

VICTORIAN

# LANDCARE

Winter 2011 Issue 52

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



## SUSTAINABILITY FEATURE

Victoria's first equine Landcare group

Healthy soils in Gippsland

Sustainability on the farm



# Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

WINTER 2011 ISSUE 52

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Horses in the Yarra Valley by Andrew Chapman.

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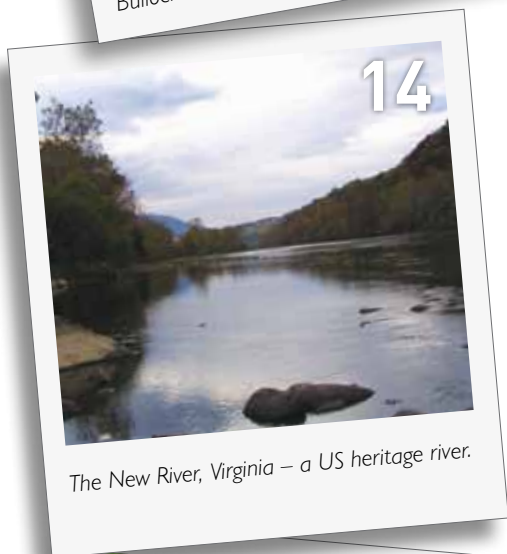
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An Environmental Farmers Network field day looking at revegetating ridges in the Bullock Hills south of Ararat.



The New River, Virginia – a US heritage river.



Organics consultant Gerhard Grasser inspects the topsoil at Darryl Hook's Pound Creek property.





# From the Minister

Sustainability is an important concept for the Landcare community. The aim of many groups is to support work that is productive, profitable and environmentally sustainable. Sustainability also includes the efficient use of energy and other resources, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

This issue of the Landcare magazine has plenty of food for thought on all these issues, with a wide variety of stories about sustainability. I am always interested to hear how Victorians deal with such a challenging topic as sustainability and there's a real overview of that in the following pages.

As Environment Minister and someone keenly interested in protecting our natural assets, it's a great feeling to be able to encourage local communities and environment groups to apply for a \$20 million green grants fund that was announced in the 2011-12 State Budget.

This funding is for small- and large-scale grants to support local community projects focused on improving biodiversity, reducing/managing waste and cleaning up our coasts and waterways. I encourage Landcare groups and networks to access this grants fund, to help support them in



*Variable Glycine is a depleted pea species that is difficult to collect in the wild. The Euroa Arboretum has turned a handful of original wild seed into a potential ten kilograms of seed each year.*

*Sue Logie and Tammy Muir have established 10 hectares of seed production areas on their property at Yielima in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.*



their hard work across Victoria to build a better environment.

Also of interest in this issue is the feature on Ross McDonald, a farmer from Kaniva in the Wimmera, who shows how his desire to farm sustainably affects all of the decisions he makes. Five Landcare networks in south Gippsland report on their soil acidification and soil carbon project, and a committed group of landholders in the Shepparton region describe their efforts to restore the genetic diversity of local plants.

Each time I meet a Landcarer, or learn about their efforts through sources such as this magazine, I'm impressed by the level of commitment and dedication that is happening throughout the state. I plan to do my bit to make sure that work and effort is supported and acknowledged.

Thank you

Ryan Smith  
Minister for Environment and  
Climate Change

# Sustainable seed production in the Goulburn Broken Catchment

By Jim Begley

A large-scale indigenous seed production project in the Goulburn Broken Catchment is striving to reverse the trend of native plant extinctions in the landscape, build ecological function and ultimately provide sustainable farming ecosystems for the future.

In 2001 staff from the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank at the University of Melbourne's Dookie campus began the long process of collecting seed from wild populations of indigenous flora species. The goal was to develop seed production areas from these declining populations and build the genetic diversity of missing shrub and ground layers back into the landscape.

As direct seeding is the preferred method of revegetation for large-scale landscape change big volumes of seed are required. Dedicated seed production areas are necessary to build the volume of available healthy seed, reduce the effects of inbreeding in fragmented plant populations, and improve the efficiency of seed collection. Seed production areas also protect remnant vegetation from the future pressures of seed collection.

Eighteen seed production areas producing 35 species have now been established across the Goulburn Broken catchment with more and more landholders getting involved each year. According to Seedbank Co-ordinator Liz Evans, approximately 150 kilograms of seed is collected annually.

"Local farmers, private industry, indigenous work crews, individuals with an interest in botany, seed collectors and nurseries are all involved in seed production and collecting. Our latest project a partnership with Tahbilk Winery."

## **Arboretum returns depleted species to the landscape**

Seed production areas established by the Euroa Arboretum have shown that

limitations in the seed supply of targeted species can be reversed enough so that depleted species can now be included in mainstream revegetation projects.

Variable Glycine (*Glycine tabacina*) is a depleted pea species that is difficult to collect in the wild. Through seed collection beds specially designed to catch the highly dispersible seed, a handful of original wild seed has been turned into a potential ten kilograms of seed each year.

Sally Mann, a botany enthusiast who was instrumental in setting up the seed production areas at the Euroa Arboretum, reports that Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) is another success story.

*Cathy Olive from the Euroa Arboretum and Janet Hagen from the Hughes Creek Catchment Landcare Network with some of the plants that are being used in revegetation projects across the Goulburn Broken Catchment.*



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*As direct seeding is the preferred method of revegetation for large-scale landscape change big volumes of seed are required.*

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*Stocks of Prickly Currant Bush at the Euroa Arboretum.*

"Silver Banksia was once widespread across Victoria. It is now grossly depleted and completely absent from the northern half of the catchment. Historical records show that Silver Banksia was quite common. Early explorers often referred to the species in their journals as honeysuckle. These plants are pollinated by honeyeaters and were a great food source for nectar-dependent species like pygmy possums and regent honeyeaters, many of which are now virtually extinct."

To counteract the short supply of Silver Banksia seed, Sally and her team propagated 90 plants from nine depleted populations. The plants were brought together in a seed production site to cross pollinate. The seed from the cones of the first 90 plants has grown into 2000 plants which will be planted out across the catchment this year.

In just seven years a species that was on the brink of extinction in the local area has been brought back to life. As numbers of Silver Banksia build each year across the landscape they will be restoring a missing habitat component for insects, birds, reptiles and mammals.

#### **Landholders establish their own seed production areas**

Tammy Muir and Sue Logie from Yielima in northern Victoria have been producing native seed on their 258-hectare property since 2000. Sue and Tammy were motivated to get involved through their connection with the Superb Parrot Project.

"We needed large quantities of seed for our direct seeding projects. The drought was impacting on roadside vegetation and we needed good healthy plants to collect from. The distance to travel between populations was also taking up a lot of our time.

"We identified the species needed for direct seeding and also the species which were in decline on the roadsides. This provided a foundation for the seed production areas on our property," Tammy said.

Tammy and Sue have revegetated 50 hectares of their property with 10 hectares being used for seed production. They collect around 35 kilograms of clean seed each year for use on revegetation projects throughout the catchment.

#### **Volume and diversity of plants needed for climate change resilience**

The goal of the indigenous seed production project in Goulburn Broken is to build the volume of plants in the landscape, increase the diversity of species available for revegetation, and improve the genetics of plants so their health and adaptation potential is maximised.

Seed that is collected needs to be of good genetic stock. This requires multiple healthy parent plants from multiple sites. Plans are underway for a study that will provide the genetic background to the project. Dr Linda Broadhurst, from CSIRO in Canberra, has lent her skills and knowledge to the project. Dr Broadhurst believes we should also be considering

*Seed that is collected needs to be of good genetic stock. This requires multiple healthy parent plants from multiple sites.*

the future effects of climate change on our native plant populations.

"Plants are static, they have been adapting to change for thousands of years, and their potential to cope through climate change is possible, some may drop out and others will survive. The question is, do we have enough volume of plants out in the landscape to adapt to the changes? We may need to change the way we do things to maximise the resilience of species," Dr Broadhurst said.

**To sponsor a species or for more information about the project contact Jim Begley from the Goulburn Broken CMA on 5761 1574, or by email at [jimb@gbcma.vic.gov.au](mailto:jimb@gbcma.vic.gov.au).**



*Seed production areas on Geoff Lodge's property at Murchison. Different varieties of Acacia, Dodonaea, Dillwynia, Eutaxia and native wallaby grass are sown between the rows.*

“

*After 13 years of drought (some will say more) farmers across the Mallee are rethinking how they use what has been a very scarce resource.*

”



*Farmer Colin Hunt uses information from the Mallee Water Use Efficiency project to help him manage the heavier soils on his property at Millewa.*

# Decade-long project promotes water use efficiency on Mallee farms

*By Michael Moodie*

It might seem strange to be talking about water use efficiency at a time when there is plenty of water around, but after 13 years of drought (some will say more) farmers across the Mallee are rethinking how they use what has been a very scarce resource.

The Mallee Water Use Efficiency Project is a decade-long research project that aims to improve whole-farm water use efficiency and profitability across the 7 million hectare Mallee region, encompassing Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales.

A partnership between Mallee Sustainable Farming, CSIRO and DPI with funding from the GRDC, the project uses on-farm core research sites coupled with regional demonstration paddocks to show farmers how to make better use of the available water and, in turn, increase their profitability.

Project activities include the highly variable soil types and production potentials common across Mallee paddocks and farms. Simulation modelling is also used to test water use efficiency strategies and recommendations for longer term and

broader ranging scenarios in collaboration with farmer groups.

Core research sites at Karoonda and Ouyen address the many challenges to the sustainability and wider uptake of water use efficient intensive cropping systems, including grass weed problems, disease, high fertiliser costs and the need to reduce exposure to downside risk. The research at both sites is focused on matching inputs to yield potential and incorporating break crops into low rainfall Mallee farming systems.

Demonstration paddocks compare trial strips such as different fertiliser rates. Differences in the crop water use efficiency between treatments are monitored throughout the year across the two to three soil types in each paddock.

According to Millewa farmer Colin Hunt the information gathered from trials and demonstrations in the project help him to identify how to best use the heavier soils on his farm.

“This helps us to make the most of available soil moisture for better production, ground cover and soil health,” Colin said.

Each soil type in each paddock is soil tested prior to sowing to determine topsoil fertility, soil moisture, starting nitrogen levels and sub-soil constraints such as salinity, boron and chloride. The information is entered into a crop modelling program called Yield Prophet.

The program works by simulating crop growth conditions, agronomy, crop inputs and climatic conditions for the current growing season, and then predicting crop yield and other performance outcomes based on historical climate data for the remainder of the growing period.

Based on this data, Yield Prophet generates reports that can be used to forecast yield, manage climate and soil water risk, target specific grain quality, and assess the possible effects of climate change. Yield Prophet reports are made available on the Mallee Sustainable Farming website for farmers to access.

**For further information go to the Mallee Sustainable Farming project website at [www.msfp.org.au](http://www.msfp.org.au)**



# Teens build nest boxes for local wildlife

Bunnings stores in Victoria have taken up the challenge of sustainability by helping teenagers build nest boxes that will help preserve and protect native fauna.

The Goulburn Broken CMA's Landcare Corporate Partnerships Facilitator, Karen Brisbane, started the program in 2010 with Trudy Hobbs from Bunnings in Shepparton and a group of Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning students from Shepparton High School.

The Shepparton Bunnings store supplied all the materials, plus equipment and lunch for

Year 10 and 11 students from Shepparton High School who came to the store to build and paint 30 nest boxes for animals such as Squirrel Gliders and Brush-tailed Phascogales. Staff at the store were so impressed with the students' enthusiasm that they are keen to see the program continue.

Other Bunnings stores are also getting involved. The Bayswater store has taken on the challenge of building 30 nest boxes with the Bayswater Secondary College over a three-month period.

The nest boxes will go towards a larger project for the Monbulk Landcare Group. The nest boxes will be installed on private and public land by local Scouts and Venturers, with a wildlife information day held on the different species that will use the boxes. The first round of boxes will be designed for Kookaburras, Brush-tailed Possums and Eastern and Crimson Rosellas. Boxes for Sugar Gliders, King Parrots and Gang Gang Cockatoos are also being investigated.

The Bunnings store in Pakenham is donating materials for 40 nest boxes for the Cardinia Catchment Landcare Group. The boxes will be built for Feather-tail Gliders, Owlet Nightjars, Tree Creepers and King Parrots. Pakenham Bunnings will supply material for the boxes and cut the wood to size. The local Cubs and the Cardinia Catchment Landcare Group will build and install the boxes as part of a larger project to recruit volunteers for Landcare.

**For further information contact Karen Brisbane on 5820 1134 or by email at [karenb@gbcm.vic.gov.au](mailto:karenb@gbcm.vic.gov.au)**

*Students from Shepparton High School display the nest boxes they made with help from the local Bunnings store.*



## Managing Country Together

*By Richard Kennedy*

Traditional owner groups and representatives from Government organisations around the state met at Yarra Glen in February 2011 for the Managing Country Together gathering. The event was run by Melbourne Water in partnership with Landcare Australia.

The gathering provided a good networking opportunity. Groups were able to discuss what natural resource management agencies were doing in their country.

The gathering was from an indigenous rather than an agency perspective. Participants were able to talk directly to representatives of government agencies, ask relevant questions and get direct answers. The sharing of knowledge

between participants gave everyone lots of ideas to take back and implement in their communities.

Workshops delivered information relating to the many issues that arise when dealing with agencies and managing country together. There were good ideas on how to inspire others to start new projects and get more people involved.

The Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the Yarra Valley, also hosted a site visit to look at some traditional scar trees around the Healesville area and the mission stations at Coranderrk.

**Richard G. Kennedy is the Landcare Indigenous Involvement Officer with the North East CMA.**



*The Wurundjeri community's Jindi Worabak dance troupe performed around the campfire at the Managing Country Together gathering.*

# Sustainability on the farm

By Ross McDonald

Ross McDonald farms in the west Wimmera and has been active in Landcare for many years. He shares his thoughts on running a sustainable farm business.



Our family has farmed in the Kaniva area since 1879. My wife Fran is a secondary school teacher, our daughter Grace is at the University of South Australia and son Joe is doing his VCE at Kaniva College. We have 800 hectares – 600 hectares are cropped annually and 200 hectares are set aside as remnant vegetation.

There is evidence of Aboriginal occupation on our farm, with scar trees and stone



Joe McDonald canoeing on the farm dam in 2011 – the first full dam since 1996.

artifacts. This serves as a reminder to me that even though we own the land, I am really only the caretaker.

Our aim is to run a profitable farming operation with the least negative impact on the environment. Everything we do on the farm is considered with this aim in mind. Some of these actions on the farm come at a price, but they leave me with a clear conscience. I still have to compromise, but ultimately I am here to run a profitable business or we will not survive.

## Minimum tillage for maximum benefits

We don't burn stubble on the farm and will not use urea because it damages the atmosphere. Tractor usage is kept to a minimum with sowing done usually in one pass without cultivation. We grow mustard for a local bio fuel producer with the intention of running all our farm vehicles on bio fuel. Care is needed with spraying operations close to vegetated areas to avoid off-target damage. We don't use crop dusters to apply chemicals or fertilisers for the same reason.

All of our paddock trees are protected and will be fenced off over time, no matter how inconvenient they are to the farming operation. All of our remnant vegetation has been fenced to exclude stock and is under protective covenants with Trust for Nature. We are also attempting to link these areas with revegetation corridors.

By the end of 2012 we will have completed 30 hectares of revegetation work on the farm. We have BushTender agreements on these remnants and receive payments for the management work we carry out. With the carbon market about to start, we also hope to be able to sell carbon produced in the revegetation areas.

We have developed a small wetland on the edge of some remnant vegetation using piped groundwater. This provides habitat for frogs and birds when there is little water around.

It's been great to see the vegetation respond and some of the birds and animals return with the wet season of 2010. We didn't quite get enough run off to fill our wetlands which

Ross McDonald with some Sugar Gums planted in 2008. They are showing good growth despite only 1100 millimetres total rainfall.



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*Our aim is to run a profitable farming operation with the least negative impact on the environment. Everything we do on the farm is considered with this aim in mind.*

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*A scar tree on the McDonalds Kaniva property is a daily reminder of early Aboriginal occupation.*

have been dry for 14 years, but most of our dams filled up. Our son, at 17, had his first swim in a farm dam – something I did every summer when I was a kid.

### **The climate change challenge**

Farming has been very challenging for the last 15 years, which I think is largely due to climate change. We all need to consider the impact we are having on the planet. As a farmer I am in a position to do more than most people, but I also have more to lose. If the worst climate predictions occur, I will not be able to continue farming the way I do now.

Many farmers have left our district in the last ten years. Our small town is struggling. I have invested a lot in our farm and sometimes find it hard to remain positive about our future.

But it is not all bad. I like what I do and I am proud to be a farmer. I also enjoy the work I do with Landcare. Sometimes when I'm out looking over a nice crop, I turn the other way and see some healthy trees, some tall native grasses or a Wedgetail Eagle overhead – well, that just makes my day. I want people to be able to see these things in 100 years time.

I am currently President of the Kaniva District Landcare Group, a member of the Victorian Landcare Council and on the Board of the Hindmarsh Landcare Network. I am also a member of the Environmental Farmers Network. Farming doesn't happen in isolation. Being connected to the wider community and learning from each other is very important.



*An Environmental Farmers Network field day looking at revegetating ridges in the Bullock Hills south of Ararat.*

# The Environmental Farmers Network – sustainability, one policy at a time

*By David Cummings*

Australian farmers are still looking for the right balance between farm outputs and environmental outputs. As human population increases so do the pressures on our farms. What will happen if we keep pushing farm production without proper consideration for the environment? Farmers must also learn to cope with the imperfectly defined effects of climate change.

Six years ago, in the light of these growing concerns, a group of interested commercial farmers saw the need for an organisation to represent the many farmers who see that farm production is intimately linked to environmental production.

Because many of the existing organisations are focused on the production of individual commodities, the opportunity to see the way the whole system links and works together was often being missed.

The Environmental Farmers Network (EFN) provides a collective voice for farmers who are concerned about the declining health of native vegetation, wetlands, waterways and soil and interested in the long-term sustainability

of farming in a social, environmental, energy and economic sense.

The EFN promotes policies that further the environmental health of private and public land in farming areas. The policies are built from member contributions. The current policy coverage includes biodiversity, farm greenhouse emissions, bio-fuels, water, wetlands, farm forestry, wind farms and climate change. The EFN policies are used as a basis for taking part in debates on the future of farmlands and farm production in southern Australia.

According to Andrew Bradey, EFN President, the EFN aims to influence standards, regulations and expectations, and to be a force for change towards a more sustainable future.

"We need to re-evaluate the environmental costs of farming – and investigate the role that farming land can play in improving the general state of the environment," Andrew said.

**For further information about the Environmental Farmers Network visit the website at [www.environmentalfarmersnetwork.net.au](http://www.environmentalfarmersnetwork.net.au)**

# Landcare engages with horse owners in the Yarra Valley

By Katie Jacobson



Existing networks such as pony clubs are valuable for promoting Landcare programs and events.

**The Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare Program has educated more than 200 property owners and many agency staff on the close links between horse health and behaviour and good land management.**

The program has shown that traditional whole farm planning approaches are not effective at connecting and engaging with the equine community. Successful Landcare education programs for horse owners must be delivered on the basis that horses are owned to be loved, not managed.

The Yarra Ranges is a region dominated by intensive horticulture, large scale beef and equine lifestyle properties. In 2006 I was employed through Yarra Ranges Council as a Landcare Facilitator for the region. My role involved working with the 10 existing Landcare groups to establish the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network and together develop programs to support sustainable land management practices. Horse owners were a major target audience.

The best model for involving horse owners in property planning was the Horses, Land and Water Program being run in South Australia by HorseSA. We nominated the Yarra Valley as a Victorian pilot region as part of the program's national expansion.

In September 2007 the first Horses, Land and Water Program was run at Macclesfield Pony Club. Pam Brookman from South Australia was funded by Yarra Ranges Council Landcare Program to present the sessions which covered basic whole property planning principles plus identifying, understanding and managing local soils, pastures and weeds for horse and pony health.

## **Horse owners have a deep connection with their animals**

Watching the sessions in progress was an important learning experience. The deep, personal connection that horse owners have with their horses was evident. It was also clear that having a presenter who owns and truly understands horses

is critical to selling the value of good land management for horse health.

The first course was promoted by members of existing Landcare groups who were also horse owners. Word soon spread across neighbouring horse properties and through local pony clubs. The program snowballed, the phone was ringing hot with enquiries and we had a full course of 20 people every 3-4 months.

Further down the catchment, the WACMAC Landcare Network (Whittlesea Agricultural Society, Arthur's Creek District, Merriang District, Strathewen and Cottlesbridge Landcare Groups) had been working with Jane Myers, one of Australia's leading experts on small property horsekeeping. Jane had periodically come down from Queensland and run some very successful short courses on horse behaviour and land management for the WACMAC region.

The two Landcare networks realised that by combining aspects of the two programs the best possible approach for sustainable land management on lifestyle equine properties could be created.

## **Equine Landcare Program emerges after fires**

The Black Saturday fires in 2009 created a surge in requests for information and support from horse owners in the region, with many local equine properties burnt by the fires. The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network worked closely with the DPI Small Landholders program to support the local fire-affected properties and deliver education courses from which the revised Yarra Valley Equine Landcare Program emerged.

Through working with the DPI team, the course evolved to now include a day of presentations by Jane Myers on horse

*Having a presenter who owns and truly understands horses is critical to selling the value of good land management for horse health.*





*Horse owners in the Yarra Valley have been keen to learn more about soil, pasture and weed management on their properties.*

health and sustainable land management, followed by a practical day led by the DPI Small Landholders team on property planning, with a practical soils, pastures and weed management component.

The Equine Landcare Program now represents a significant and valued project in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network Strategic Action Plan, and thanks to Jane's national reputation, and the strong connections to local pony clubs and other horse groups, it continues to go from strength to strength.

#### **From Landcare learners to leaders**

In November 2010 more than 80 past participants from the course and other local horse owners attended a forum in the Yarra Valley and unanimously decided to form the Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare

Group. Since then the group has held public talks, elected a committee and even created a Facebook page for members to follow their events and to share educational resources.

The Yarra Valley experience shows that equine land managers in peri-urban areas can be successfully engaged about sustainable land management. The secrets are to recognise the personal links over the productive and have someone who truly understands horse health and behaviour as your public face. Working with local pony clubs and horse groups to promote the programs and messages across their large memberships is also valuable.

***For further information go to Facebook and search for Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare.***

***Katie Jacobson is currently working on community and corporate fundraising programs for a not-for-profit organisation. She wrote this article in her role as a volunteer for the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network.***

## **Tips for managing horse properties:**

- Take a walk around the property regularly to identify what's growing, where and when
- Use a small shovel to dig up some pasture and investigate soil types as well as root and soil health
- Horses are social animals. To prevent tracking and erosion problems along fences avoid keeping animals on their own
- Cross-grazing horses with cattle can be an effective pasture management tool for pasture growth and weed management
- Maintain horses on high ground in winter to keep them healthy and prevent waterlogging of pastures. This will also improve soil and pasture condition in spring and summer

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*The Yarra Valley experience shows that equine land managers in peri-urban areas can be successfully engaged about sustainable land management.*

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The second Landcare for Singles planting day attracted 85 people to Birdsland Reserve in Belgrave South. According to participants, it was a lot of fun, and a great way to meet new people.

## Landcare for Singles success in the Yarra Ranges

Love is in the air and new plants are in the ground after two Landcare for Singles planting days in the Dandenong Ranges during May.

According to Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network representative Chris Morgan, Landcare for Singles was part of a planned program to engage and recruit some new, younger volunteers to the network.

"Our volunteer base is ageing and over-stretched. This prompted us to conduct a 12-month recruitment drive which focused on a new model of recruitment called TOTAL recruitment. The model uses planned, strategic and active ways of approaching volunteers rather than the more common passive methods of simply advertising and waiting for people to turn up," Chris said.

The Landcare for Singles events used Twitter, Facebook, radio advertising and email networks to appeal to the target audience. The tactics were a success. Despite cold and wet weather 42 people attended the first planting day and 85 people attended the second. More than 1300 tubestock were planted in the Birdsland Reserve, a 75-hectare bushland reserve located in Belgrave South.

The project attracted 185 new contacts for Landcare in the area.

### So, do you plant here often?

A number of structured events were run at the planting days. Firstly, participants divided themselves into groups based loosely around age. Prompt questions printed on the tubestock helped start conversations and break the ice. This was followed by speed planting where singles planted each new plant with a new person. The planting days wrapped up with a woodfired pizza lunch when everyone gathered together to chat some more.

The planting events were followed by an evening party in June with food and drink, two bands, a DJ and an exhibition of local artists at the Burringja Café in Upwey. The party gave volunteers a chance to meet, mingle and talk about Landcare again.

Kim Boswell, Landcare Facilitator for the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network, said that the project has attracted a great deal of interest with a new, untapped audience.

"The vast majority of people who attended Landcare for Singles had never been to a Landcare event before, but many said they had been thinking about some kind of volunteering for a while. Many of them have indicated they would be interested in having further involvement with Landcare."

Kim says the issue of how new volunteers are brought on board is important.

"Traditionally Landcare groups and networks have asked for a substantial time commitment from their volunteers. Younger people are often not in a position to make that sort of commitment, so we are looking at more project-based episodic ways that they can make a contribution. We are being very careful about how we seek to involve these people in the future."

An anonymous love letterbox that allowed singles to express interest in someone they'd met at the planting days was put to good use. Landcare staff forwarded the letters (confidentially) and are hoping that some Landcare love is the result.

Landcare for Singles was supported and funded by Yarra Ranges Council and DSE.



# Drought tolerant pastures on the Gippsland Plains

By Samantha Monks  
and Lisa Warn



**Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (YYLN) is working with 16 producers from Woodside to Stradbroke who have established trials to demonstrate the use of drought-tolerant perennial pasture species and better grazing management on their properties. Participants have each sown three paddocks (10 hectares) of pastures over the three years of the project.**

The Caring for our Country project is being delivered by YYLN with the support of the University of Melbourne's Mackinnon Project. EverGraze principles are being used to establish trials of appropriate perennial pasture species and management practices.

The properties are located around Woodside, Darriman, Seaspray and Stradbroke in south-east Gippsland. Participants are all active members of the Woodside or Merriman Creek Landcare Groups. The soil types on the farms are mainly light sandy clay loams, which have low water holding capacities and are prone to wind erosion.

Producers in the area have been hit hard by the prolonged drought conditions. Confidence, incomes, pastures and soils have all suffered. The project has been important for boosting morale and increasing peer support amongst the participants.

Average annual rainfall is 600 millimetres, but the district has experienced drought conditions for the past three to four years. Despite the dry conditions in 2009 (the first year of the project), 15 paddocks were sown. The majority had good establishment results and all of the pastures survived their first summer.



*A drought-tolerant pastures field day at Charles Meckiff's property at Darriman.*

All of the sowings in the second year (2010) were excellent and benefited from the summer and early autumn rains in 2011. Year three sowings are currently underway. A range of perennial species has been sown including lucerne, cocksfoot, phalaris, fescue and kikuyu.

The project has equipped the participants with knowledge of suitable species and varieties for their area, better sowing techniques and an understanding of soil testing and fertiliser requirements. The participants have improved their skills in species identification, establishment and assessment.

The project is aiming to have at least 500 hectares of perennial pastures established by 2012. Participating farmers have worked hard, often in difficult conditions, to get the pastures established under the strict project guidelines. The drought-tolerant pastures group was awarded the Special Network Award at the recent YYLN 2011 Landcare Awards.

**For further information please contact Samantha Monks on 0419 371497 or by email at [samantham@wgcm.vic.gov.au](mailto:samantham@wgcm.vic.gov.au)**



*The drought-tolerant pastures group with their Special Network Award at the 2011 Yarram Yarram Landcare Awards.*



Silos at Catawba Farm with the Appalachian Mountains in the background.



Bo (William) Wines, a farmer from Catawba Valley, Virginia, was one of more than 70 volunteers at a workday organised by Catawba Landcare at Catawba Farm.

# Landcare American

**Virginia is the heartland of the US Landcare initiative. Virginia, which covers roughly half of Victoria's area and is home to 7.7 million people, currently has two Landcare groups.**

While many of the issues that confront US landholders are different, the process where groups of landholders identify issues of common concern (and these issues provide the impetus for action), are much the same as in Australia. Virginia's Landcare groups formed from local communities seeking solutions to specific environmental, economic and land management problems.

Landcare Virginia-style doesn't have a strong focus on revegetation. Virginia has 63 per cent forest cover and a forgiving climate of more than 100 centimetres average annual rainfall. The emphasis is on triple bottom-line outcomes – making sure environmental and social factors are considered alongside financial performance. Although agriculture contributes US\$55 billion each year to Virginia's economy, 53 percent of the state's 60,000 farmers operate at a net loss (a 2002 figure). While farming costs have risen with inflation, agricultural commodity prices and farmer incomes have remained the same.

The Grayson Landcare Group was formed in 2005 in Grayson County, southwest Virginia. Grayson County has a long farming tradition. The Grayson Landcare Group promotes the adoption of sustainable farm and land management practices. This includes rotational grazing to improve productivity and installing off stream watering systems to help protect waterways.

## **Landcare group markets its own natural foods**

Members of the Grayson Landcare Group established Grayson Natural Foods in an endeavour to increase landowner incomes and return more money to the local community. Grayson Natural Foods is a co-operative, grass-fed beef cattle processing and marketing enterprise that produces and markets value-added beef and aims to enhance the viability of local farms and protect them from the pressures for subdivision.





The New River, Virginia – a US heritage river.

# style

By John Robinson

The Angus cattle that produce Grayson Natural Foods beef are raised according to an agreed set of protocols, including no antibiotics, hormones, or steroids. To eliminate middlemen Grayson Natural Foods sells its beef hamburgers and steaks direct to consumers, including up-market restaurants in Washington DC (six hours away) and universities. All income, other than operating costs, is returned to the participating farmers.

According to Jerry Moles, Grayson Landcare Group Facilitator, consumers will pay more for quality, safety and good stewardship.

"Demand for Grayson Natural beef exceeds supply, so the Landcare group is looking for more local farmers who are willing to raise grass-fed cattle according to our strict protocols. This illustrates that our shared belief in the triple bottom-line and a willingness to work together can make a difference."

The group has plans to establish a meat processing facility to further benefit the local economy. Momentum is building in the local foods movement across the US. In mid-2010 there were 6132 farmers markets operating across the country –

an increase of 16 per cent from 2009. This reflects the growing popularity of locally grown, farm fresh produce.

## **Catawba Farm a Landcare incubator**

Catawba Landcare Group was established in 2006 to encourage improved environmental stewardship among landholders in the Catawba Valley. The valley is at the headwaters of the Catawba Creek, a tributary of the Roanoke River and the Upper James River, which feeds into Chesapeake Bay. Catawba Landcare has instituted a streamcare program to restore and protect the valley's streams and rivers, as these waterways ultimately reach millions of people downstream.

The 150-hectare Catawba Farm is the Catawba Valley's major landmark. It has a long history as a resort, tuberculosis sanatorium and dairy. Virginia Tech University has owned the farm since the 1980s. In the mid-1990s it unsuccessfully attempted to sell the property for a prison, golf course and housing. The local community wanted to see the site put to a productive use and were very concerned at its potential sale.

Catawba Landcare helped develop a vision for Catawba Farm as a Landcare incubator, with the aim of it becoming a productive,

sustainable and self-supporting model farm.

The group's vision for Catawba Farm is gradually being realised. The Catawba Sustainability Centre was established at the farm in 2009, with funding from Virginia Tech University and a range of government agencies. The sustainability centre has been set up as a showcase for students and the local community. It is running projects on innovative land management practices that create better land stewardship and projects that support new and expanding agricultural and natural resource businesses.

Catawba Landcare has also played a role in the establishment of the Catawba Valley Farmers Market.

While Landcare in the US is still at a formative stage, the Catawba Landcare Group and the Grayson Landcare Group are at the forefront of efforts to promote sustainable practices among their communities.

*John Robinson visited Virginia and North Carolina in 2008 on a Fellowship from Australian Landcare International to get a sense of how Landcare is being applied in the US and to see how Australian Landcarers can best support the emerging US Landcare initiative.*

“

*Members of the Grayson Landcare Group established Grayson Natural Foods in an endeavour to increase landowner incomes and return more money to the local community.*

”

# Innovative revegetation



*Lyn Herbert and Dave Bateman with a 14-month-old Blue Gum at Moyarra – the result of a trial to revegetate steep slopes in the south Gippsland hills more efficiently and effectively.*

**Two large-scale revegetation projects that were part of the Bass Coast Landcare Network's Land Stewardship project in 2009 have yielded some interesting findings on how steep slopes can be revegetated more effectively and efficiently.**

Steep slope direct seeding in the South Gippsland hills is generally undertaken using heavy earthmoving equipment. This exposes large areas of soil on very steep gradients of land. The costs are high; there are soil erosion risks and safety concerns for the dozer drivers.

Steep hillside sites (five hectares each) on Bruce and Lyn Herbert's property at Moyarra and Brian and Cheryl Enbom's property at Jumbunna were involved in the project. Both families have also participated in the DSE EcoTender program.

Three methods were used on each site. They included planting of 5000 tubestock, sowing four kilograms of indigenous seed onto bare ground (no till) and direct seeding one kilogram of pre-germinated seed.

Standard Landcare practice would have involved planting 10,000 tubestock and

spot spraying the hills. A combination of direct seeding and tubestock is more cost effective than planting tubestock alone. Labour costs are also reduced as it took only half a day to direct seed each hill using three people. Planting tubestock would have taken five days with three people.

## **Site and seed preparation**

Sites were sprayed six weeks prior to planting and seeded in early June 2009. Strips a metre wide were sprayed across the contours on the hills with a 1.5-metre gap in between the strips. The hills looked like zebra stripes from a distance.

Seed mixes were made up using native species appropriate for the sites. Of the five kilograms of seed for each site, 10 per cent was overstorey eucalypts, 50 per cent was middle-storey trees and shrubs and 40 per cent was seed from understorey species.

*The steep hills looked striped after they had been sprayed and seeded along the contours.*

“

*Steep slope direct seeding in the South Gippsland hills is generally undertaken using heavy earthmoving equipment. This exposes large areas of soil on very steep gradients of land.*

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# for steep slopes

By Dave Bateman



*A good variety of species have germinated across the site.*

One kilogram of seed went through a process of pre-germination. The remaining four kilograms of seed was mixed with 25 kilograms of sawdust as a bulking material prior to sowing. All the acacia seeds were heat treated, which involved soaking them in boiling water for 20 minutes prior to sowing. This process is called scarification and enhances the germination of hard-coated seeds like acacias.

The pre-germinated seed was seeded by one person moving across the sprayed slope and chipping out a shallow divot of soil at spacings of 1.5 metres (removing the weed seed from that particular patch). A second person then placed a small handful of seed in the small hole created.

The other section had the seed broadcast over the sprayed dead grass. Some tubestock planting occurred amongst these areas.

## **Positive results despite extreme conditions**

Weather conditions following the seeding were extreme. For the first seven weeks after sowing, conditions were mild and damp, ideal for germinating seed. At the end of October, conditions began to warm up, with no rainfall for a four-week

period well into November and high temperatures.

The pre-germinated seed at the Jumbunna property, facing north, struggled during this warm period. However, the site at the Herbert property faced the south-east and the pre-germinated seed was able to withstand the prevailing conditions.

The results from the Moyarra property are very positive. Grass growth was exceptional following a very wet spring. In the pre-germinated seed site, 14 species are strongly represented. A number of the Blue Gums are over three metres in height, with many other eucalypts easily standing two metres tall.

In the areas where seed was broadcast a good variety has germinated and is emerging.

One aspect that could be improved with the pre-germinated seed site would be to keep the eucalypt seed separate from the rest of the species. Controlling where the eucalypt seed was placed would allow for a more satisfactory spread of these plants and also improve the chances of independent understorey plants establishing.

*For further information contact Geoff Trease from the South Gippsland Seed Bank on 0400 746 828 or Dave Bateman from the Bass Coast Landcare Network on 0488 399 151.*

“

*The results from the Moyarra property are very positive. Grass growth was exceptional following a very wet spring.*

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Students from Balnarring Primary School have improved their school grounds and recorded a huge increase in birdlife. In 1996 29 different bird species were recorded at the school. In 2008 this had increased to 84 species.

# Schools get serious about sustainability

By Jane Liefman

“

*Schools use the School Environment Tracking system to input data and track their progress as they implement their school's environmental action plan.*

”

ResourceSmart AuSSI (Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative) Vic is a statewide environmental sustainability framework for primary and secondary schools that provides students with real-life learning experiences and leads to improved management of the school's facilities and resources. The program is co-ordinated by Sustainability Victoria in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, other environment organisations, local government and environmental education service providers.

There are five modules in the framework: biodiversity, action planning, energy, waste and water. Schools use the School Environment Tracking system to input data and track their progress as they implement their school's environmental action plan.

Earlier this year Aitken College, Balnarring Primary School and Eltham North Primary School were announced as the first schools to receive five star sustainability certification under this system. At the end of 2010, 27 per cent of all Victorian schools were involved in ResourceSmart AuSSI Vic.

Balnarring Primary School has a student-led environment team called the BEAT kids

(Balnarring Environmental Action Team) who work across all four ResourceSmart categories of water, waste, energy and biodiversity.

The school addresses sustainability using a whole school approach. Sustainability is taught inside the classroom and outside too when their wetlands become an open classroom. The school has a garden, a barn for chickens and goats, a worm farm and is involved in composting.

Students and staff participate in a weekly sustainable classroom challenge that focuses on energy and waste reduction tips. The school has installed a five-kilowatt solar system and has introduced many water reducing initiatives.

The school has enviroflush urinals, tanks to supply water for toilet flushing and evaporative coolers, dual flush toilets, security fittings on outside taps, a safety valve to detect surges in water use and a no watering policy for the gardens and oval. Any overflow water is piped to the Korra Bun-Yun wetland.

**For further information on ResourceSmart AuSSI go to [www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/for\\_educators\\_2439.html](http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/for_educators_2439.html)**



## Happy birthday Landcare!

In 1986 the Minister for Conservation and Lands, Joan Kirner, and VFF President Heather Mitchell announced an exciting new joint initiative called LandCare (initially spelt with a capital C). The strong community foundation of Landcare has ensured its longevity.

In this, the 25th anniversary year, the government partnership is being rejuvenated through the draft National Landcare Action Plans, input to the development of a new Victorian Landcare policy and the Caring for our Country review. The Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) has worked with its members to provide input to all of these processes.

In 1981 the Farm Tree and Land Management Group got underway with four Farm Tree groups and the *Trunkline* magazine. In 1986 \$200,000 of Victorian Government LandCare grants superseded Garden State Committee funding. In 1988 34 LandCare Groups were registered plus another 50 were in the process of registering. A conference in Bendigo followed and Landcare launched nationally.

The 1990s was the decade of Landcare. The main principles were integrating economic and environmental goals, long-term sustainability of agriculture, appropriate valuation of environmental assets, intergenerational equity and recognising the global dimension of Landcare action. In Victoria, Landcare broadened its farmer base with the City Landcare Program and by 1995 there were 285 groups in the FTLA.

At the International Landcare Conference held in 2000, Joan Kirner said that the total commitment of volunteers and paid staff needed constant replenishing and support from communities and government.

"Land protection initiatives needed to be based on the Landcare principle of community empowerment, ownership and action, backed by resource," she said.

Over 10 years later these calls sound familiar, and the FTLA is still going strong.

Landcare is a dynamic movement, difficult to quantify but very resilient. We look forward to reaching 50.

## Annual forum

Over 50 members and guests celebrated the FTLA 25th year at the 2011 AGM. Attendees reaffirmed the importance of funding for co-ordinators and facilitators, the need for increased funding for on-ground works and recognition of the importance of Landcare for community wellbeing.

After an opening address by Alexandra Gartmann there were sessions on Professor Alan Curtis' new Landcare survey results, farm trees for conservation and profit, capacity assessment of local groups, marketing to light greens and the Caring for our Country review.

The FTLA Committee of Management for 2011/12 is President David Clark from the Upper Mt Emu Creek Landcare Network, Vice President Alex Arbuthnot from the Maffra & Districts Landcare Network, Treasurer Peter Berrisford from the Bellarine Landcare Group and Secretary Richard Jamieson from the H11-H12 Catchment Action Group.

The ordinary members are Artur Muchow from the Middle Yarra Landcare Network, Karen Alexander from the Johns Hill Landcare Group, Aurel Dessewffy from the Murroon Landcare Group and Terry Hubbard from the Upper Goulburn Landcare Network, with the immediate past president Susan Campbell from the Springhurst & Byawatha Hills Landcare Group. The FTLA wishes to express its thanks to past President Andrew Stewart and to Allison Mudford for their service to the committee.

## Renewals

Renewal notices were due on 30 June 2011. If you are unsure whether your group has renewed please call the FTLA on 9207 5527 or email [ftla@vff.org.au](mailto:ftla@vff.org.au). Some groups assume that they are covered by the FTLA insurance and have subsequently discovered they are non-financial.



Alex Gartmann from the Birchip Cropping Group addressing the FTLA annual forum.

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*Landcare is a dynamic movement, difficult to quantify but very resilient. We look forward to reaching 50.*

”

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*The first step in the four-year management program involved dividing the property into three main areas, based on soil types: plains, heavy messmate and gravelly hill.*

”



*Dr Damian Bougoure, a soil microbiologist from DPI, was the keynote speaker at the Bass Coast Landcare Network's healthy soils, sustainable farms field day.*

# Healthy soil means sustainable

**The Bass Coast, La Trobe, Maffra, South Gippsland and Yarram Yarram Landcare Networks are involved in a project that aims to build knowledge about managing soils for productive and sustainable agriculture in Gippsland.**

The project is looking at as many different soil management strategies as possible, including high-input, nitrogen, potassium, phosphorous, biological, organic and biodynamic approaches. Each Landcare network is developing its own programs as part of the three-year project which has been funded by Caring for our Country and is being co-ordinated by the West Gippsland CMA.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network's most recent event was a Soils Big Day Out bus tour organised by Jill Vella. The tour took a busload of soil explorers to Hallston on the steep slopes of the Strzeleckis to view a sustainable pasture trial.

The pasture trial is evaluating strategies for establishing productive pastures on north-facing slopes. Trial co-ordinator and Landcare group member Malcolm Cock gave an overview of the practical aspects of establishing and running on-farm trials, including site preparation, monitoring and evaluation. This was valuable for the

soil explorers as many of them will be establishing their own trials in the future.

## **Fish Creek dairyfarmers embark on soil management program**

The tour then stopped at Graeme and Jenny Cope's property on flat country at Fish Creek. Purchased just three years ago, the 840-acre property has been converted from a low input beef enterprise to a high input, high production, dairy farm milking 600 cows.

The Copes' management strategy has involved using lime and commercially cultured microbes to stimulate soil biology, in conjunction with a conventional nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus and sulphur fertiliser regime.

Farm consultant Kevin Hughes, who has advised the Copes since 1994, explained that the first step in the four-year management program involved dividing the property into three main areas, based on soil types: plains, heavy messmate and gravelly hill. Soil tests revealed that the soil

was acidic, had low phosphorus and soil biology was low. Other issues were acid root in the plains area, weeds such as bent grass and moderate pastures.

Graeme Cope wanted to avoid ripping the acid mat and having to carry out too much oversowing to improve the pasture. He also planned to follow rotational grazing management and to apply nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus and sulphur at fairly conventional rates in winter and early spring, when soil biology is sluggish.

Kevin Hughes advised applying one tonne of lime per hectare each autumn to increase soil pH, as well as the addition of commercially cultured soil microbes. Graeme applies the microbes using a boomsprayer, which he says works extremely well. Some farmers in the area apply microbes by air.

Kevin also recommended applying half a tonne per hectare of pig or fowl manure with the lime to provide nutrients for the microbes and existing micro-organisms.





John Mulvany explains the fundamentals of soil testing, tissue analysis and different fertiliser approaches at a healthy soils workshop in Gippsland.

“

Only a limited amount of oversowing has occurred, yet pasture throughout the property is far denser and more palatable than when it was purchased.

”

# farms

By Jillian Staton

## Lime boosts soil biology

“Most people put lime on every three or four years, but I’ve found that annual applications give the soil biology a better boost, especially in the first three or four years of a management program,” Kevin said.

In most cases, choosing the right lime for the job comes down to cost and convenience. However, farmers should note the composition of the product they are considering as different limes contain additional chemicals depending on their mineral source.

Graeme Cope said the results of the program have been extremely positive.

“Only a limited amount of oversowing has occurred, yet pasture throughout the property is far denser and more palatable than when it was purchased. We’re getting a lot more production out of the pasture because it contains more rye and clover, and the cows are happy to graze it down nice and even,” Graeme said.

While soil pH has not yet risen above five, the acid mat is definitely declining. Kevin said that this is the result of increased biological activity breaking down the partially decomposed organic



Organics consultant Gerhard Grasser inspects the topsoil at Darryl Hook's Pound Creek property.

matter that forms the mat on the soil surface. Phosphorus levels have also risen significantly – far more than has been applied – suggesting that soil biology has unlocked existing deposits.

Graeme believes the program has been a worthwhile investment.

“The lime and microbes don’t replace fertiliser but they certainly help to drive the pasture.”

Graeme and Kevin are not expecting the same dramatic results each year. Kevin Hughes believes a 60 per cent

improvement in the first year is realistic, and then it’s more gradual.

“Nevertheless, the cumulative improvements that Graeme is likely to see will definitely be worthwhile. They include an additional inch of topsoil each year, improved water holding capacity and improved soil structure that will enable the soil to hang on to more nutrients. Over time, this means a more productive soil using far less inputs,” Kevin said.

**For further information contact  
Tony Gardner on 1300 094 262 or  
by email at [tonyg@wgcm.vic.gov.au](mailto:tonyg@wgcm.vic.gov.au).**

# Around the State – News from the

## **Glenelg Hopkins**

The Glenelg Hopkins Environmental Achievement Awards will be held at Hamilton Exhibition and Conference Centre on 25 August 2011. There has been strong interest in all of the categories. Over 60 groups applied for Administration Support Grants, which have now closed for 2011. The grants assist groups to pay their insurance and other administration costs.

The annual Group Health survey was undertaken in the region. Better planning, attracting new members and accessing external support were highlighted as issues that need addressing.

Sheepvention will be held from 1-2 August 2011. The Landcare team will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Landcare with a gathering of Landcarers from around the region for a morning tea.

*For further information contact  
Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.*

## **Port Phillip and Westernport**

Support for Landcare and other community-based natural resource management is stepping up again in the region. Following negotiations, funding has now been secured from Melbourne Water, DAFF's Regional Landcare Facilitator Initiative and DSE's Vision for Werribee Plains Initiative.

To date four positions (2.4 full-time equivalent) have been filled with advertising for another three positions underway. In the Western Port catchment we welcome Geoff Boyes and Bridgette MacCallum to the Cardinia Environment Coalition; Joel Geoghegan to the Bass Coast Landcare Network and Kathleen Bartlett to the South Gippsland Landcare Network. In the Werribee catchment we welcome Emmanuelle Brunet to the Port Phillip and Westernport CMA.

*For further information contact  
Doug Evans on 9712 2296.*

## **Goulburn Broken**

We have been busy in funding mode – attempting to place community projects together to fund Landcare works across the catchment. Our networks have also been very busy with their projects. More than 100 people attended the Gecko CLaN Landcare gathering to watch the documentary *Food Inc* at the Swanpool cinema.

Landcare groups and networks have been working with the CMA on delivering World Environment Day morning teas to the eight local government areas within the catchment.

Goulburn Murray Landcare Network held their Landcare Awards on 22 July in Nagambie – a testament to the passion and efforts of Landcare over the past 25 years.

*For further information contact  
Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.*

## **North Central**

It has been a busy time in the region with many groups applying for the 2011-12 Victorian Landcare Grant funding round. The CMA has held a number of information sessions to give groups an opportunity to hear about the funding round for the year.

The Landcare team hosted five Community Grants Writing courses for Landcare and community groups to assist them in mastering the art of grant writing. The workshops highlighted the importance of project planning and some key dos and don'ts when it comes to grant submissions.

We welcome back three groups; Lockington District Family Landcare Group, Gunbower Landcare Group and Echuca West Landcare Group who have come out of recess and are planning to start some projects in their areas.

*For further information contact  
Jodie Odgers on 5440 1883.*

## **East Gippsland**

Welcome to Emma Orgill, the new federally funded Caring for our Country Regional Landcare Facilitator for East Gippsland. Emma will be operating out of the Far East Victoria Landcare office and will be delivering her program across the whole of the region.

Volunteer Co-ordinators in East Gippsland will pool resources to hold a Care Groups Day during August – a day of celebration, recognition and reward for volunteers with Coastcare, FishCare, Waterwatch and Landcare. The event will be held at Lake Tyers with the theme of winding back time. Participants will be treated to presentations about the history of the region and have the opportunity to discover the natural beauty of Lake Tyers.

*For further information contact  
Sandie Brown on 5150 3581.*

## **Mallee**

The season ahead looks promising for the Mallee Landcare community, particularly for those who have tree planting planned. The Yelta Landcare Group, headed up by Pauline Bartels, has been particularly active with tree planting in the Merbeina area and has engaged the community to a greater degree than ever before.

The VFTLA Red Cliffs Community Landcare Group is offering a unique approach to Landcare in the Sunraysia region. It is a whole of school concept where the senior students from Red Cliffs Secondary College form the group's executive with a shadow adult executive as mentors. The accountancy students run the books, the tech and woodwork students design and produce project construction plans, while the agriculture students take care of the agronomy and botany.

The school hopes to develop the group, in conjunction with the wider community, to raise its profile locally and conduct activities around the Red Cliffs area that help develop a greater sense of community pride and ownership. A number of other schools in the region are now watching this development very closely with the intention of mirroring the concept if it proves successful.

*For further information contact  
Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.*



*The VFTLA Red Cliffs Community Landcare Group is offering a unique approach to Landcare in the Sunraysia region.*





# Regional Landcare Co-ordinators



The South Gippsland Landcare Awards had a Friday the 13th theme. The Landcare folk believe the scariest things in the region are weeds and pest animals and this was reflected in their costumes.

## North East

Interviews are underway for the production of a DVD celebrating 25 years of Landcare in the region. A digital library of Landcare history is also being produced. Documents, photographs and videos are being collated for the production.

Two part-time, Caring for our Country funded Regional Landcare Facilitators have been busy working with the Landcare networks in the region. Amber Croft and Dave Cromarty are employed and managed by North East Landcare – a collective of all four Landcare networks.

The newest network, the Mitta to Murray Landcare Network, is starting to develop an action plan, and other networks are updating their existing plans. This has been facilitated by Moragh Mackay from Bass Coast Landcare Network as part of the Network Planning Toolkit project.

**For further information contact**  
**Tom Croft on (02) 6024 9107.**

## West Gippsland

Both the South Gippsland and Yarram Yarram Landcare Networks local Landcare Awards were well attended and showcased the great work being done in these areas. A wide range of local and regional business sponsors were also represented. Winners from the local awards will be nominated for

the state awards to be held later this year.

A growing interest in soil health is evident across the region with more than 300 people attending a series of soil health field days held over recent months. This is year one of a three-year project that is clearly meeting an important need for landholders.

**For further information contact**  
**Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.**

## Wimmera

The Wimmera Landcare community is underway with its annual program of community plant out days. With water back in the Wimmera and greener landscapes a major talking point, it's been exciting to introduce more people to Landcare through these events.

Events were hosted by Jallukar, Concongella, Crowlands, Northern Grampians and Great Western in June and July. The Yarrilinks plant out at Murtoa on 6-7 August 2011 will bring city-based migrants, local farmers and community members together. Hindmarsh Landcare Network will deliver the final plant out weekend on 20-21 August 2011.

The CMA, Hindmarsh Landcare Network and Project Platypus have recently participated in the Land Stewardship Replication Trial project run by Bass Coast Landcare Network in collaboration with Nature Matters and the DSE ecoMarkets

team. The project has led to some very useful discussion and planning for our region.

**For further information contact**  
**Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.**

## Corangamite

The biennial Corangamite Landcare Awards were held on 22 July 2011 and people gathered to celebrate the achievements of the many individuals, groups and organisations that have contributed to improving our region. Congratulations to all of the winners and nominees.

Congratulations are also due to the groups who were successful in receiving funding through the 2011/2012 Corangamite Landcare Grants.

New partnerships with West Vic Dairy and Heytesbury & District Landcare Network have developed into a series of farm focus workshops. The Upper Barwon Landcare Network and CMA staff have also been involved in a Landcare Stewardship Replication research trial sponsored by DSE.

Landcare celebration projects are being planned for the 25th anniversary and Volunteer Recruitment Initiative projects are underway along with a suite of workshops, bus tours and farm walks.

**For further information contact**  
**Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.**

# In brief

## Grassland conference

Wyndham City is hosting a grassland management conference in November 2011.

The conference is an opportunity for those managing biodiversity in the plains to share research and techniques, create networks and to enhance their grassland management skills.

For further information go to [www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/grasslandmanagementconf](http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/grasslandmanagementconf)

## New Zealand Landcare Trust

The New Zealand Landcare Trust will be holding a conference in the Waikato region (North Island, Bay of Plenty area close to Rotorua and the Coromandel Peninsula) from 7-8 March 2012.

For further information visit the website at [www.landcare.org.nz/](http://www.landcare.org.nz/)

## Get connected with Landcare Victoria online

Landcare Victoria now has its own YouTube channel. Subscribe to the channel to view videos from all around the state including videos from the North Central CMA about the birth of Landcare in St Arnaud 25 years ago. Go to [www.youtube.com/user/landcarevic](http://www.youtube.com/user/landcarevic)

Extend your networks into the social online space by becoming a friend of

Landcare Victoria on Facebook. Share information, events and links to articles of interest with other Landcarers and beyond to spread the word about Landcare.

## Go to Facebook and search for Landcare Victoria.

## Victorian Landcare turns 25 this year

There are activities being planned across the state to celebrate Landcare's 25th anniversary in Victoria. Groups and networks are encouraged to plan their own

activities and a number of resources are available on the Gateway to help with this.

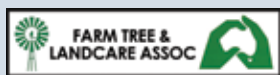
A much anticipated highlight of the celebrations will be the 2011 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony to be held at Government House in Melbourne on 16 November 2011.

To find out more about the 25th anniversary visit [www.landcarevic.net.au](http://www.landcarevic.net.au)



A grassland conference being held in November is aiming to improve biodiversity management within the Volcanic Plain Grasslands.

The Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment and distributed in partnership with the Farm Tree & Landcare Association and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare and natural resource management among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



## Mailing list enquiries

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Farm Tree & Landcare Association

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