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L *Victorian* Landcare

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



Bat facts
uncovered

Farm forestry with
greenhouse benefits

5 steps to
project success

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Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management is published for the Victorian Landcare community by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Catchment Management Council.



Balancing Birches Creek

The North Central CMA has recently completed an environmental flow assessment of Birches Creek and is offering incentives for landholders along the study area to remove willows, to revegetate with indigenous plants and to control erosion.

Project manager Catherine Fox said that rivers in north-central Victoria perform a delicate balancing act.

“They provide water for our communities’ needs, and play a vital role in maintaining the natural water cycle in the environment.”

Alterations to the natural flow of rivers since European settlement have had many direct and indirect impacts on native plants and animals in Victorian river systems and in the Birches Creek system.

“As a result of this study we have developed recommendations for an optimum flow pattern in the system to mimic the natural flow of the river, which will lead to healthier waterways,” she said.

“Environmental flows are intended to help keep our rivers healthy. This study will help us to determine how best to use environmental water to ensure the system continues to survive and thrive.”

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

Landholders are being offered incentives to help improve Birches Creek after a recent environmental flow assessment.



From the editors

This is our first issue for 2006 and we have some great Landcare reading for you.

Two stories from the thriving Victorian Landcare Network show the great work of this group. A team of Landcarers is currently working on an international Landcare project in a remote community in southern Sri Lanka.

This project will see the construction of basic eco-tourism facilities to help a community hit by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. We hope to feature stories from team members when they return.

Network members were also busy last year organising Australia's first greenhouse neutral Landcare conference. Organisers worked to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced in the running of the conference and to offset those that were unavoidable.

The conference produced 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide (including the travel of participants). The same amount was offset by purchasing carbon credits from a Central Victorian initiative of the



Carbon Neutral! Attendees at Australia's first greenhouse neutral Landcare conference last year made tours on horseback. A great opportunity to network and observe land management issues such as weed invasion.

Bendigo Bank which is setting up a voluntary market for carbon trading in biodiversity and salinity revegetation projects.

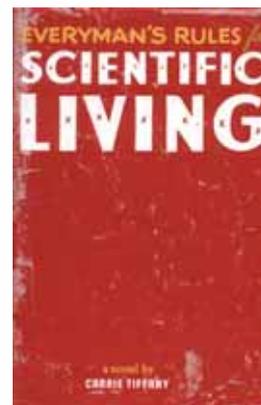
See page 7 for more details of this innovative idea.

Carrie Tiffany and Teresa Oppy

Letters

We are always interested in hearing from our readers. If you have a story, a letter, a comment or a suggestion please don't hesitate to get in touch. A book prize is presented to the best letter published in each issue of the magazine.

The prize for the best letter for the last issue is still unclaimed. So a copy of Carrie Tiffany's novel, *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living*, awaits the writer of the best letter for the next issue. Please send your letters to Carrie Tiffany (address on page 2). Letters must include a name, address and telephone number and be less than 300 words. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



From the DSE Landcare Team

Congratulations for 20 years of Landcare achievements! We look forward to celebrating with you at the International Landcare Conference – 'Landscapes, Lifestyles, Livelihoods', in Melbourne, 8-10 October 2006. For more details of the Conference or to express your interest, please contact the Conference Organisers on 03 9645 6311 or log on to the Conference website: www.international.landcareconference2006.com.au

All of the Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) have concluded their selection processes for awarding Second Generation Landcare Grants to Landcare groups and other community groups. Look out for announcements in your area, and thank you for all of your hard work in submitting and undertaking projects. The State's Second Generation Landcare Grants are available through CMA's for community-based integrated natural resource management projects.

A Mid-term Review of the State

Government Initiative – Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare is near completion. A significant component of this initiative is the establishment of the 10 Regional Landcare Co-ordinators based in the CMAs and the Statewide Landcare Co-ordinator based in DSE. The next edition of this magazine will highlight the achievements to date and directions for the future.

Jane Liefman, David Lucas, Probarti Milton and Teresa Oppy

Around News from

12 National Landcare Program projects valued at almost \$1 million.

Interest in Soil Health and production programs continues to build, with over 90 people attending Soil Health field days last November.

For further information contact Tom Croft on (02) 6043 7600.

Corangamite

A DVD showcasing the tremendous work of the Landcare community over the past 20 years will be launched at the CMA recognition dinner to be held in late May. The dinner will celebrate the achievements of the regional community and recognize the current term of the CMA Board.

The anniversary of 20 years of Landcare will culminate at the Regional Landcare Forum with the Landcare community to discuss current regional successes and challenges and to participate in a mid-term review of the Regional Landcare Support Strategy.

For more information contact Polly Hall on 5232 9100.

East Gippsland

Seven successful community groups and individual landholder projects will receive around \$145,000 as part of Envirofund drought round 7. Projects include relocating stock watering points away from streams, erosion control measures and fencing of waterways.

Round 8 will open for applications in February 2006. For help in developing your project application contact Kirsty Hannan on 5152 0600. Round 8 will focus on traditional works including revegetation, fencing of waterways and restoring wetlands, etc.

The third successive Green Corp Program,



Ray Marks planting at the Wotojobaluk Ranch in the Wimmera. Severe weed and rabbit infestations have been removed and more than 1500 native plants established on the reserve which is included in the recently announced Native Title Determination.

West Gippsland

Landcare continues to protect and enhance biodiversity, improve water quality and raise productivity across the region. Groups are actively involved in skill development, training and action planning. Story collection and Landcare group health scales are progressing well and will assist in more accurately depicting Landcare across our region.

The GippsLandcare project continues and funding is secure until June 2007. Project approvals for 2006 are close to 200 (worth \$400K) and submissions are still being received.

GippsLandcare's Smarter Planning, Smarter Action land management course begins in February through to October at venues in Warragul, Traralgon, Maffra, Yarram, Korumburra and Foster.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 5662 4555.

Port Phillip and Westernport

The Port Phillip and Westernport Landcare support strategy is reaching the end of its life and steps for reviewing its effectiveness and renewing it for the future are now underway.

Four new Landcare groups have formed recently.

The work of a university student over the holidays has accelerated the production of Environment Condition Reports for groups. Thirty-two groups now have reports. The CMA is in the process of GIS mapping the current boundaries of all Landcare groups in the region. This is now approximately 80% complete.

We bid farewell to Daley Walker who made a major contribution to the strategic support of Landcare in the Westernport and Dandenong region. We welcome Sarah Canham as her replacement.

For more information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

North East

Five Landcare groups in the region have recognised 170 years of active service to the groups by 13 people. Presentations were made at local celebrations as part of the groups' Annual General Meetings.

The CMA reported to the community on the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy at a series of forums held across the region last October. Following the reporting session, themed tables enabled community members to directly speak to CMA and partner agency representatives on specific issues.

North East Landcare groups, networks and industry groups gained funding for

the State

the Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

East Gippsland Biodiversity and Nyerimilang Cultural Protection Project, is underway. If Landcare groups in the Bairnsdale area require additional labour assistance for on-ground projects, please contact Tracey at the East Gippsland Landcare Network on 5152 0600.

The East Gippsland Field Days will be held on 28th and 29th April 2006.

For further information contact Darren Williams on 5152 0600.

Wimmera

The Wimmera Landcare Team has farewelled Nathan MacDonald, Felicity Brown and Justine Watt recently so expect to see a few new faces on the team soon.

The 2005 Wimmera Landcare Community Support Strategy has been endorsed by the CMA Board. The Strategy reflects community views and aspirations for Landcare and provides direction and comment from all key Landcare partners and participants.

Project Platypus has established a new Landcare Resource Centre in Stawell. The centre is available to Landcare groups for meetings, workshops, presentations and displays. Contact Project Platypus on 5358 4410.

Wimmera Landcare Week (April 1-7) will focus on events and activities that reflect and acknowledge the many Landcare achievements since its launch in 1986. Landcare groups and members have been asked to dig out old project information, photographs, newspaper articles, newsletters and posters.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

North Central

Macedon Ranges Shire Council has

commissioned a project to better identify and understand the natural resource management needs of non-resident landowners in the region.

Increasing the participation of absentee landholders in natural resource management will have benefits for the wider community. Landcare co-ordinators from the Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges Shire have found contacting absentee landholders difficult and any information that may help in reaching them will be beneficial.

For more information contact Ashley Beechey on 5440 1814.

Goulburn Broken

Local primary and secondary school students recently contributed to Victorian threatened species records as part of Mission Phascogale. The project saw 24 students undertake an eight-day camp in a remote corner of Lake Eildon National Park, helping DSE monitor local threatened flora and fauna populations.

Some of the trip highlights included the discovery of an extensive unknown colony of leafy greenhood orchids, plus special ceremonies, walks and talks shared with local Taungurong elders.

The Engaging Real Estate Industry in NRM Project is now online. Aimed at raising real estate agent awareness of property conservation values and promoting conservation incentives, the website features the new real estate agents' manual, *A Good Environment Sells*. Go to www.conservationbroker.net.au

For more information contact Katie Brown on 5797 2001.

Mallee

As Landcare in the Mallee enters 2006, we aim to continue the support for 27

groups across six networks.

The co-ordinators support to groups has been exceptional over the past 12 months. Higher levels of project planning and resourcing have been achieved in this time. Funding has been secured for the next 12 months to support nine Landcare co-ordinators in the Mallee.

For more information contact Brendon Thomas on 5051 4377.

Glenelg Hopkins

The Landcare team has been busy developing a new Landcare Support Strategy in conjunction with the community. Several workshops have been held with valuable community input and two surveys have been distributed and their responses collated.

The region's multi award winning Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group celebrated 10 years of active Landcare participation. The group has undertaken projects such as revegetating The Flume, weed and fox control work at Middle Island penguin colony, weed control and revegetation along waterways and at wetland sites.

The Glenthompson Catchment Group has celebrated 20 years of Landcare. The group has administered funding of over \$600,000 over the last 13 years, successfully targeting the fragmentation and decline of native indigenous vegetation, salinity, erosion and biodiversity.

For further information contact Shelley Lipscombe on 5571 2526.

Victoria's 10 Regional Landcare Co-ordinators are funded through Victoria's Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare, administered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

10-year triumph for Warrnambool Coastcare



By Keith Davis



In October last year the Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group celebrated 10 years of active Landcare work. The group began in 1995 as the Warrnambool City Landcare Group but changed their name to better reflect the current focus of restoration projects on public lands around the coastal fringe of Warrnambool.

Since 2002, the group has planted more than 16,000 indigenous trees, shrubs and groundcover plants as part of their ongoing major project to revegetate The Flume, a popular local surfing beach. The project is linked with the annual National Tree Day program with hundreds of community volunteers turning out to help group members revegetate the area in successive years.

Don McTaggart has led the group with great enthusiasm for the last four years. There are now around 100 members who are encouraged to participate in project planning and education activities. The group has created partnerships with various authorities and community groups and has a working relationship with the Warrnambool City Council, DSE, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, South West TAFE and the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust.

Some of the group's projects include weed and fox control works at the Middle Island Little Penguin colony, revegetation along sections of the Lower Merri River, South Warrnambool wetlands and Russell's Creek, and removing weeds and rubbish along coastal Crown lands during



Don McTaggart (left) and Frank Wiggins receiving the National Keep Australia Beautiful Victorian Clean Beach Challenge Community Action Award, watched by Warrnambool Mayor Glenys Philpot.

annual Clean Up Australia Days. A new project is underway to help control bridal creeper invasions in sensitive native dune vegetation.

A recent Envirofund project will establish a raised viewing platform and solid pathway to control visitor traffic on an eroded section of sensitive dunes, combined with revegetation to protect and restore this area of public land.

The worthy efforts of the group's decade of Landcare have been recognised by successive awards during 2005, including the Keep Australia Beautiful Victorian Clean Beach Challenge Community Action and Natural Heritage Awards, the National Clean Beach Challenge Community Action Award, and the Victorian Landcare Natural Heritage Trust Coastcare Community Award.

Congratulations go to the group on achieving 10 years of outstanding voluntary Landcare in our regional community. This group clearly demonstrates the strength of people working together to achieve goals they could not realise as individuals.

Some of Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Group's awards on show at the 10th anniversary celebration.



Australia's first greenhouse neutral Landcare conference



The first ever Australian greenhouse neutral Landcare conference was held in Hepburn Springs last year at the Victorian Landcare Network (VLN) Annual Forum. The focus of the VLN forum was greenhouse and the organisers decided to put theory into practice.

The conference was organised to initially try to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced, then to measure the actual emissions with the aim of purchasing carbon to offset those emissions.

Matt Stephenson, President of the VLN, said delegates were encouraged to be greenhouse conscious and to consider how they would get to the conference.

"We then ensured that all participants informed us of their travel methods to calculate the resulting CO₂ produced. The 95 participants drove an astonishing 22,000 kilometres and flew 14,800 kilometres, which resulted in over 20 tonnes of CO₂ release.

"The electricity and gas consumption of the conference venue was calculated to have released a further 2 tonnes. In total the 2005 VLN conference produced 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide."

To offset the 22 tonnes the VLN is purchasing carbon credits from a Central Victorian initiative of the Bendigo Bank which is setting up a voluntary market for carbon trading in biodiversity and salinity revegetation projects.

Matt Stephenson explained that currently carbon credits can be purchased for about \$US10 per tonne in Europe.

"Although the cost for carbon per tonne hasn't been finalised in this Victorian market, it is calculated that the total cost of offsetting the carbon pollution of the conference will be less than \$500 – a pleasant surprise for conference organisers," he said.

The conference included sessions on carbon brokering and the launch of a new land manager's guide for calculating the economic benefits of revegetation for carbon trading. *Growing Trees for Carbon and Conservation: A Toolkit for Landholders and Purchasers* was produced by the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and the North Central CMA.

Using the *Growing Trees for Carbon and Conservation Toolkit* a one hectare area of revegetation in Central Victoria could store about 5 tonnes of CO₂ each year, reaching a maximum store of 360 tonnes after 100 years. Given that it might cost about \$1700 per hectare to revegetate this is a very cost effective way of offsetting carbon emissions, and has the added benefit of assisting in salinity control and biodiversity preservation.

Climate change from greenhouse gas emissions by human activity is now well established, with predictions that agriculture in south-eastern Australia will be a major loser from the increases in



A forester explains the complex nature of forest management in the Wombat State Forest near Daylesford to participants at the forum.

drought frequency and intensity, decreases in rainfall, increases in evaporation and increases in intensity of storms, floods and bushfires.

The agricultural sector is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gas in Australia, contributing 18% of all of Australia's emissions, and climate change from greenhouse gas emissions will dramatically affect the way in which farming and Landcare evolves in Australia.

For further information contact Dean Bridgfoot on 5471 1736.

SIR award for high achiever



Unassuming Landcarer Craig Tuhan of the Girgarre Stanhope Landcare Group is the winner of the 2005 Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR) Landcare Award.

Craig's involvement with Landcare began in 1993 when he joined the Girgarre Stanhope Landcare Group. Craig accepted the role of Secretary for the group almost immediately – a position he still holds today. He has also previously been President of the group.

Craig has made countless field trips to the evaporation basin with children and teachers from Stanhope Primary School, educating the students about salinity and irrigation practices. He has organised many tree planting days and has prepared and watered the sites with his own equipment on numerous occasions. He was also part of a team that planted a corridor of vegetation between Stanhope and Rushworth.

For the past four years Craig has sat on the Campaspe Shire Landcare Network Steering Committee and been a strong supporter of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network where he has held different roles on the executive. He has also worked on the community monitoring committee, group project support committee and pest plant and animals committee for the network.

As a member of the Local Area Planning Project Management Committee, Craig was involved in the development of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Local Area Planning projects for over four years. He is now the Chair of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Local Area Planning Implementation group.

Craig has also played an important role in the successful running of the annual Goulburn Murray Landcare Network bus



Craig Tuhan with his Shepparton Irrigation Region Landcare Award for 2005.

trips for the past five years. The bus trips are a highlight for around 40 Landcarers every year.

He is active in attending Landcare forums and conferences to share his knowledge and meet other like-minded Landcarers. He has attended State Landcare Forums in Ballarat and Bendigo in previous years as

well as National Landcare Conferences in Adelaide in 1998 and Darwin in 2003.

Ann Bell, current President of the Girgarre Stanhope Landcare Group, says Craig is a quiet achiever and is always there.

“With nearly sixteen years of voluntary service in his local community, Craig Tuhan is truly a dedicated Landcarer.”

Oz Landcarers head for Sri Lanka

A team of twelve Australians is currently in Sri Lanka as part of the Victorian Landcare Network's International Landcare Pilot Program. Landcare members and NRM professionals from across Australia are volunteering their time to support a remote southern Sri Lankan community to develop an eco-tourism venture based on the local coastal and lagoon systems.

One of the participants, Wimmera farmer David Tepper, says he volunteered because he feels strongly about what is happening to the planet.

"This is an opportunity and a challenge to give something back, and also to do something for somebody less fortunate than ourselves," he said.

During the two-week visit the team will

assist the community to construct basic facilities including boat landing jetties, bird hides, picnic facilities and children's play equipment to encourage protection and appreciation of the natural assets of the area.

The Australians will also help community members to practise their hospitality, guiding and interpretation skills on Western tourists.

The network is currently in discussions with potential long-term partners to build on the pilot program model with the view of providing ongoing linkages with the Sri Lankan project community as well as extending opportunities for Landcare programs across the globe.

The project is proudly supported by



Gunguli, Ganeshi and Sureshi's parents are setting up a wildlife camping ground and ecotours venture to create a more sustainable income source.

The Myer Foundation, Landcare Australia Limited, West Gippsland CMA and the Loch Village Community in Gippsland. Individual team members are providing their own funding and seeking local support.

For further information contact the Victorian Landcare Network at Victoria@landcare.net

The twelve Australian Landcare volunteers. Front row (left to right), David Tepper (Vic), Emma Bennett (Vic), John Yalden (Vic), Kate Steel (Qld), Robyn Cox (SA). Back row, Ro McFarlane (NSW), Lizzie Bickmore (Vic), Glen Merrick (Vic), Amanda Malone (WA), Denna Kingdom (Tas), Matt Stephenson (Vic), Jason MacKay (WA).





Trafalgar Primary School students transporting the baton through the catchment.

In b

Guildford and Upper Loddon Landcare Group showed the Council outcomes of the Jim Crow Creek restoration project, undertaken in partnership with the North Central CMA.

The Group's final stop was at Bald Hill. This site is owned and managed by the Macedon Ranges Shire Council with the assistance of the Pipers Creek Landcare Group. The traditional owners of this area, the Dja Dja Wurrung/ Jaara people, have aspirations of a joint management agreement with the Macedon Ranges Shire and Pipers Creek Landcare Group.

The reserve contains high quality native vegetation with scar trees and other Koori cultural heritage assets. Woody weed invasion poses a major threat to the values of the reserve, and the Landcare Group has been addressing this issue.

A Vision Splendid

Published by Greening Australia, this inspiring new book, *A Vision Splendid: Dreams, inspirations and experiences of farm forestry in Australian landscapes*, presents fascinating first-hand accounts of eight Australian farmers who are having a go at something different.

This unique compilation glimpses the journeys taken by these remarkable farmers and their families as they strive towards their own visions of sustainable farming and country living.

A Vision Splendid is available from Greening Australia on (02) 6281 8585 for \$22.

Yarram Yarram Envirofest a hit for young Landcarers

The first Yarram Yarram Catchments Network Envirofest saw the local park and theatre buzzing with interest and activity last September. The one-day environmental expo was specially

Our lakes are precious

An impressive 2500 students from 85 schools took part in the Gippsland Lakes Relay last year.

Students, teachers, parents and other community members took samples from rivers across Gippsland and tested them for salinity, temperature and turbidity; before adding the sample to a special baton.

The students learnt the threats and issues impacting on the Gippsland Lakes and discussed ways to address them. The slogan for the relay was, 'Our lakes are precious – pass them on.'

Samples were collected during the relay from the Latrobe, Thomson, Macalister, Avon, Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers and were ceremoniously poured into the Gippsland Lakes at Lakes Entrance.

"The relay showed that communities are linked to the catchment and they all have an impact on our waterways and lakes," said Becky Van Der Heyden, the Gippsland Lakes Relay Project Officer.

Landcare Council visits North Central

North Central Victoria's innovative Landcare program was showcased last May, with members of the Australian Landcare Council visiting the region to gain an understanding of local issues and

to view on-ground works undertaken by local Landcare groups.

The Australian Landcare Council provides advice and policy recommendations concerning Landcare and natural resource management to the Australian Government. It comprises community Landcare members from each of the States and territories, who are also representatives of local government, the National Farmers Federation, Australian Conservation Foundation, Greening Australia, the indigenous community and Government departments.

The Council's three-day tour included a visit by the Victorian Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, who attended the Council's meeting in Bendigo.

This was followed by a bus tour of the region hosted by the North Central CMA.

The group visited the Sutton Grange property of Jock MacRae, who is a member of the Sutton Grange Landcare Group. This group is made up largely of primary producers who have been trialling aspects of Landcare, often implementing innovative solutions.

In protecting remnant vegetation and waterways, the Group has used a variety of rehabilitation techniques and fencing types, which impressed members of the Landcare Council.

At Guildford, Maurie Dynon from the

rief

designed for young people in the Yarram Yarram Catchments Network area.

In 2002 the network identified the need to raise awareness and knowledge of natural resource management in the youth of the Yarram community. Envirofest was the culmination of that idea.

A committee of volunteers from the community and schools worked with network staff to organise the event. Funding from Coast Action/Coast Care and the West Gippsland CMA covered the cost of workshops and buses to bring the students from the communities of Welshpool, Woodside, Longford, Gormandale and Devon North into Yarram.

The event was immensely popular, with over 650 students from eight primary schools attending. The students attended workshops on wetland restoration, salinity, water quality, streamside protection, indigenous culture, biodiversity and the role of Landcare in the community.

Envirofest presenters came from the Gould League, DPI Fisheries, Greenpeace, CoastCare, the Connies, East Gippsland TAFE, Toolangi Forest Education, Waterwatch, the Young Spirits dance group, Landcare staff and volunteers. Serious messages were passed on as

Forest education provided Envirofest participants close encounters with native animals.



Students paint a mural and think about the different components of a landscape.

children touched native animals, acted out the hydrological cycle, painted murals and played environmental games.

With an overwhelming positive response from the teachers, students and presenters, the decision was made to run another Envirofest in three years' time. In the meantime, our junior Landcarers will be kept busy with hands-on activities such as planting, weed management, seed collecting and gardening, reinforcing the message of looking after the environment.

For further information contact Jenny Wolswinkel on 5183 9148.

Corangamite strategy supports the human element

The human element in natural resource management will be boosted in the Corangamite region with the release of the Corangamite Landcare Support Strategy last November.

Corangamite CMA Chairman Peter Greig said the strategy was an operational blueprint for the 150 environmental groups in the Corangamite region.

"It will assist communities and groups to gain knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve successful outcomes in their local areas.

"Additionally, it will focus people on overcoming barriers to social change and allow them to achieve their aspirations toward a healthy, prosperous catchment," he said.

The strategy was launched at an event

hosted and organised by the Heytesbury District Landcare Network, the Mt Leura Development Committee and the Corangamite CMA. Numerous environmental and local produce displays were on show demonstrating an excellent cross-section of community involvement.

Natural resource management groups in the Corangamite catchment comprise more than 3000 members and an army of non-member volunteers.

They are supported by 18 Government-funded staff. Last year, \$5.8 million was invested in Landcare support and onground works, including State Government funding through the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare Initiative for development of this strategy.

For further information contact Polly Hall on 5232 9100.

Dr Peter Greig, Chairman of the Corangamite CMA Board (left), with Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and Member for Geelong Province Mrs Elaine Carbines and Don Forsyth, Chief Executive Officer of the Corangamite CMA.





Farm with greenhouse



The site of a new Spotted Gum plantation.

Landcare is entering an exciting new era at Jigsaw Farms' ten properties, one of which was a former Potter farm just north of Hamilton. Jigsaw Farms is applying Landcare at the landscape scale and is well on the way to planting almost one million new trees.

Mark Wootton from Jigsaw Farms says they will probably end up with around 1000 hectares of land revegetated throughout the properties. About 600-700

hectares will consist of longer-term farm forestry plantations with Spotted Gum grown for high quality timber as the focal species.

"We may be pushing the limits from a Landcare perspective, but this goes hand in hand with boosting agricultural production from the 70% of the property that we have selected for improvement. We are doing as much as we can to improve our production from the better soils, and areas we believe are limited for

agriculture we are targeting for forestry and trees."

According to Mark every Jigsaw Farms creek is fenced off.

"This isn't just about water quality. We believe it can also help with our disease-free status, as waterways travelling throughout farming landscapes are possible sources of infection. Our local Glenelg Hopkins CMA supports creek fencing costs which is an added bonus."

forestry benefits at Jigsaw Farms



By Graeme Anderson

Growing the landscape

The farm planning maps for Jigsaw Farms show how large tracts of connected revegetation and farm forestry areas are all designed to fit neatly into the farm unit.

“Siting our treeplanting areas relies on an overall gut feeling for the landscape. We design our revegetation around saltburn scalded areas and remnant trees. We also like to follow the *Birds of Australia* guidelines by having belts of vegetation at least 50 metres wide wherever possible to connect all new and remnant vegetation.”

The end result looks good as well as providing great shelter throughout the farm.

“The benefits of good shelter were observed a little while back where we had a lambing percentage of around 100% in an agroforestry paddock and much lower lambing survival in exposed paddocks,” Mark says.

Hamilton treeplanting contractor Keith Cummings is an important part of the operation. Keith undertakes all of the site establishment of woodlots and revegetation areas. Keith will also be involved in pruning and thinning works on the farm forestry sawlog plantations.

Keith has steered Jigsaw Farms down the path of Spotted Gum due to its high value timber and the fact that it is fairly easy and cheap to prune compared to other gum species.

Greenhouse partnerships offset costs

Large-scale revegetation is costly. Jigsaw Farms has cleverly chosen to participate in some greenhouse partnership projects which help them to realise their vision.

Mark explains that DPIs Plantations for Greenhouse project assists with establishment costs in return for selling

20% of the carbon rights.

“This still leaves us with 80% of the carbon rights and the flexibility to manage the forestry plantings for longer-term timber and income,” says Mark.

Plantations for Greenhouse is a Victorian Government greenhouse project establishing over 1400 hectares of new carbon sink and timber plantations in partnerships with landowners right across Victoria.

While the majority of revegetation is farm forestry, Jigsaw Farms also include buffers of indigenous revegetation in all of their plantings. This year the direct seeding is being supported by Greenfleet. Greenfleet supports revegetation works to cover the greenhouse emissions from vehicles that subscribe to the program.

With earlier plantings now clearly visible from a distance, the Jigsaw Farms vision of putting together the pieces of the



Mark Wootton from Jigsaw Farms is committed to sustainable agriculture.

sustainable farming puzzle is leaving its mark on the local landscape. The property provides a powerful insight into the future – where large-scale greenhouse and farm forestry plantings grow amongst high value agriculture.

For further information contact Graeme Anderson on 5226 4821.

Mark Wootton and Keith Cummings view an aerial photograph of planned revegetation works on the Jigsaw Farms properties.





A Lesser Longeared Bat.

Every night, bats are out in force, feeding on insects and nectar. Some even feed on small mammals and fish. Even though Australia has done some of the best bat research in the world, there is much we still don't know about bats. However, we do know that they are important when it comes to controlling insects.

"Bats eat up to half their body weight in one night which is quite amazing," says Craig Grabham, a member of Charles Sturt University's Institute for Land, Water and Society.

"We are only just starting to realise how important they are in controlling insects, especially across agricultural land. Bats are undervalued. We need to promote them more as a natural biological control of insects."

Craig Grabham's research project investigated the diversity and activity of insectivorous bats across six habitat types of a fragmented rural landscape in south-eastern Australia. The study investigated the habitat value of native revegetation to insectivorous bats and how it compared to other habitat types across this landscape.

While Craig's research focussed on the Eastern Billabong Catchment – west of the Hume Highway and north of Albury – his findings are just as relevant to much of Victoria.

"We designed it as a case study of different landscape structures that would be relevant to the broader region of south-eastern Australia," says Professor Nick Klomp, Craig's partner in bat research.

"Much of the landscape of rural Australia will support bat communities, we just need to know how."



From left to right. A Lesser Longeared Bat, a Freetail Bat, a Chocolate Wattled Bat and a Little Forest Bat.

Craig's research has demonstrated that revegetation is important for bats. He investigated six habitat types – cleared paddocks, linear revegetation, patch revegetation, linear remnants, patch remnants and continuous remnants – and found bats use revegetation more than cleared paddocks but less than remnant vegetation. Activity was significantly higher in all remnant habitats and particularly so in large remnants. Significantly higher levels of activity were recorded in linear revegetation compared to revegetation patches.

Craig explains that remnant vegetation is critical for bats as it provides a variety of habitat required for roosting, breeding and foraging. During the day bats can be found sleeping in hollows of old trees or under loose bark. Revegetation is important because it compensates for the loss of previous vegetation that has been removed. However, because young trees don't have hollows they provide only a limited range of habitat for bats, mostly for foraging. Craig collected data over 16 months using sophisticated echolocation equipment which picks up on the bats' echolocation calls.

"All but one of the insectivorous bats are inaudible to humans," says Craig, who used six echolocation units at a time, in different locations, allowing him to compare habitat types.

"The White-striped Mastiff Bat is the only insectivorous bat that we can hear in flight. It makes a sound very similar to teaspoons hitting one another.

"Bats use their surrounding landscape to navigate. Every couple of seconds, they send out hundreds of sound waves which

Natural Think

bounce off solid objects and return to the bats giving them a three dimensional image in their brains which they use to navigate. Sonar operates in a similar way but bats use a far more complicated form. Dolphins and some whales use a very similar technique."

Bat populations in Australia are unknown. Studies by bat researchers have found harp traps capture only about 10 per cent of bats that fly within the vicinity of the trap.

"I've caught 200 bats in one night which is a good sign," says Craig. "You would have to think they would be one of the most abundant terrestrial mammals in Australia.

"However, based on the knowledge that their habitat is declining we can assume that so too are their numbers."

Researcher Craig Grabham gets ready to set up his bat traps.



pest control? bats!

by Margrit Beemster



A Little Forest Bat.

Bat facts

With at least 1000 species worldwide, bats have successfully colonised almost every region of the earth. They are the world's second most common mammal group after rodents, comprising more than 20% of all mammal species.

There are two distinct types of bats, the *Megachiroptera* (flying foxes or blossom bats) and *Microchiroptera* (insectivorous bats).

Australia has approximately 90 species of microchiropteran and megachiropteran bats, classified into

seven families, representing at least 25% of Australian terrestrial mammal fauna. We have at least 78 species of microbats and 12 species of megabats.

The average weight of microbats is between 8 and 10 grams, and their wing span ranges from 15 to 30 centimetres. Coloring varies; some are dark brown to black, others have white stripes and some are mottled.

Like many Australian mammals female bats have the capacity to store sperm over winter and delay ovulation until

spring when they then become pregnant. The gestation for bats varies from four to eight weeks with most species only able to bear one young though some have twins, such as the long-eared bats.

Research has found that bats can live as long as 20 years in the wild. They occur on every continent in the world except for Antarctica. Most of the bats found in Australia are also found in south-east Asia. In Indonesia they are regarded as a food source.

Every river tells

Environment Victoria believes that a river shrivels up and dies unless you actively try to tell its stories.

In its campaigns to save many of Victoria's stressed rivers, Environment Victoria, the State's peak environment group, knows that the personal can be political, that people's memories and anecdotes have a place in the arguments for better river health.

Since June 2004 Environment Victoria has been collecting, and publishing on its website, personal stories about Victoria's rivers.

The project currently features stories about the Campaspe, Loddon, Goulburn and Glenelg Rivers, as well as the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers.

According to Paul Sinclair from Environment Victoria, one-third of the State's major waterways and two-thirds of

our wetlands are in poor or very poor condition.

"Many rivers are in danger of becoming polluted drains. The Your River stories, though, show how important healthy rivers and streams are to people."

The project has received vital support from the North Central CMA, the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA and the Glenelg-Hopkins CMA.

Willows spell death for Murray cod

As pretty and romantic as willow trees are, Maurie Dynon, Vice-President and Voluntary Project Co-ordinator of the Guildford/Upper Loddon Landcare Group, says they should never be on a river.

"The fibrous root system of willows collects a lot of silt and pebbles, layer upon layer of it," Maurie explains.

"The water level in a waterhole can drop from six feet to two or three feet within five to ten years."

Murray Dynon is committed to improving erosion on the Loddon River.



He points out that Murray cod cannot breed under a willow.

"No native aquatic life can breed there. A willow won't sustain life around it."

The removal of up to 300 willows and poplars along two 300-metre strips on either side of the Guildford bridge is one of several major Landcare projects that directly affect the Loddon River.

Maurie is an original member of the Guildford/Upper Loddon Landcare Group which formed in 1995 because of concern about erosion on the Loddon at Strangways and also on Jim Crow Creek. The group, which covers an area of 540 square kilometres, is one of the largest Landcare groups in Victoria, with 200 members.

"There's fantastic work going on, a lot of it happening out of sight," says Maurie.

"With climate change, we can't increase the quantity of water but we can increase the quality. One of our key



The Loddon River at Bridgewater.

drivers is to improve the quality of water going past Adelaide.

"People around here are fairly environmentally conscious, especially if they can see the benefit of a project. It's no good forcing ideas down people's throats."

a story

By Vin Maskell and Anna Boustead

Weeds threaten the Glenelg River

Tim Burnard is a deer farmer near Casterton and member of the Bahgallah/Killara Landcare Group.

When he bought his 100-acre property on the banks of the Glenelg River, Tim Burnard couldn't get down to the river for all the overgrown weeds. After several years of battling the African Feather Grass, the banks are now restored to the extent that you can get down to the river for a paddle on a hot day, or to seek out the elusive platypus.

Tim has set aside 45 per cent of his property for remnant vegetation. The remainder is used to farm red deer. A self-taught builder, Tim and his partner Donna spent seven years constructing their house, which runs



Tim Burnard has removed an extensive weed infestation from the riverfront of his property at Casterton.

Severe erosion on the Glenelg River.



on solar power and utilises natural light and ventilation. The result is a bush retreat overlooking the Glenelg River.

"You can see the river from nearly every room," Tim explains.

The once gushing flow of the 1991, 1992 and 1996 floods has been reduced to a slow trickle, caused by a combination of low rainfall and the diversion of two-thirds of the river's flow at Rocklands Dam.

Tim has been working with local farmers through the Bahgallah/Killara Landcare Group, encouraging them to fence off their properties from the river

to prevent stock from destroying its fragile banks and polluting the water. The group is also tackling other weeds, such as bridal creeper and blackberry, which threaten to take over much of the banks on this stretch of the Glenelg. He says that farmers need to work together to protect the river from weed invasion.

Tim is currently working on establishing a local community group to tackle the broader threats to the Glenelg.

To discover more Your River stories visit the healthy rivers page at www.environmentvictoria.org.au



The wise owl's

five steps to project success

By Amy McDonald

Over the past four years I have been project manager for a very small Landcare group in outer metropolitan Melbourne. One of my projects involved securing a corporate grant and growing it with the use of community partnerships to restore six hectares of Powerful Owl habitat.

The group is the Mt Evelyn Environmental Protection and Progress Association. The Powerful Owl project has been a resounding success. We are proud of what we have accomplished and keen to share our five steps to a successful project with other groups.

1. Think of a catchy name

Mt Evelyn is the home of several breeding pairs of Powerful Owl, and these magnificent birds have become an icon for our town. When we started the project,

our reserve was nameless. The Owl Land Reserve was formally named to launch our project. A community competition to design a logo for the Owl Land also generated interest and lots of entries – we were underway!

2. Money makes money

Putting on our business hats, we designed an irresistible business case for a corporate partner. A walk on the Owl Land, and a perfectly timed appearance of an owl complete with possum in claw, was all that was needed to seal the deal.

Our partner gave us a large grant, which attracted more funding from other groups. We contributed \$5000 to buy trees; our council contributed \$10,000 to spray weeds. We spent \$500 on a second-hand trailer; our local hardware store donated

\$500 worth of tools and some signwriting. By thinking creatively we made our money stretch, and achieved even bigger outcomes than we, or our corporate partner, had hoped.

3. Think big

The Mt Evelyn Environmental Protection and Progress Association has a small group of active members. Our committee meetings attract no more than 10 people. To make this project work we needed to think big, and take advantage of our community contacts.

By partnering with the local neighbourhood house we used some of our sponsorship money to fund a community jobs program, which brought in a team of paid workers who did a brilliant job, and learnt new skills.

The community jobs program team and associated Government funding grew our little project into a \$250,000 natural resource extravaganza.

4. Use the media

We are always in the local paper. We reported our story in *Stories of Community Landcare Success – Port Phillip and Westernport Region 2004*. Our State member chats about us in Parliament.

Getting your name out there does fantastic things for your volunteer numbers and membership, impresses your sponsors, attracts interest from new funding bodies and, more importantly, inspires other environment groups.

5. Don't forget the party

It's critical that volunteer groups celebrate their successes. Burn out is common but avoidable. We're always having parties and celebrations. Launching the project, the art from the Owl Land exhibition, the

TXU personnel help out with restoring owl habitat. Big companies can offer more than just money.





Getting dressed up as an owl helped to get the message across.

community name that reserve competition – you name it – we’ll hold it!

We have also nominated ourselves for lots of awards, both as a group and for our individual members. It is a great way to publicly thank people who have made a contribution. Celebrate, enjoy, laugh and re-energise.

We hope our five proven steps to success are helpful for your environment group. For more information contact Amy McDonald on 9489 7332.



Laancoorie’s living classroom

A classroom bounded by nature was opened near Hamilton late last year. The project was the brainchild of landowners Pauline McCarthy and Jane Duffy who had always hoped their high-conservation value property would be used as an educational resource.

An Envirofund grant funded the development of a booklet, education kit, interpretative signage and a website aimed at developing skills and knowledge relating to conservation and biodiversity at Laancoorie.

An information centre will provide a sheltered site for visitors to share their experiences when returning from the wildflower, wetland, and grassland and regeneration walks. It will also promote the need to conserve this valuable property, which contains an ephemeral wetland and a creekline and is permanently protected through a Trust for Nature covenant.

Trust for Nature is Australia’s oldest land trust and works to protect land through its conservation covenanting program, which sees landholders entering into voluntary agreements to protect a site’s natural features from subdivision, land clearing and adverse development.

The property is adjacent to the Hamilton to Coleraine Railtrail, which provides an important corridor link to other native vegetation. High priority grassy woodlands together with the Nigretta and Wannan Falls also feature in the area, providing habitat and refuge for birds such as the Powerful Owl.

For further information contact Pauline McCarthy by email at laancoorie@iprimus.com.au or view the website www.laancoorie.com.au



The Laancoorie Living Classroom.

Sustainable cropping and grazing research trials



By Ian Linley

Southern Farming Systems (SFS) is a non-profit farmer-owned cropping and grazing organisation with over 600 members who farm around 800,000 hectares in south-west Victoria.

The organisation is currently undertaking projects with mixed cropping and grazing farmers to increase profitability and enhance the environment. The initial cropping focus of SFS has broadened to incorporate the livestock and environmental components of the farming system.

A major focus on stubble management as an alternative to stubble burning has seen trials conducted in techniques such as incorporation, spreading, mulching, baling, microbial digesters, crop selection and sowing techniques such as residue managers creating mini windrows between seeding lines and variations of seeding row spaces. Stubble retention has also proven to be a useful weed management tool in some of these trials.

Stubble grazing can be undertaken for animal production purposes and has also been utilised to reduce residual dry matter and control pests and diseases in subsequent crops. Combinations of direct grazing of stubble trash, harvesting stubble for supplementary fodder during feed shortages and grazing at crop vegetative phases have been trialled, with decreased

Farmers examining a range of crop establishment trials at an SFS field day.



Ceres farmer Mick Shawcross and LaTrobe university student Ashley Paech inspecting the regrowth of barley after grazing. Strategic grazing of crops over winter has the dual benefit of providing valuable feed mid-season and also reducing the stubbles left after harvest.

and delayed ear emergence, rust reduction and grazing pulling of particular crops being some of the initial findings.

Raised beds and controlled traffic have allowed management of the effects of waterlogging and this has allowed the trialling of lucerne as a break crop to weed and disease cycles, as an increaser of soil fertility and as a provider of livestock feed.

Trials have indicated that lucerne may create reduced moisture in subsequent crops, that cereals sown into lucerne results in increased winter feed and that animal liveweight gains on lucerne are variable, but may be better managed when adding energy supplements.

Strategic grazing of native grasses in late summer and winter has also been trialled, with results indicating an improvement of native species population and diversity, and indications that native grasslands cannot re-establish unless soil fertility is low.

An integrated pest management trial based on retention and management of native grasses is providing evidence that native grasses may supply a pool of beneficial predators likely to have an important role in repopulating crop and pasture lands with beneficial predator deficiencies. Key differences in populations of beneficial predators and pests in crops and pastures have been detected from year to year and differences appear to be due to farm practices such as burning, cultivation and insecticide use.

The farmer-driven approach of SFS, the partnerships between industry, Government and natural resource managers, and the scientific rigour of the trials ensure a balanced outcome for farmer profitability and environmental sustainability of the natural resources.

For information on the trials visit the SFS website at www.sfs.org.au



Landmates lend a hand

Revegetation fencing underway as part of the Landmate Scheme.

For more than a decade a program designed to help prisoners reintegrate into the community has provided valuable support to local environmental programs.

The Landmate scheme operating from Loddon Prison has established itself as an important labour source and a significant education program for the prisoners who participate.

The scheme is funded by the Victorian Government through the State Landmate program and is jointly co-ordinated between the North Central CMA and DPI.

According to the Landmate co-ordinator, Darren Taylor, once prisoners' security rating is deemed suitable for them to work in the community, they can be selected to join a Landmate crew.

"The Landmate scheme works as an employment program for prisoners. It replicates a working day, where participants attend for set hours throughout a standard working week," said Darren. "It enables prisoners to be better prepared and equipped for reintegration into the community."

The Landmate crew works on properties in the Castlemaine area to undertake works including weed control,

revegetation, fencing and planting trees.

The scheme was initiated by the then Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Maryborough in the early 1990s.

"It took a while for the local community to warm to the idea of having prisoners undertaking this kind of work in the area," said Darren. "However, the outcomes of the scheme speak for themselves and negative perceptions were soon reversed."

Darren recalls that Moolort Landcare Group was one of the first in the region to embrace the Landmate concept.

"The Moolort Landcare Group understood the benefits of working with a Landmate crew. Those landholders who were involved achieved a level of on-ground works that they wouldn't have been able to undertake on their own.

"Word soon spread amongst other Landcare groups about the effectiveness of the Landmate crew to the point where a more co-ordinated approach was needed."

The scheme currently involves the North Central CMA, DPI, Mt Alexander Shire, City of Greater Bendigo and Landcare, who share its benefits with Loddon Prison.

"Loddon Prison views the scheme as an

opportunity to provide a service to the community and to enable the prisoners to begin their reintegration into the community," said Darren Taylor.

"Prisoners can obtain qualifications such as their chainsaw operator and chemical users certificates. The scheme also runs a nursery that provides participants with seed collection and propagating skills.

"This initiative has proven to help build the prisoners' morale and self esteem, and the confidence to engage with community members. It also gives them a better chance of future employment and a feeling of being of value to the community," said Darren.

Recent work undertaken by the Landmate crew has included the hand removal of African weed orchid at Lake Eppalock. They have worked with the North Central CMA buffer strip and remnant protection programs, and DPI on revegetation fencing in the Bulabul and Timor West areas.

For further information about the Landmate scheme, contact your local shire-based Landcare Co-ordinator.

Rod Phillips, Loddon Prison Landmate supervisor, discusses projects with Tracey Harbridge from the North Central CMA.



Community connection to Gunbower

The Northern Territory may have tourist-touting Kakadu but there are people who say the Gunbower Forest in a flood year can be just as alluring. Thousands of birds, animals, tiny wetland creatures and plants make this 20,000 hectare forest that stretches along the southern bank of the Murray River from Torrumbarry to Koondrook their home.

But even some locals who live at nearby Cohuna don't appreciate what's on their doorstep, according to forest fan, birdwatcher and daytripper Norma Sheridan.

Norma, 71, who grew up on a farm near the forest, left the area and returned as a 34-year-old, began to spend more time there after her husband died nine years

ago. The tragic loss of her son also compelled her to seek solace in the tranquillity of the huge red gum haven and its protected wetlands. But her love affair with the forest began earlier as a birdwatcher.

An archivist with the Cohuna Historical Society, Norma's knowledge of birds has made her a sought after data collector for scientists and forest managers.

"We used to come out here as children with our parents and when I came back to Cohuna I started bird watching and rediscovered the Gunbower Forest," Norma said.

"I've been absolutely rapt in it ever since and I have just taken to it more and more since my husband died."

Norma can reel off lists of birds she has spotted – the Intermediate Egret, herons, cormorants, ducks, kingfishers, honeyeaters, Rufous Whistlers, choughs and more. She doesn't camp out, preferring day trips and she avoids the forest in busy holiday times when thousands descend to camp along the forest's waterways including the Murray River and Gunbower Creek.

"The tracks get too dusty," she says.

Forest mentor

Norm Wilson, 76, is Norma's bird watching mentor. Norm, a farmer's son who left school at 13 to cut trees for charcoal in the forest during the early 1940s, reckons he has walked every inch of it.

"I was born there, right on the edge," he says. "We used to go rabbiting and fishing. We made a living out there in those days and sometimes it was all the living we got. The farm those days never made much money. On rainy days we'd go rabbiting and sell the skins and this is where we got our money to go to the pictures."

Today Norm spends every spare moment in the forest. He loves fishing and shooting though declares he only shoots what he eats. His ute is permanently equipped, with boat atop and fishing rod and bait in the back. When floodwaters drown the tracks, Norm can navigate his way through the forest just as easily.

"I'm always fishing," he says. "You get Murray cod, millions of bream. They reckon this is the only place from Echuca to Swan Hill that you can get them."

Norm reckons he's had stiff necks from spotting koalas, and knows where to spot Sea Eagles and Wedge-Tailed Eagles as well as the rare Great Crested Grebe.

Norm Wilson and Norma Sheridan – passionate about Gunbower Forest.



Forest

By Genevieve Barlow



Long dry spell

Like many other frequenters of the forest, Norm and Norma have watched it change and evolve. “More people, more trees,” they say when asked what they’ve noticed most.

But 10 years of dry weather is taking its toll and they’re keen for the forest to get a good drink.

Norm wonders if he’ll ever see it flood naturally again. “We might not see it any more,” he says. “You’d have no birds without water,” he adds. “You’ve got to have enough water to make them lay.”

For her part, Norma welcomes the scheme to flood the forest artificially, a plan that is being carried out by North Central CMA and the forest and waterway managers – DSE, Parks Victoria and Goulburn-Murray Water. It was tried out in the spring of 2003 and allowed endangered species such as the Great Egret and White Bellied Sea Eagle to breed.

Forest flooding essential

“I’m all for water being let down into these lagoons and swamps whenever possible. It’s necessary if we are going to maintain these healthy rookeries and the

breeding,” Norma says.

Stan Archard, an irrigation industry pioneer who has built up a multi-million dollar business in Cohuna designing irrigation schemes, is helping devise ways to keep the forest artificially flooded.

“There is a new era in the Gunbower Forest,” he declares.

“Without artificial flooding we would be in trouble because the (natural) floods are getting less and less and if global warming occurs as they say it will, the forest might get even less water. Without it, our forests wouldn’t be as good as they are.”





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