Tiffany



*Tussock in the hills around Dunedin.*

local experience. As well as the economic benefits there are also social benefits when a landholder is part of the local Landcare group and joins in the community activities of planting and weeding."

Julie presented some hard facts in her talk which demonstrated the productivity benefits from animal and pasture protection using indigenous native species.

"We are seeing similar results as the NSW and Victorian studies such as 30% more grass in protected pastures, 50% of clover pollinated by native insects, a 21% increase in animal liveweight, 31% more wool, a 50% reduction in lambing losses, improved fertility, foetal development, milk production, birth mortality is down and liveweight gain is increased, less use of pesticides and crops yields increasing up to 47%.

"There are also many environmental benefits including improved water quality from fencing waterways and wetlands, improved fish habitat, lower salinity levels, increased property values, increased

amenity of property and community capacity building," Julie said.

## ***Farmers keen to co-operate***

Julie was very impressed with the attitude of the people that she met and also with the dramatic tussock hill landscapes around Dunedin which are so different to our own.

"People were particularly interested to hear how we had gone about convincing farmers to fence off 20 metres from the waterways.

"There is a definite willingness on behalf of the New Zealand farmers that I met to co-operate in these sorts of waterway protection projects and they are really interested in the mechanics of how they work," Julie said.

Julie's speech was well received by farmers, Government bureaucrats and the Taieri Trust alike. The Trust now hopes to assist farmers with small numbers of protection works as limited funding for incentives is available at present.

Julie invited any interested New Zealand farmers to visit the Bunyip/Cardinia Catchment Landcare Project and see firsthand some of the 200 projects involving the fencing off of waterways, remnant vegetation protection and wetlands which make up 25% of properties in the catchment.

For further information contact Julie Weatherhead on 6942 8580.

*Julie Weatherhead standing at the top of the world's steepest street in Dunedin.*



# Grow West and the protect a critical

By Carrie Tiffany



*Graham Simpson in front of the long-awaited fence.*

When Graham and Marlene Simpson bought their Rowsley Valley property in 1962 they described it as being 'cheap and nasty' – but at the time it was the only way they could get into farming.

According to Graham the property was totally unimproved with 1700 acres divided into just three paddocks.

"It was a real cocktail of problems – rabbits, thistle and erosion – we had it all," Graham said.

But the property also had an area of Box Ironbark forest abutting the Werribee Gorge State Park. Graham noticed when he shut the area up every spring the understorey would start to regenerate, but as soon as he put the sheep back in they grazed it flat.

"You could really notice the difference in the areas the sheep walked through and those they left alone. It was clear to me that if the area could be locked up permanently it could be a terrific environmental asset."

## **Major improvements underway**

Graham got busy with improvements on the property which he turned into a successful mixed farming enterprise combining wool growing and cropping. His first major task was controlling soil erosion. Throughout the 1960s he worked closely with the Soil Conservation Authority and was rewarded for his efforts in 1978 winning the South Eastern Hanslow Cup.

Later on he became an active member of the Rowsley Valley Landcare Group working on rabbit and serrated tussock control programs. He is now keenly involved in Grow West.

Although busy with farming, raising children and improving the property it was always Graham's intention to fence the Box Ironbark forest out. However, in recent years, with income from the farm declining, it was starting to look as though his plan was getting further and further away.

"I used to watch the wethers chew the shoots back in the summer and think how long can this go on – surely one day this bush is going to die."

## **Three group bid succeeds**

The situation was turned around recently when three local groups came together and were successful in obtaining an Envirofund grant to complete the project.

Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee Inc, Parks Victoria and

*Photopoints of the fence which will be revisited in the years to come to show how the site is regenerating.*





# Simpsons local remnant

Grow West will work with the Simpsons to fence the 68-hectare Box Ironbark forest on the property and plant 2200 key understorey species and 300 overstorey species to enhance the site.

The works will protect the depleted Box Ironbark forest and other existing trees, shrubs and grassland plants, including rare species such as Fragrant Saltbush. It will also contribute to the conservation of habitat for threatened species like the Powerful Owl and Brush-tailed Phascogale.

Graham is really excited about the project and reports that the works are already underway.

"We are in the process of placing a covenant on the site with Trust for Nature to ensure its long-term protection. I think in the future people will see a property with a protected remnant such as this as a real asset."



## *One piece of the puzzle*

The Simpsons project is one piece of a larger landscape plan. Their remnant will form part of a biolink between the White Elephant Reserve and Werribee Gorge State Park.

According to Carmen Zerafa, Grow West Project Co-ordinator, this will then form part of an even larger landscape plan aimed at joining the Brisbane Ranges National Park, White Elephant Reserve, Lerderderg State Park and Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Carmen describes Grow West as a large-scale landscape change project that was born from the desire of the local community and stakeholders to improve the degraded landscapes of the area.

The Grow West project area covers a diversity of landscapes, from fertile alluvial river flats, rolling pastures, slight slopes to steep gorge country.

According to Carmen it is in this steep and harsh gorge country that landholders are desperately trying to control infestations of pest plants and animals that spread on to productive agricultural lands and into natural vegetation areas.

"Over time, Grow West hopes to rejuvenate the 50,000-hectare project area by revegetating at least 10,000 hectares with a massive mosaic of native vegetation, farm forestry plantations and other sustainable landuse and management options tailored to suit each site," Carmen said.

For further information contact Carmen Zerafa on 5367 2922.

*Bob Reid and Judy Douglas from Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee Inc are delighted to have been involved in the project.*



# Wimmera group says a facilitator is the

Broughton/Yanac VFF Landcare Vermin and Weed Control Group members are dedicated and passionate about what they do.

Not only have they attracted major funding for the past three years to control rabbits and weeds in their area, they have actually done the work.

And considering it's all voluntary and that it has to fit around farming, work and family commitments that's a pretty good effort.

So what is it that keeps the likes of President Roy Dickinson and members Brett Wheaton and Malcolm Jarred so enthusiastic? They joke that it's the meetings at Group Facilitator Joan Gordon's home where they get to sample her home cooking.

## ***Using grants to pay for administration and organisation***

"Sitting around Joan's log fire enjoying some homemade muffins is certainly an attraction, but actually we put our success down to using part of the grant money to

pay a facilitator to help with administration and organisation," Roy Dickinson says.

The group is aiming to rid the area of rabbits and weeds including Paterson's Curse, Horehound and Cape Tulip. It's a challenge considering that the best times to spray weeds are also the busiest times for farming. Then there's the job of co-ordinating equipment so that everyone gets a turn and meeting the funding requirements that have strict timelines on when money has to be spent.

*From left, Joan Gordon, Malcolm Jarred, Roy Dickinson and Brett Wheaton discuss their rabbit control program while inspecting their equipment.*





# key to success

By Melissa Pouliot



From left, Roy Dickinson, Glenn Dixon, Malcolm Jarred, Joan Gordon and Brett Wheaton relax in Joan's lounge room while planning the weed and rabbit control program.

"This is where our facilitator plays a big part in keeping the enthusiasm going," Brett Wheaton says.

"Joan rings us up to remind us and helps us co-ordinate the equipment so we can get it in the right location at the right time."

Brett says the group works well in a co-ordinated but informal manner.

"If you have a meeting style that everyone enjoys, people are more likely to come back and get involved," he says.

## Local decision-making

"Another reason our group works so well is because we've got local people making decisions for their own area."

The group recognises the challenges ahead for Landcare, such as keeping enthusiasm levels of volunteers high, focusing on a

broader range of activities that involve more people and strengthening links between Landcare and agriculture.

But this group is eager to move forward. Its strong advice to other groups is to put some funding towards a paid facilitator.

"It's a new concept and not everyone is keen to adopt it, but we highly recommend having someone to manage the paperwork so we can concentrate on getting the work done," Roy Dickinson says.

Broughton/Yanac Landcare Group is full swing into its warren ripping and spray program for the year, which attracted a \$16,435 Second Generation Landcare grant.

The Wimmera CMA distributes funds from Second Generation Landcare – a State Government funding program.



Landholders with active bush stone curlew nests are invited to make contact with researchers at Charles Sturt University.

## Have you seen this bird?

Do you have a bush stone curlew nesting in your paddock?

If so, two Charles Sturt University PhD research students, Andrew Carter and Elisa Tack, would like to hear from you. Andrew and Elisa have just started a three-year research project investigating the habitat and management requirements of this endangered species, and are looking to find out where curlews are persisting throughout Victoria.

While a survey in southern NSW by the Nature Conservation Working Group revealed about 100 birds, little is known of bird numbers in Victoria.

"We are wanting to hear from landholders about as many active curlew nests as possible, to monitor breeding success over the next three years," Andrew said.

"We know there are a few birds around Benalla and Yarrawonga but there doesn't seem to be a huge breeding rate because of predation by foxes and cats.

"Almost all remaining curlews are on private land and without the co-operation of landowners the species could be in strife."

Andrew said the sites identified under the survey would be kept confidential.

The bush stone curlew is a shy, ground dwelling bird, about 60cm tall with long, gangly legs. It makes a distinctive wailing cry at night that has been described as the sound of a woman being murdered.

Landholders can contact Andrew Carter on (02) 6051 9623 or by e-mail on [acarter@csu.edu.au](mailto:acarter@csu.edu.au)



# In brief

*Subscribe to Koala Science News for the latest news in koala research.*

## **Koala Science News**

The Australian Koala Foundation is getting ready to launch its first issue of *Koala Science News*, a free e-mail update that brings the latest news in koala research to land managers, planners, bush regenerators, conservationists, students, policy-makers and koala supporters in Australia and around the world.

The first issue will tackle some of the broader issues affecting remnant eucalypt woodland, the status of diminishing koala

populations and the koala's emerging role as a flagship for conserving Australia's bushland fauna and flora.

*Koala Science News* is an initiative of the Australian Koala Foundation. To subscribe, send an e-mail to [akf@savethekoala.com](mailto:akf@savethekoala.com) with subscribe koala science news in the header.

## **Woody online**

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group now has a website which details the group's history, its achievements over the

past decade, as well as news about upcoming events.

The website provides fast and easy access to best practice examples of successful productive catchment management.

Some of the tools that the group has developed also feature. *Landscapes for the Future*, a software package using geographic information system technology to help plan Landcare works, is well worth a browse.

The website address is [www.woodyyaloak.com.au](http://www.woodyyaloak.com.au)



# In brief

## **RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2004**

Marilyn Lanyon from Boort is the Victorian State winner of the RIRDC Rural Women's Award for 2004. This national award scheme aims to support women who have a strong, positive vision for the future of agricultural production, resource management or their industries.

Marilyn, in family partnership, has been growing processing tomatoes on an irrigation farm for over 25 years.

After returning from a Women in Horticulture South-East Asia Market visit in 2001, Marilyn decided to turn a serious supply situation into a value-adding opportunity and new business venture in the commercial production of 'Simply Green Tomatoes'.

Marilyn's vision is for the women and men of the processing tomato industry to work together to remain viable and seek value-adding opportunities so their future is not dependent on multinational companies.

## **Have your say on the ABC**

ABC Radio National's program, *Bush Telegraph*, is looking to hear from people aged between 8 and 108 years, who are living in regional or rural parts of Australia who want to have their say on ABC Radio.

If you're interested, you will be contributing to *Bush Telegraph's* 'Country Viewpoint' segment. This involves writing a 400-word script about anything to do with living in a regional area.

The piece needs to be written so that it will sound natural when recorded.

For further information contact Tara Vickers on 9626 1261 or e-mail [vickers.tara@abc.net.au](mailto:vickers.tara@abc.net.au)



*The Victorian State finalists in the RIRDC Rural Women's Award. Back L-R: Marilyn Lanyon, Diane Robinson, Dianna Malcolm. Front L-R: Tanya McDonald, Thelma Hutchinson (standing a little behind Tanya), Christina Carraturo, Donna Meola and Bev Fisher.*

## **The State of Australia's Birds**

The 2003 report on the State of Australia's Birds has now been published.

The favourable news is that a concerted effort by dedicated individuals, recovery teams, landholders and governments has improved the prospects for several threatened species and that the conservation of birds can be compatible with human landuses like sustainable farming.

The unfavourable news is that the implementation of recovery plans is poorly supported by governments and that the populations of several common and widespread woodland birds of the wheat-sheep belt continue to decline.

According to the report there is strong circumstantial evidence that species richness is reduced where native vegetation clearance is continuing.

This detailed report makes interesting reading and would be useful to quote in funding applications for biodiversity-type projects.

The report is available on the Department of the Environment & Heritage website at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/birds-03/index.html>

## **Salinity Solutions Conference**

Salinity researchers from across Australia will converge on Bendigo in early August for a major salinity conference.

Salinity Solutions is being convened by the CRC for the Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity and the Victorian Departments of DPI and DSE. The theme of the conference has been chosen to reflect the important partnership between science and the community in providing appropriate solutions to address dryland salinity in Australia.

A variety of speakers who are actively engaged in salinity research will talk on the social, environmental and agronomic problems salinity is causing.

For further information visit the conference website at [www.cdesign.com.au/salinity2004](http://www.cdesign.com.au/salinity2004)



# The Lloyds mend erosion and protect

Stuart Mill landholders Tony and Glenda Lloyd are determined to do their bit to tackle the soil erosion that threatens their farm and waterways. They want to restore the health of their property and the health of the landscape around them.

Stuart Mill is 25 kilometres from St Arnaud. It is just outside the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality area of Carapooee – however, it is one of the North Central CMA's targeted areas for degraded waterways. It also has a very active Landcare group.

The Racecourse Creek rises in a catchment on the Lloyds property and flows downstream into the Strathfillan Creek and on to the Avoca River, where it contributes both salt and sediment.

## *Severe erosion worsens*

Poor subsoils and increased runoff caused by the removal of perennial vegetation and hard setting soils make the land in and around the creek prone to severe erosion. This became a major concern of the Lloyds and in the early 1990s they began searching for a solution.

The initial advice was to create a new creek path to allow the natural waterway to rehabilitate – an action that was to have devastating results. In just 12 months, the artificial creek path had eroded worse than the original. The erosion continued at a rate of about 20 metres a year.

Obviously, a better solution needed to be found.

In 2002, through their involvement in the Stuart Mill Landcare Group and the group's partnership with the North Central CMA, the Lloyds received support through the North Central CMA Waterways Works Program, the Australian Government Envirofund and the Victorian Government's Second Generation Landcare Grants to undertake work on the creek.

Several erosion control structures were built, banks were battered, the creekline was fenced to control stock then revegetated with indigenous trees and the adjacent slopes were sown down with grasses.

"There's been a lot of work done," Tony said.

"We've done a bit over the years, but this has been particularly good. There was a real risk that the erosion would keep on cutting paddocks in half and taking a lot of ground out of production."

The Lloyds were so pleased with the work of the North Central CMA that they sent a letter of appreciation to Terry Stevens,



*Tony and Glenda Lloyd alongside Racecourse Creek – the rocks have been placed in the creek to halt erosion.*





# water quality

By Sandra Volk

*Severe erosion on the creek with works on the rock chute underway.*

Waterways Works Supervisor, and his team in Charlton.

## ***River health protection***

According to the Lloyds, the project will deliver multiple benefits to the environment and their farm productivity. For example, the threat of erosion and the amount of sediment transported into the Avoca River will be greatly reduced, with a positive effect on river health and land protection.

Revegetation will enhance biodiversity, create corridors in the landscape, and provide shelter for stock. Fencing will protect the creek from unrestricted stock access but allow the Lloyds to manage the creekline more effectively.

In addition, it will make the farm much more attractive and pleasant – a benefit which you can't put a price on.

The erosion control works on the Lloyds projects are ongoing, enabled through the support of State and Australian Government funding sources and Landcare.

The project has also required a considerable commitment from the Lloyds, who have provided labour for fencing, battering and revegetation. They also have spent money establishing perennial pastures on land above the creek.

## ***A showcase project***

According to Terry Stevens, North Central CMA Works Co-ordinator, the

project has showcased what can be done to address the severe erosion control problems in this region.

“We plan to continue with this work both here at the Lloyds and with other forward-thinking farmers in the region. However, we need an active, involved community. It can be a win-win situation in terms of environmental outcomes, and the health and productivity of a property,” Terry said.

Tony and Glenda Lloyd agree. They are encouraging other farmers to work with the North Central CMA and their local Landcare group so that they are able to take advantage of every opportunity to improve their land management.

For further information contact the North Central CMA on 5448 7124.

# Listening to the stories of Landcare

By Sandra Volk



*The Landcare workshop participants surround a map of the north central catchment region.*

The North Central CMA has been listening to stories from the community to find out what makes Landcare work and how we can build upon its strengths for the future.

The findings will form part of a strategy being developed to provide a foundation for Landcare support over the next five years.

This innovative approach, which has drawn the attention of policymakers nationwide, has seen over 140 stories collected from across the region.

The stories follow the themes of persistence, learning, achieving on ground works, bringing communities together and creating a sense of place.

At a workshop in Bendigo during April Landcare representatives from all over the region joined together with representatives from the North Central CMA, DPI and local government to build a vision for Landcare and to discuss how to develop its strengths and to dream about its future.

Priority areas for future development in Landcare include raising awareness of Landcare achievements, involving Landcare and its ethic in the education curriculum, passing the environmental cost of primary produce on to consumers, attracting industry support for environmental projects, encouraging people to take personal responsibility for

the environment and repairing native landscapes throughout the region.

According to Clare Claydon, North Central Regional Landcare Co-ordinator, the workshop allowed participants to dream about what they could do to make Landcare increasingly effective, inclusive, passionate and proud.

"One aspiration was to have an environment report on the television news, sandwiched between the stock market report and sport. That would be quite an achievement," she said.

The Landcare Support Strategy will be launched in spring 2004. For further information contact Clare Claydon on 5440 1820.



# Old Land, New Landscapes



By Carrie Tiffany

*"From the highway, I could see large areas of bushland draped over the ridges and low hills rising above the plains – grey-green ramparts shadowing the monoculture crops below. It didn't seem at all impossible to imagine more Landcare groups discovering the value of these areas, planning their ecological reintegration with stock routes or roads, or dreaming of returning locally extinct species to them."*

Occasionally a book comes along that has the potential to change the way people think. Chris Williams recently published story of farmers, conservation and the Landcare movement should be essential reading for those involved in natural resource management.

*Old Land, New Landscapes* is a case-study of the Genaren Landcare Group in central-western NSW, with particular emphasis on the Sutherland family who create a wildlife sanctuary on their farm and work to reintroduce endangered mammal species.

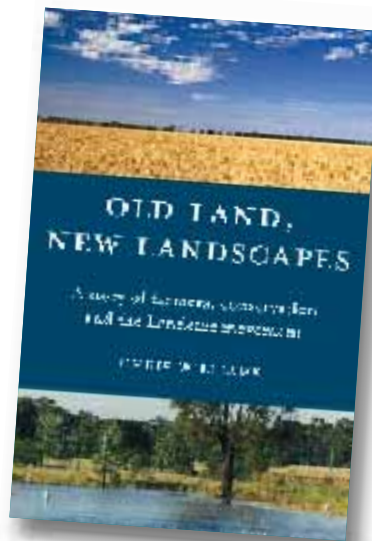
Chris Williams is a natural resource management practitioner (currently the Conservation Manager with Trust for Nature in Victoria) who understands that managing landscapes is, in the first instance, about managing people. *Old Land, New Landscapes* owes as much to the discipline of anthropology as the environmental and agricultural sciences.

Williams has an engaging and highly readable style. He paints the broader picture of the landscape while focusing on the history and motivation of individuals. We learn, for example, that one of the Genaren landholders became a revegetation zealot out of guilt – he was making up to his wife for having brought her to such a 'God-forsaken' place 20 years before.

This isn't a book offering easy solutions or even a happy ending but it is a compelling

read. As Chris gets to know the Sutherlands and the other farm families he shares their frustrations and conflicts. *Old Land, New Landscapes* is a fascinating story of a community and of a landscape.

*Old Land, New Landscapes* by Chris Williams is published by Melbourne University Press and sells for \$34.95 at all good bookshops.



*Mike and Kylie Sutherland  
with their sons James and Duncan  
amongst native grasses on Genaren.*



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