VICTORIAN

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& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

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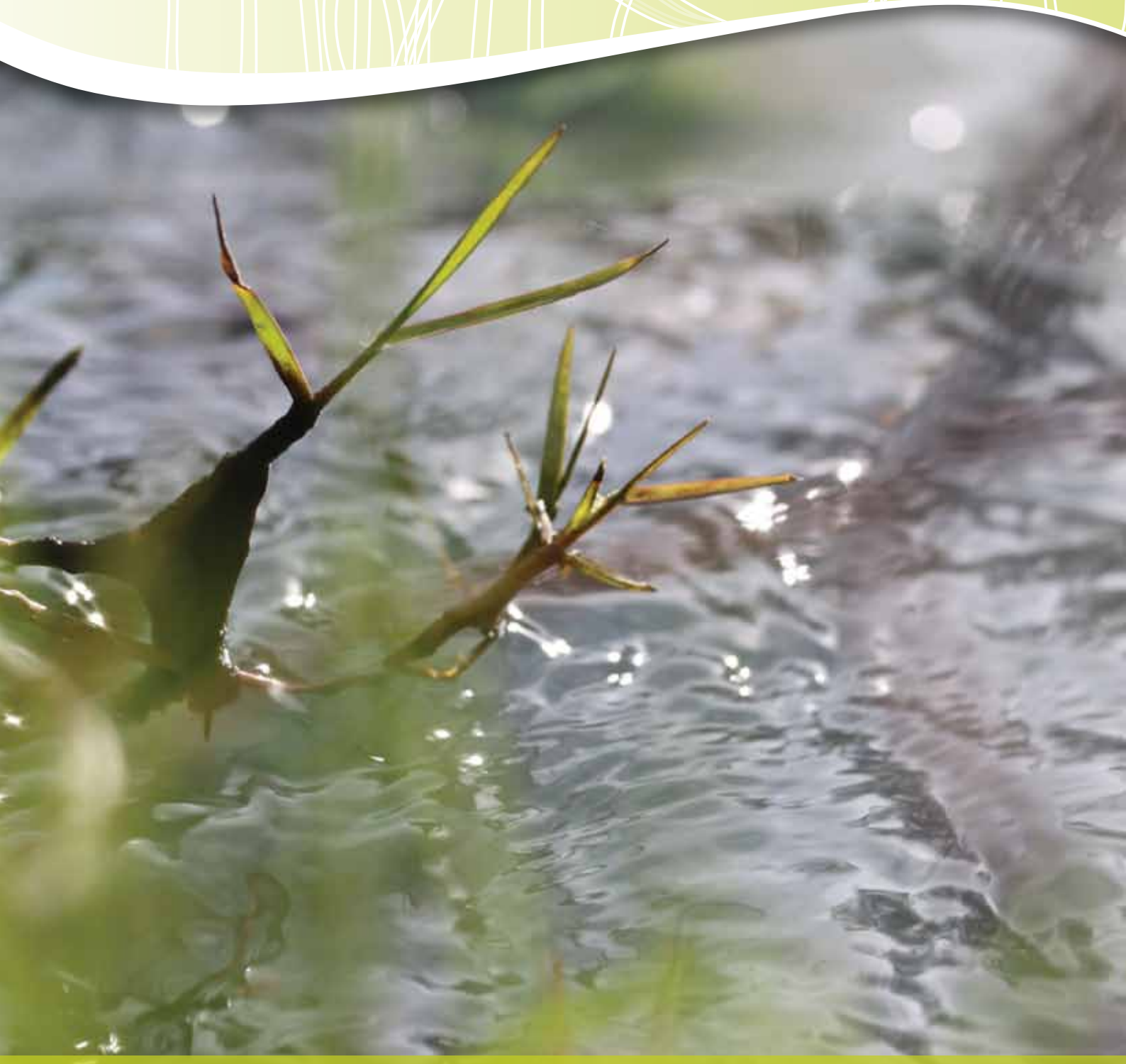

MANAGING WATER FEATURE

Yarra Pygmy Perch rescue mission

Creating and restoring wetlands

Aquatic weed alert

State Government Victoria

Landcare Victoria

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

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Installing netting over new plants at the stormwater wetlands below Stawell Hospital.

The Yarra Pygmy Perch is a small fish with a dangerously small population.

Many spring wetlands in the Strathbogie Ranges are surrounded by grazing land.

Contents

Editorial contributions
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Cover photograph
Mullaroo grass on the bank of the Mullaroo Creek at Lindsay Island in the north-western corner of Victoria, by David Wood.

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From the Minister

It gives me great pleasure to be a part of the Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine – a publication that showcases the diversity and efforts of so many Victorian Landcarers.

I'm looking forward to working more closely with Landcare groups whose protection and conservation work is an essential part of preserving Victoria's valuable natural assets.

As the Member for Warrandyte since 2006, I've seen first-hand the difference local volunteers can make to our environment and landscape.

This issue's topic, decided before the January and February floods, deals with the real issues our community is facing, and the important role Landcare plays in flood recovery; helping to support those in need by sharing information and resources.

In this issue there is a range of stories about managing water. Two dairy farming families in West Gippsland discuss their involvement in the Corner Inlet Connections Project. Stretching from the hills to the sea, the project aims to reduce the flow of nutrients and sediments into Corner Inlet and so improve the health of the inlet, particularly its seagrass meadows which are sensitive to nutrients in the water. Peter and Lynne Truscott, who live near the coast, are upgrading their effluent management system, while high up in the Strzelecki Ranges Trent and Belinda Crawford are improving water quality by removing blackberries from local waterways.

There are also stories on wetland management, the fate of the Yarra Pygmy Perch and Victoria's first Indigenous Landcare group.

I'm also looking forward to being a part of celebrations throughout Victoria to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of Landcare in Victoria. The first group was formed at Winjallok near St Arnaud in 1986; I doubt the members of that group would have predicted how eagerly Landcare would be embraced across Australia and around the world. For more information on 25th anniversary activities go to www.landcarevic.net.au/25years

I look forward to more contact with you and being a part of your work and achievements and believe that the best environmental outcomes can be achieved by working together.

Thank you

Ryan Smith
Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Devastated by a prolonged drought, the town of Wycheproof is now adjusting to new lakes. This photograph was taken from the back of the Wycheproof Cemetery, looking east.

Farmers take catchment approach to protecting Corner Inlet

By Gillian Hayman and Wendy Williamson

Nutrient, effluent and fertiliser control at Yanakie

Peter and Lynne Truscott milk 300 cows on 215 hectares at Yanakie in West Gippsland. A creek that runs through the Truscott property flows into Corner Inlet – a spectacular RAMSAR-listed wetland.

Peter and Lynne are well aware that their management practices can impact on the wider catchment and the inlet itself. The Truscotts are part of the Corner Inlet Connections Project. Stretching from the hills to the sea, the project aims to reduce the flow of nutrients and sediments into Corner Inlet and so improve the health of the inlet, particularly its seagrass meadows which are sensitive to nutrients in the water.

Farms are only one source of the sediments and nutrients. Land clearing, the mining operations of years gone by and the bushfires have all had their effect on the inlet. In recent months DPI and the West Gippsland CMA have been working with landholders in the area, focusing on fencing creeks, soils, fertilisers and effluent management.

Peter and Lynne Truscott on their Yanakie farm beside Golden Creek, where they have done some replanting. The West Gippsland CMA will finish the replanting works as part of the Corner Inlet Connections Project.

One of the benefits of reusing wastewater is that less fertiliser is needed, and consequently the farmer saves money.

With the help of Daniel Watts from DPI Ellinbank, the landholders have drawn up effluent, nutrient and fertiliser management plans. Often it is a case of putting down in writing the guidelines and procedures which the farmers have long had in their heads.

The Truscotts have upgraded their effluent management system and make the most of the nutrients and water from the ponds.

"We recycle the waste water for washing the dairy yard and spraying onto our paddocks in the summer time," Peter says.

"We hire a slurry tanker to apply the effluent onto the more distant paddocks."

One of the benefits of reusing wastewater is that less fertiliser is needed, and consequently the farmer saves money.

With the help of the soil and effluent samples he took, Daniel Watts recently drew up a guide for fertilising the Truscott property.

The plan shows that sometimes they can do with less fertiliser and the mix is adjusted according to the soil samples.

The Truscotts frequently refer to the DairySAT self-assessment tool which Dairy Australia recommends for dairy farmers to improve productivity and environmental outcomes on their farms. They have found it a useful guide for best practice in everything from effluent management to native vegetation and waterways, but were pleased to note that they had already adopted many of its recommendations.

The West Gippsland CMA has also been working with farmers on revegetating and fencing off riparian zones. Fencing off the streams reduces grazing pressure and helps prevent erosion and sediment loss. Trees provide valuable shade and shelter for stock as well as habitat for birds and other wildlife.

"We've been doing this for some time on Golden Creek, which flows through our property, and the mangroves in the inlet are definitely looking healthier," Lynne says.

Peter is pleased to see the birdlife increasing as he plants more trees beside the creek.

The Corner Inlet Connections Project is involving landholders at both the top and the bottom of the catchment.

> *It's a great area to be farming in with high rainfall and productive land.*

Cleaning up the headwater creeks in the Strzeleckis

Up in the Strzelecki Ranges, at the headwaters of the Jack and Albert Rivers, members of the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network are also working on the Corner Inlet Connections Project. The measures they take to protect their waterways will have an effect further down the catchment where the creeks meet the sea. The landholders have been removing blackberries, fencing off remnant vegetation and planting native trees.

At Binginwarri, Trent and Belinda Crawford are laying out plans for their dairy farming business. After some time share farming, Trent decided it was time to lease some land and manage his own herd.

The Crawfords are members of the Binginwarri Landcare Group and are working hard to remove blackberries within the headwaters of the Albert River.

Belinda grew up on the farm and remembers swimming in the river as a child.

"The farm was leased out for 20 years and unfortunately the weeds had a chance to take hold. Before we sprayed we couldn't even get to the water because of the blackberries. It had become pretty ugly," Trent said.

The adjoining dairy farmers have also been involved in the project which is managed by the West Gippsland CMA with funds from the Federal Government's Caring for our Country program.

According to Paul Martin, former co-ordinator of the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network, three Landcare groups are working together to improve the health of Corner Inlet and the Nooramunga catchment.

Trent enjoys farming in the area.

"It's a great area to be farming in with high rainfall and productive land. The Corner Inlet Connections Project is an added bonus that will improve our waterways – and there's an even further bonus that the work will have a positive impact downstream by protecting Corner Inlet."

In addition to the creeks, the farm also includes five acres of healthy remnant vegetation which is fenced and protected from grazing, productive clay loam soils and a recently renovated dairy where 120 cows are milked.

Trent and Belinda are now in their third season on the 150-acre property. Their future plans include fencing out Billy Creek, removing willows and re-establishing native vegetation along its banks. There are plans to link the two creek plantings with a shelter belt of trees and shrubs allowing wind protection from the westerlies in the winter and shade and shelter for the cows and pastures in the warmer months.

For further information contact Gillian Hayman at Dairy Australia on 5683 2663 or go to www.dairyingfortomorrow.com

Trent Crawford inspects recent work to remove blackberries from the headwaters of the Jack and Albert River catchments. The long-term benefits will include less sediment run off into Corner Inlet.

Wetland plants are very resilient and are expertly adapted to colonising new areas once the conditions are right.

A Southern Brown Tree Frog on Water Ribbons at Redman Bluff Wetlands.

A natural wetland flourishes after years of drought at Myston West Road in the Grampians.

Creating and restoring

After a dry and difficult ten years, the recent high rainfall, saturated catchments and flooding have seen some of Victoria's freshwater marshes and wetlands bounce back with vigour. It is very satisfying to see these areas lush with wetland herbage and attracting myriads of native insects, frogs and birds.

Some wetlands have not recovered. The worst have been denied water, flooded or drained and no longer have the necessary hydrological conditions to support wetland plants. Others have degraded slowly, their in-soil seed banks exhausted after years of cropping and grazing.

Even in these areas all hope is not lost. Wetland plants are very resilient and are expertly adapted to colonising new areas once the conditions are right. This can sometimes happen naturally, particularly if a source of seeds is close by in an adjoining wetland, and the hydrological conditions are still favourable. At other times these wetlands need a helping hand.

Once the favourable water patterns are restored, or in the case of a new wetland, created, there are a number of steps that can be taken to help establish wetland plants. This advice has been developed over many years of observing and experimenting with wetland plantings, particularly in Redman Bluff Wetlands in the Grampians.

Make loose rich soils

Wetland plants need loose, deep, rich soils. For farm dams topdress with 300 to 600 mm of saved topsoil (200 mm is the minimum). For restored wetlands the soil should be okay, but if the soil is compacted it may need to be cultivated.

Incorporate lots of organic material

Where adding topsoil, or cultivating, add as much mulch to the soil as possible. Wetland plants love to grow in pure organic material, so you cannot add too much organic material. Aim for 50 percent of the soil being made up of organic material.

Add nutrients

Wetland plants are hungry. New wetlands (particularly dams or ponds), and restored wetlands, often lack enough nutrients to allow wetland plants to establish rapidly. When adding topsoil sprinkle a layer of blood and bone below it. When cultivating, mix blood and bone into the soil.

Mulch heavily

A thick layer of mulch not only conserves moisture, it provides nutrients which feed the

From left, Aileen and Tom Banfield, Gypsy the dog, Henry Beckitt-Curwen, Vanessa Beckitt and Aidan Banfield in front of Snip Swamp, part of the Redman Bluff Wetlands. The Grampians are in the background and Douglas Beckitt-Curwen was behind the camera.

wetlands

By Aidan Banfield

plants over time. Leaves, woodchips, hay, cut grass, composted grass, potting mix or tree pruning all make good mulch. I've used 30 cm thick grass hay with good success. Another excellent approach is to flood thick long grass in situ, or grow a heavy crop of rye corn grass prior to flooding.

Plant generously

Plant wetland plants at high density. This helps them out-compete weeds, stabilises soils, absorbs wave energy, creates a microclimate and leads to quick growth. Large plants such as Water Ribbons should be planted at four per square metre and others (particularly most wetland herbs) at 10 per square metre. If budgets don't allow for planting a wetland at high density, choose the areas of the wetland with most favourable conditions for wetland plants, and plant these.

Use guards to protect plants

Wetland birds can cause heavy losses on newly planted areas. Guard plants for the first six months; longer if swans are present. Plastic tree guard sleeves with 4 x 1 metre bamboo stakes are ideal for individual plants. An alternative is wire or plastic mesh guards with 2 x 1 metre stakes. Use a cage with wire netting for dense plantings of several square metres, or vine or orchard bird netting on heavy wire frames for larger areas.

The role of wetlands in fire and flood control

In January 2006 the Banfields' two properties at Pomonal were burnt out by the devastating Grampians bushfires. They were fortunate to save their houses and camping ground. While some of this was due to their own efforts on the day, Aidan Banfield believes that his Redman Bluff Wetlands effectively stopped the fire in its tracks.

"It was amazing to see where the fire had run out of puff, over a short distance, once it hit the wet ground surrounding and in between the wetlands," Aidan said.

According to Aidan the wetland has also protected the property during the recent floods.

"It is the areas that were densely vegetated (with stock excluded) in and around the wetlands that have not suffered damage. Areas on our property and in the wetlands eroded by the floods were bare or sparsely vegetated. Downstream of the wetlands, flood peaks were not as big, being spread out over time.

"The wetlands had the capacity to hold back volumes of water and then release it gradually as the flows over the outlets eased."

Aidan has observed this was also the case with Brady and Goose Neck Swamps near Dunkeld when he visited them before and after the floods.

"These areas were still releasing banked back floodwaters weeks after the flood, taking some of the pressure off the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers downstream. Other wetlands and flood plains on these river systems played their part too – all adding up to less environmental and economic damage than we would have seen without wetlands."

Keep water up through the first summer

If possible add water by sprays or occasional flooding to keep soils a little moist through the first summer. Mulch helps with retaining moisture.

For further information go to www.wetlandsinfo.net.au/pdfdocs.html If you'd like to arrange a visit to the Redman Bluff Wetlands contact Aidan Banfield by email at aidan.banfield@wetlandsinfo.net.au

Re-snagging the Goulburn River to create habitat for native fish

By Jim Castles

Snags have been removed from our river systems in the past to improve boating safety and navigation, and in the mistaken belief that flows would improve as a result. Snag removal has caused the loss of in-stream habitat in our waterways, resulting in the decline of native fish populations. A group of fisheries and riverine ecologists from the Murray Darling Basin Authority recently estimated that native fish communities in the basin were about 10 per cent of their levels before European settlement.

Re-snagging, where feasible and practical, is increasingly becoming a priority for the rehabilitation of native fish populations in our waterways. While re-snagging on its own is unlikely to achieve native fish recovery, when combined with revegetating riparian areas, restricting stock access and managing flows, a net benefit for native fish populations is expected.

The Goulburn Broken CMA is implementing a re-snagging project in the Goulburn River between Murchison and Shepparton.

In-stream habitat mapping was carried out by scientists from the DSE Arthur Rylah Institute in 2010 to identify areas that have a low density of snags. The re-snagging sites will be selected based on this mapping and access to the waterway at the sites.

The fallen trees to be used as snags have been sourced from a number of locations across the catchment. River Red Gum, Grey Box and Yellow Box trees that had fallen in local government managed parks, reserves and roadsides due to storms and flooding will be used for the project. The CMA has received permission from VicRoads to use portions of some large trees that were removed as part of the construction of the Nagambie bypass.

The project is part of the CMA's Goulburn River Large Scale River Restoration Project and funding was provided by the Victorian State Government.

For further information contact Jim Castles by email at jimc@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Why are snags important to native fish?

Snags are the branches, trunks and whole trees found lodged in waterways. They form structures and create scour pools (deep holes) in the riverbed which provide habitat for native fish.

Fish use snags to shelter from fast currents and sunlight and take refuge from predation. Snags are also important to fish as feeding and spawning sites and as nursery areas for juvenile fish.

Recent investigations into the ecology of large native fish species have shown that snags provide vital habitat for native fish, including the iconic Murray Cod and the endangered Trout Cod.

Research carried out over a seven-year period in the Goulburn River near Shepparton found almost twice as many fish at a site with a high density of snags, compared to a site with a low density of snags.

A stockpile of timber that will be used to re-snag the Goulburn River. The timber was sourced from a park in Seymour and construction works along the Nagambie Goulburn Valley Highway bypass.

> *Fish use snags to shelter from fast currents and sunlight and take refuge from predation.*

From left, Dick Murray, Wayne Edwards and Desi Smith from the Bidja Bila Landcare Group helped plant almost 500 trees and grasses at Gateway Island recently. Photograph courtesy of the Border Mail.

> *Many Indigenous people are really keen to get some reconnection to the land and to have a chance to pass on their skills and knowledge to the young blokes.*

New Landcare group helps Indigenous men reconnect with the Murray

By Carrie Tiffany

Victoria's first Indigenous Landcare group has formed in the north east. The Bidja Bila, or men of the river, Landcare Group has started work at Murray Oxbow, a 13-hectare area of Crown land along the Murray River between Albury and Wodonga.

Richard Kennedy, Indigenous Involvement Officer with the North East CMA, said the group was formed in response to the *Finding Common Ground* report. Commissioned by DSE, the report recommended increased Indigenous involvement in environmental activities.

Richard Kennedy says the benefits of Indigenous people being involved in Landcare go both ways.

"It's obviously good for the environment, but it is also good for the community. Many Indigenous people are really keen to get some reconnection to the land and to have a chance to pass on their skills and knowledge to the young blokes."

There are currently 14 active members in the group. Richard says although most of the men were born locally, the Albury Wodonga region is a resettlement hub for Indigenous people and there are around 50 different tribal groups represented in the region.

The Murray Oxbow site has a lagoon with permanent water. The group is keen to do some fishing and see which fish species are present. They are also planning to make a bark canoe and traditional fishing spears using local materials.

Other Landcare projects include planting native trees and shrubs and removing introduced woody weed infestations. At the group's first working day they planted 500 native trees and grasses along the Murray River on Gateway Island.

Bidja Bila group chairman Desi Smith said the group provided an opportunity to meet new people.

"You come along and you're meeting people, and knowing that it's good for the environment and getting back to nature. I think it is a really good, positive thing."

Richard Kennedy said some of the younger members of the group were also undertaking training under a green jobs program at the local TAFE to help them get first aid, chemical user and chainsaw certificates.

"The Landcare group will be a good opportunity for these young blokes to get some practical experience. This will help them to find employment in the natural resources area," Richard said.

Richard is now off to Mildura to talk to the local Indigenous community about getting involved in Landcare. He hopes the example of the Bidja Bila Landcare Group will inspire others to get involved.

For further information contact Richard Kennedy at the North East CMA on (02) 6043 7613, or by email at richard.kennedy@necma.vic.gov.au

Indigenous Landcare resources on the Gateway

Finding Common Ground: A review of Indigenous engagement in Landcare in Victoria is available on the Victorian Landcare Gateway at www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/publications

A Landcare note for people interested in establishing an Indigenous Landcare group in their local area is available at www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/for-groups/notes

Waterwatch – communities caring for

Waterwatch Victoria is a community engagement program where thousands of Victorians volunteer their time to monitor and rehabilitate local creeks, wetlands, groundwater, rivers and estuaries. Waterwatch supports groups to get involved in local waterway monitoring and on-ground action.

A network of Waterwatch co-ordinators provides water quality and biological monitoring training and supports Waterwatch volunteers, schools and community groups. For further information go to www.vic.waterwatch.org.au

Mudgegonga volunteers inspire local change

By Emma Nilsson

A dedicated group of Waterwatch volunteers in Victoria's north east has continued water quality monitoring in the face of prolonged drought, the 2009 bushfires and severe flooding.

In February 2007 members of the Mudgegonga Landcare Group started water quality monitoring three waterways that flow into the Ovens River after they suspected Mudgegonga might be the source of poor water quality in the area.

Since that time members have tested eight local sites along the Barwidgee and Happy Valley Creeks each month. The sites are monitored for reactive phosphorus, turbidity, nitrate, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, temperature, pH and macro-invertebrates.

A Waterwatch team based at the North East CMA has offered support and guidance to the Mudgegonga Waterwatch group. The team analyses the group's monthly data and develops an annual report that demonstrates how the results compare against the objectives of the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria).

According to Mudgegonga Landcare Group Co-ordinator Stephen Routledge the way that the data is collated gives a clear idea as to the environmental condition of the small creeks and catchments in the area.

"The information is useful for grant applications and looking at trends to highlight problems," Stephen said.

The group has encouraged local landholders to protect water quality by fencing areas of riverbanks, eradicating weeds and invasive species and reducing the use of pollutants.

In 2009 Mudgegonga was impacted by the Black Saturday bushfires which destroyed stock, fences, crops and many homes. The volunteers continued to monitor the local waterways, providing valuable information on erosion and sediment issues to the community.

Mudgegonga Waterwatch has been an inspiration to the 60 other Waterwatch volunteers in the north east who have witnessed the community rebuilding their lives and properties after the bushfires.

Despite difficult times the group has remained strong and continued to promote healthy waterways as well as raise awareness of the importance of improving catchment health.

For further information contact Emma Nilsson on (02) 6043 7616 or visit the website at www.necma.vic.gov.au

Two volunteers from the Mudgegonga Waterwatch Group collect monitoring supplies from Waterwatch Co-ordinators from the North East CMA.

Indigenous wetland vegetation is being planted along the river as well as aquatic plants that have been placed to provide emerging and floating vegetation – ideal frog habitat.

Building habitat for a special frog

By Rebecca George

For the past two years Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has made a concerted effort to rehabilitate a wetland along the Barwon River in Geelong. With funding from Shell, the project aims to encourage the once common Southern Bell Frog *(Litoria reniformis)* to return to the area.

The Southern Bell Frog is also known as the Growling Grass Frog due to the distinctive growling call of the adult male. This ground-dwelling and relatively large frog once had a population across its southern range numbered in the millions. Today, the frog is estimated to have a wild population of approximately fifty thousand and the species is listed as endangered.

The major reason for the decline of Southern Bell Frog populations in SA and NSW is chytrid disease. In Victoria, populations are relatively disease-free. However, declining water quality, changed water flows and loss of habitat are placing pressure on these frogs which will further reduce their resilience to disease and exacerbate broader population health issues.

At one particular wetland along the Barwon River, the Shell EcoVolunteer group at CVA has been busy removing willows and other invasive weed species and cleaning up general rubbish such as mattresses and shopping trolleys. Indigenous wetland vegetation is being planted along the river as well as aquatic plants that have been placed to provide emerging and floating vegetation – ideal frog habitat.

By the end of the project CVA plans to enhance wetland habitat at four other locations along a 20-kilometre stretch of the Barwon River in an urban area of Geelong. Rehabilitating several wetlands will minimise habitat fragmentation and encourage frog populations to move across wetlands and expand their habitat.

A Waterwatch co-ordinator provides a close-up of the many water bugs found in the rehabilitated wetland.

CVA has formed a partnership with Corangamite Waterwatch at the Corangamite CMA to establish a monitoring program and provide training and equipment for its volunteers. Volunteers generally visit the wetland once a month for ongoing rehabilitation works and for water testing. Collecting water quality information from the wetland has given the volunteers a greater understanding of the health and function of the wetland.

A number of family days and school excursions have also been held at the wetland. Waterwatch co-ordinators have used these opportunities to show families and students the diverse array of macro-invertebrates that live in the wetlands. Macro-invertebrates are a biological indicator of waterway health. An abundance and diversity of macro-invertebrates will create ideal conditions for higher wetland consumers such as frogs.

For further information contact Rebecca George at the Corangamite CMA on 5232 9100.

A group of young volunteers from CVA gets involved in water quality monitoring at a wetland near Geelong.

Regional Landcare Facilitators

The Australian Government's commitment to support a national network of Regional Landcare Facilitators continues to be implemented in Victoria with ten organisations contracted to host a Regional Landcare Facilitator.

The Regional Landcare Facilitators will work with the State funded Regional Landcare Co-ordinators to support community Landcare and production groups to adopt sustainable farm and land management practices. The facilitators are:

North East Ovens Landcare Network
Amber Croft and Dave Cromarty.
Tel: 0408 930 508

Glenelg Hopkins CMA
To be advised. Tel: 5551 3351

Project Platypus Association Incorporated
Bob Wallace, Bindi Lees and Trevor Barker. Tel: 5358 4410

Corangamite CMA
Grant Godden. Tel: 5232 9100

Far East Victoria Landcare Inc
To be advised. Tel: 5161 1365

North Central CMA
Ashley Beven. Tel: 5440 1809

West Gippsland CMA
Nick Dudley. Tel: 1300 094 262

Goulburn Broken CMA
Charlie Sexton. Tel: 5761 1619

Port Phillip and Westernport CMA
To be advised. Tel: 9296 4662

Mallee CMA
Tom Fagan. Tel: 5051 4331

The Australian Government will also work with the Regional Landcare Facilitators through their community networks to help land managers understand how they can benefit from the Carbon Farming Initiative. More information about the Carbon Farming Initiative is available at www.climatechange.gov.au/cfi

For further information contact Dean Jones, Caring for our Country Facilitator, on 5430 4530.

Aquatic weed

Infestations of aquatic weeds can choke waterways, restrict access for irrigation and recreational purposes and harm aquatic flora and fauna.

In Victoria, five aquatic species are declared as State prohibited weeds under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* due to their highly invasive nature and the threat that they pose to the State.

Adopting good hygiene practices such as washing down boats, clothing and fishing equipment is an effective way to prevent aquatic weeds from being introduced into new areas.

Landholders need to be extra vigilant in the search for invasive aquatic weeds following the recent heavy rains and floods. Aquatic weeds can spread rapidly following these events and potentially establish across vast areas of waterway making their eradication difficult.

Landowners are urged not to attempt to control or dispose of any suspect infestations themselves, but to call DPI immediately to arrange for the safe removal of the plants.

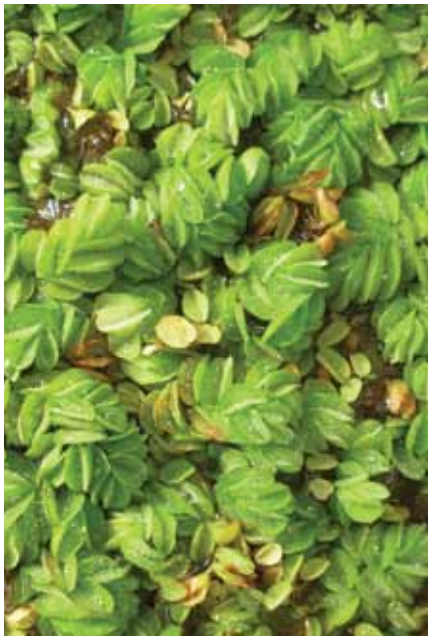
For more information about aquatic or other State prohibited weeds contact the Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Water Hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) *is a free-floating perennial herb. It is regarded as one of the world's worst water weeds because of its ability to reproduce rapidly and choke waterways.*

Water Hyacinth is easily identified by its swollen, bulbous leaves and purple flower with a yellow spot on the upper petal. Water Hyacinth infestations have been found in ponds and dams throughout Victoria.

alert

By Katie Le Blanc



Salvinia (Salvinia molesta) *is a free-floating perennial fern. Its leaves are oval shaped and covered in waxy hairs. Submerged leaves look and act like roots. Salvinia can grow very quickly and form dense mats across the water surface in just a few days.*

Salvinia infestations are generally restricted to backyard ponds. Salvinia poses a significant threat to local river and lake systems. A recent infestation was detected on a private dam in western Gippsland.

All species of ***Horsetail*** (Equisetum species) *are declared State prohibited weeds in Victoria. Horsetails have hollow stems with vertical grooves that are jointed. Instead of flowers Horsetails produce cones.*

Horsetails also have extensive underground root systems which enable them to spread to neighbouring properties. Horsetails are a semi-aquatic weed. At this stage Horsetails have only been detected in backyards. Horsetails are poisonous to stock if eaten.

Lagarosiphon (Lagarosiphon major) *has submerged growth and can be rooted or free floating.*

The simplest way to identify Lagarosiphon is by the leaves. They are stiff to touch, bright to dark green in colour and are arranged in alternate spirals along the length of the stem. Lagarosiphon is not currently known to be in Victoria.

Alligator Weed (Alternanthera philoxeroides) *can be identified by its hollow stems and white, ball-shaped flowers that appear on individual flower stalks. The leaves are glossy green and form in opposite pairs along the stem.*

Alligator Weed has previously been confused with a vegetable commonly used by the Sri Lankan community called Mukunu-Wenna. A number of backyard infestations still exist as a result of this confusion and some creeks in Melbourne's northern and eastern suburbs are also infested. Regional infestations have also been discovered in Bendigo and Warragul.

> *Landholders need to be extra vigilant in the search for invasive aquatic weeds following the recent heavy rains and floods.*

Winery benefits from wetland

Visitors to the Tahbilk Estate near Nagambie are generally thinking more about wine than about wetlands. While the Tahbilk winery, established in 1860, is well known for its contribution to the Australian wine industry it has also been making headlines for wetland management.

Scientists are electronically tracking the endangered Freshwater Catfish in the Tahbilk billabongs.

Bird hides, timber boardwalks and walking tracks allow visitors to get close to nature at the Tahbilk wetlands.

Forming positive partnerships has been critical to Tahbilk's success in its environmental projects.

The estate has been in the Purbrick family for five generations and the environmental ethic has been handed down with interest.

The winery is surrounded by a large water mass. This creates a unique meso-climate which enables Tahbilk to produce wines that are distinctly different to those in the surrounding area. While the Goulburn River flows to Tahbilk's west the estate also contains eight kilometres of meandering billabongs which make their way through the middle of the property.

The swampy billabongs were known by the local Aboriginal people as Tabilk-Tabilk – meaning the place of many waterholes. With the construction of the Goulburn Weir in 1889 the Goulburn River was raised five metres and the billabongs are now permanent.

The consistent water levels, slow flow and warmer temperatures have attracted an abundance of native birds, fish and amphibians, including some endangered and threatened species.

Habitat for endangered species

Tahbilk has been a member of the Nagambie Landcare Group since its inception. More recently it has been assisted by DSE and the Goulburn Broken CMA to develop a management plan to help protect the Tahbilk billabongs from impurities and eradicate introduced pest plants such as the Mexicana Lily.

DSE is electronically tracking the endangered Freshwater Catfish *(Tandanus tandanus)* in the billabongs. The Freshwater Catfish have been declining in numbers for at least the last 60 years throughout the Murray Darling Basin area due to habitat degradation, disruption in flow regulation and competition with introduced fish species.

The billabongs offer a habitat haven for the most southerly remnant population of the catfish in Victoria. The fallen trees, aquatic plants and slow flowing waterways of the Tahbilk billabongs are ideal habitat for the catfish.

One of the main aquatic plants that provides shelter for the catfish is also another endangered species. The Water Shield Lily *(Brascenia schreberi)* is a perennial aquatic plant unique to Victoria. The lily forms a wide floating fringe around the billabongs which the catfish use as coverage for nesting.

In partnership with DSE, Tahbilk has started a range of water rehabilitation initiatives to improve the in-stream conditions in the billabongs on the property.

The first of these strategies has been revegetation and fencing around the remnant vegetation areas to exclude stock. The second is the construction of a new bridge which will allow more effective fish passage between the Tahbilk billabongs and the Goulburn River. The bridge will ensure there is enough space and light for the fish to pass between the two areas.

Revegetation has been underway in the wetlands since 1995 when additional trees and understorey were planted to attract greater numbers of birds and gliders.

flavour

By Hayley Purbrick

In 2004 these efforts were complemented with nature walking paths, timber board walks and bird hides which are now open to the public every day.

Tahbilk is working with the local Goulburn Broken Indigenous Seedbank to revegetate much of the estate with native species such as the River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sieberi*), the Rough-barked Honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca parvistimina*) and the Wedge Leaf Hop Bush (*Dodonea viscosa*).

In association with the Seedbank, Tahbilk has also created a new trial site which will ensure the future supply of genetically healthy seed for direct seeding and tubestock revegetation projects on the Longwood plains.

Forming positive partnerships has been critical to Tahbilk's success in its environmental projects. By getting the appropriate agencies involved we've been able to access the right knowledge and expertise. This has helped us to get the most out of the property – both for our business and for the environment. It's about getting the balance right.

For more information contact Hayley Purbrick by email at hpurbrick@tahbilk.com.au

Landcare photography competition

Readers are invited to enter our 2011 Landcare Photography Competition. Entries are invited in three categories: sustainability, water and 'what Landcare means to me'.

There is a general prize in each category and prizes for primary and secondary students.

Each prize winner will receive $150 for their school, Landcare group, or charity of choice. The winning entries will be published in the magazine. To enter, send a low resolution jpg (under 200KB) to landcare.magazine@dse.vic.gov.au with your name, contact details and a caption. Prints and CDs will also be accepted and should be posted to: Project Officer, Victorian Landcare & Catchment Management magazine, DSE, PO Box 500, East Melbourne 8002.

You will need to gain the permission of anyone who is recognisable in your photographs. A high resolution file (over 1MB) will be required if your photograph is to be published. The competition closes on 10 June 2011.

Entries can also be uploaded and viewed on the Landcare Gateway: www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/magazine/vic/2011-landcare-photography-competition

Beth Brisbane took this photograph of a Royal Spoonbill in the wetland at Doctors Swamp, west of Murchison, in December 2010 – something that has not been seen for many years.

Revegetation work along Deep Creek by the Deep Creek Landcare Group will help create healthy waterways for the Yarra Pygmy Perch.

Deep Creek Landcare Group's Yarra

Once prominent in the swamps and lagoons of early Melbourne, urban sprawl saw populations of Yarra Pygmy Perch *(Nannoperca obscura)*, dwindle as bodies of water were drained to make way for development. This drastic change to their habitat has forced Yarra Pygmy Perch into only a few locations in Victoria, and the species is now extinct in the Yarra River.

> *The small size of the fish makes them vulnerable to predators and also makes it harder for them to compete for often limited resources.*

Yarra Pygmy Perch were first discovered in Melbourne in the 1870s. They are usually light brown with a pale belly, spots along the midline, and clear, faint yellow to black fins. They can grow to 6 or 7 centimetres, but are sometimes smaller than a dollar coin.

The small size of the fish makes them vulnerable to predators and also makes it harder for them to compete for often limited resources. Yarra Pygmy Perch are listed as a threatened species both in Australia and internationally.

Landcare takes a stand

The Deep Creek Landcare Group (DCLG) was formed in 1986 and is one of the oldest in Victoria. The group works around the Lancefield area to revegetate and rehabilitate land and promote sustainable Landcare values.

The group learned the local Yarra Pygmy Perch population was endangered in 2000 and applied to the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) for funding to help restore the Yarra Pygmy Perch's habitat, and hopefully save the diminishing species.

The president of the DCLG, John Blamey, said he was thrilled when their application was approved.

"The WWF recognised the dangerous position the Yarra Pygmy Perch population was in and was able to help us in our rescue mission," John said.

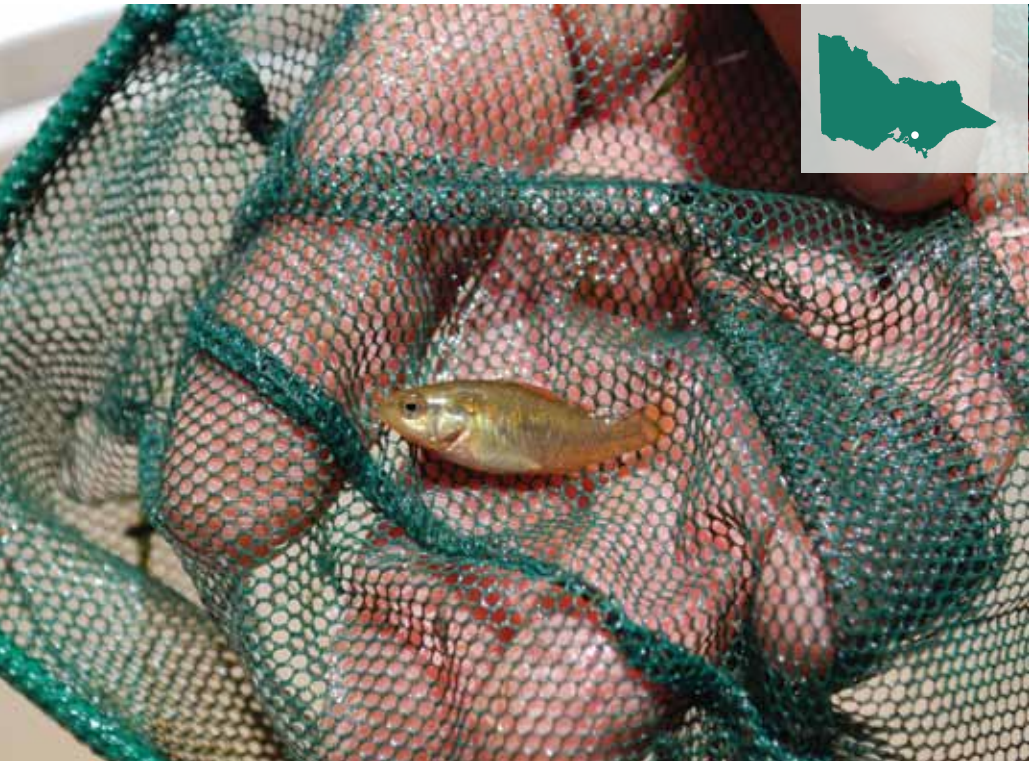
The DCLG received $5000 from the WWF which was used to remove introduced vegetation around the creek and replant native species. The area was then fenced off to protect it from further damage.

Waterwatch drought monitoring

The DCLG conducted fortnightly drought refuge monitoring during autumn and summer on behalf of Melbourne Water's Healthy Waterways Waterwatch program.

The drought monitoring project uses local knowledge and gathers observational data which is then reported back to Melbourne Water. The information helps Melbourne Water form drought response plans for the area.

Melbourne Water senior aquatic scientist Dan Borg said Waterwatch had been conducting drought monitoring for the past two years to keep an eye on the Yarra Pygmy Perch population.



The Yarra Pygmy Perch is a small fish with a dangerously small population.

> *In this case, the willows were out-competing the native in-stream vegetation that provides shelter for Yarra Pygmy Perch, which was leaving them vulnerable to predators.*

Pygmy Perch rescue mission

By Anushia Sivanesan

"The small Yarra Pygmy Perch population in Victoria is critically important to the genetic diversity of the species," Dan said.

"It makes the drought refuge program very important because we need to recognise and protect safe havens for threatened fish such as the Yarra Pygmy Perch."

The drought refuge monitoring is part of a long-term, co-ordinated plan for the species' survival.

Restoring river health

In 2008 Melbourne Water began a willow removal program in the Lancefield area to eliminate introduced plants that were dominating the waterways.

The General Manager of Waterways, Chris Chesterfield, said the site in Lancefield was identified as somewhere that significant work had to be done to protect a vulnerable species.

"In this case, the willows were out-competing the native in-stream vegetation that provides shelter for Yarra Pygmy Perch, which was leaving them vulnerable to predators."

Chris Chesterfield said that the help of local community groups like Deep Creek Landcare was invaluable when it came to maintaining river health.

"Community groups are a fantastic help because they know the local area well, are passionate about it and can dedicate extra time to each site. They help to implement and maintain the programs, and work with us to achieve the best outcome for the waterway."

Melbourne Water invested $115,000 to rehabilitate the site and with help from Deep Creek Landcare Group and Parks Victoria hopes to see a rise in the Yarra Pygmy Perch population.

A lot of work must still be done to try to increase Yarra Pygmy Perch numbers to a sustainable level. As a long-term alternative, Melbourne Water is looking into possible re-location of the Yarra Pygmy Perch species.

John Blamey said the Deep Creek Landcare Group was dedicated to ensuring the survival of the Yarra Pygmy Perch.

"A lot of good work has been done so far, but we still have work ahead of us."

For further information contact Anushia Sivanesan at Melbourne Water on 9235 7152, or by email at anushia.sivanesan@melbournewater.com.au

Sam Harrison from Waterwatch nurses a Yarra Pygmy Perch, with Mat Kinred from Melbourne Water and John Blamey, President of Deep Creek Landcare.

FTLA Update

By Susi Johnson

The Farm Tree and Landcare Association's annual forum was held in February and it was a good opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the association. In the past year 14 new groups joined the FTLA. We took the feedback from our last annual forum to the Ministers, both Federal and State, continued our representations for more co-ordinators, participated in the Landcare Volunteer Recruitment Initiative, the annual Landcare Forum at Halls Gap and Caring for our Country consultation in Canberra.

We auspiced 39 groups in applying for the Federal Government's Community Action Grants, made submissions regarding the National Landcare Framework and began discussions with the Victorian Landcare Council and the Victorian Landcare Network on working together more closely. We progressed our business plan, negotiated a property insurance deal, provided governance training and kits and increased our interstate membership. We also witnessed the terrible flooding and are helping members with recovery in any way we can.

FTLA history

2011 is the 25th anniversary of Landcare and the FTLA. One of our projects this year is to put together a history of the association. If you have served on the committee or been otherwise involved and have recollections or documents that would be of interest please get in touch.

The FTLA incorporated in 1986 as the Victorian Land Management and Farm Trees Group Inc, changing its name to include Landcare during the 1990s. We were involved with Open Farms and Greening Australia and hosted Landcare Liaison Officers. The Trunkline publication went out to 8000 members before the Landcare magazine started in 1996. Some issues – safety, tax, insurance and fears that bureaucracy would kill Landcare – appear regularly in the minutes.

Despite challenges, the number of Landcare volunteers, groups and networks continues to grow, as does the FTLA. We look forward to the next 25 years of Landcare.

Fencing farm dams to exclude stock will improve water quality.

Farm water solutions

By Heather Field

Inadequate or unreliable water supply or poor water quality can be a major limitation for property owners reliant on water from intermittent water sources such as rainwater tanks, watercourses or dams. Water supply and quality issues can restrict the scale and type of enterprises conducted, and the productivity and profitability of the property.

With our climate changing to less predictable rainfall patterns farmers reliant on surface and groundwater may need to adapt their farming systems to ensure availability and efficient use of farm water and sustainable production systems into the future.

Farm Water Solutions is a DPI project working with service and training providers, water authorities, retailers and farm communities to better understand and manage water access, storage and efficient water use in the grazing, dairy and horticulture industries.

On-farm activities, training and up-to-date information is available to help farmers get the most out of their water today while planning for tomorrow.

Training packages have been developed to improve the management of stock, domestic and other non-irrigated farm water supplies for environmental, economic and social sustainability in a variable climate.

This project has a user-friendly website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farmwatersolutions and a series of farm water agnotes and farming stories to assist landholders plan and manage farm water.

For more information on the training packages available please contact Heather Field at DPI on 5336 6607.

E-tags reveal the travel patterns of our native fish

By Rachel Rodger

Technology similar to e-tags that track cars on Melbourne's tollways will be used to provide details about fish communities in the Corangamite region.

A fishway on the Barham River near Apollo Bay.

The Corangamite CMA will trial the technology in Geelong's Barwon River to shed light on what's happening beneath the water and assess the prevalence of endangered species.

According to Denis Lovric, a senior river health officer with the Corangamite CMA, the study will provide the most advanced information on fish habitat, helping researchers assess the effectiveness of man-made interventions like fishways.

The study will take place over 12 months following construction of a vertical slot fishway – a man-made passage that enables fish to climb barriers and migrate up- and downstream for breeding. Environmental researchers from the DSE Arthur Rylah Institute will conduct the study, first catching as many fish as possible to implant them with a tiny electronic (PIT) tag. This will track the fish's movements and feed information to a computerised database.

Fish movements tracked up- and downstream

According to Denis Lovric the technology is not unlike a traffic control system used to record traffic volume on roads.

"A PIT tag reader will be built inside the fishway. It will be like the two rubber strips put on roads to monitor cars, but in this case it will track the direction of movement of the fish up- and downstream," he said.

"Fish need access to the river upstream as well as the sea so it's important we monitor the effectiveness of fish passages. Some of our native fish are endangered. We need to ensure they can access the best available habitat to complete their life cycles."

If it functions as researchers predict, the fishway built into the Barwon River's lower tidal barrage will also provide benefits for recreational anglers. Currently, species like Estuary Perch and Black Bream cannot access the Barwon River through Geelong. However, there is an expectation these bigger fish species will have access upstream and in time establish populations further along the waterway.

Once the infrastructure is in place and the study is complete, researchers hope to establish an online database of fish migration information for agency staff and public access. More fishways are planned for Kennedy's Creek, Skenes Creek, St George River, Yahoo Creek and the Gellibrand River. River health staff will also conduct studies to determine the effectiveness of existing fishways.

The Gellibrand River, which travels through the Otways to the Princetown coast, is a research priority.

Denis Lovric and his river health colleagues are keen to see whether there has been a positive impact on fish populations and water quality following the completion of more than 100km of rehabilitative work along the waterway in the past decade.

Denis Lovric in front of a constructed fishway. Fishways allow native fish to migrate up- and downstream for breeding.

Australian Grayling sighted

He said there were already signs threatened fish communities had improved. An Australian Grayling was photographed in the Gellibrand River last year. This is believed to be the only positive identification of the species in the waterway.

"As part of the study, we'll find out what effect the rehabilitation work has had on the river," Denis said.

"It would be fantastic if threatened species like the Australian Grayling, which have not been officially recorded in the Gellibrand before, are found in greater numbers."

For further information contact Rachel Rodger at the Corangamite CMA on 5232 9133 or by email at rachel.rodger@ccma.vic.gov.au

Managing bogs in the Strathbogie

Local Strathbogie Ranges Landcare groups have long known that the spring wetlands (locally referred to as bogs) are a unique and important part of their landscape. In 2005 a worrying trend developed where landholders were digging out their bogs to build farm dams for stock watering during the drier seasons, which inspired the Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative to run a bog protection program.

A Strathbogie Ranges bog. The bogs don't look like typical wetlands.

Researchers started detailed field investigations that revealed that although relatively common on the Strathbogie Ranges, the spring wetlands were unique to the area. Information days and field days increased interest in the diversity and ecology of bogs amongst landholders and most now value them as assets rather than nuisances that need improving by slashing and draining.

The diverse remnant wetlands are an environmentally significant, but depleted asset. The biodiversity values of the wetlands are many, including providing critical habitat for vulnerable species such as sphagnum moss-beds, Long-nosed Bandicoots and Latham's Snipe (a rare wetland bird).

Alpaca breeder turns wetland manager

Robyn Betts recently bought 100 acres in the Strathbogie Ranges with the aim of consolidating her alpaca breeding enterprise. When Robyn first purchased the land she had no idea that it contained wetlands. According to Robyn a site visit from a Wetland Tender field officer was a real eye opener.

The visit gave her an opportunity to understand the complexity of her wetland, its soils, plants and animals. Latham's Snipe, a freshwater wetland bird, was found during the site assessment, as well as evidence of Long-nosed Bandicoots.

Robyn's challenge is to maintain and enhance the diversity of flora and fauna.

"The management plan was great to help identify management options. It's a way of thinking about where weeds are now and how to monitor and manage the weeds," she said.

Fencing off significant areas from alpacas and occasional grazing of other areas is also part of the plan.

The knowledge she has gained from the tender process has broadened her focus from alpaca breeding to improving the biodiversity value of the property, particularly the wetlands.

Robyn Betts in the wetland on her property in the Strathbogie Ranges.

Ranges

By Jenny Wilson, Bertram Lobert, Janet Hagen and Simon Casanelia

Fairy Aprons are found growing in the saturated soils of bogs.

The wetlands are groundwater dependent – water seeps from the ground and provides seasonal, or year-round saturated soils. At many sites, soil saturation provides conditions for peat formation, where dead vegetation accumulates in the bog more quickly than it decomposes and builds up a spongy, anaerobic layer that then supports shrubby, heathy vegetation above it. Most of these wetlands are on private property and very few are in conservation reserves.

In recognition of the importance of these wetlands, the Goulburn Broken CMA provided an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives, through a tender process, to manage their spring wetlands for conservation. The Wetland Tender Program was funded through the Victorian Government.

Landowners tender to carry out management actions

The tender approach allowed landowners to decide how much financial assistance they require to manage their land for biodiversity conservation and used public funding efficiently by ensuring priority areas with high biodiversity values were targeted in a cost-effective manner.

Wetland Tender operated in several stages. Initially, after receiving an information kit, landowners choose to put in an expression of interest. A free, no-obligation site visit was then organised by a field officer. Some members of local Landcare groups were employed as field officers.

Following the site visit the wetlands were assessed for quality and size and management actions were discussed with the landowner. These actions were recorded in a management plan. Finally, the landowner decided how much money they required to carry out the management actions and submitted a bid to the Goulburn Broken CMA. The bids were assessed against a range of criteria, including value-for-money and quantity and quality of the wetlands to be protected. After the assessment phase landowners were notified of the result of their bid.

The Wetland Tender Program for the Strathbogie Ranges has now closed. A similar program for the Longwood Plains area is planned for 2012.

For further information contact Jenny Wilson on 5820 1100 or by email at jennyw@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Landcare and art in the Barrabool Hills

The Barrabool Hills Landcare Group has found a way to link art and the environment with the production of a recent booklet recording changes in the local landscape.

The booklet features an image of Eugene von Guerard's oil painting, *A View of Geelong, 1856*, on the cover.

The booklet also includes many before and after photographs of Landcare sites throughout the hills.

At the launch of the booklet, Mick Shawcross, President of the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group, said the group thought it was important to document and celebrate its achievements.

"Using the von Guerard is a way for us to show how significant these hills have always been to the Geelong community, and I think will continue to be," he said.

For further information contact Kaye Rodden by email at nidgee@reachnet.com.au

Around the State – News from the

Corangamite

The Landcare Impressions – Sowing the seeds of change in Corangamite booklet was launched in February at Derrinallum. The booklet showcases a collection of inspiring stories from individuals and groups from across the region. A great day was had by over 50 community members and group co-ordinators along with the Victorian State Landcare team. Well done to all those involved.

The 2011 Corangamite Landcare Awards will be held from April – June this year. Check the website at www.cma.vic.gov.au for information on how to nominate members of your community.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

The Victorian State Landcare team with Corangamite volunteers and co-ordinators at Mount Elephant for the launch of a new booklet about Landcare in the region.

Goulburn Broken

Our Regional Landcare Facilitator is well underway with getting to know the Landcare networks and putting together a sustainable farming program that everyone can get involved in.

Three new Conservation Management Networks have formed in the last 12 months. Our challenge is to co-ordinate works between these groups and existing Landcare networks. The CMA will be working with the networks and government representatives to ensure that the support for our facilitators is secured into the coming year.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

Port Phillip and Westernport

Support for Landcare and other community-based natural resource management is stepping up again in the region. Our unsuccessful bid to secure Caring for our Country funding to continue the CatchmentCare Co-ordination program led to the loss of local support positions. Since then, the CMA has negotiated with Melbourne Water and others to secure funding to restore support roles.

Agreement has been reached that 4.4 community NRM co-ordinator positions will be established until at least June 2012.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

West Gippsland

Yarram Yarram Landcare Network welcomes their new co-ordinator, Dan Garlick. Dan, along with Sam Monks, Bronwyn Johnson and the network board, are entering an exciting phase for the district. Maffra & District Landcare Network continues a phase of review and renewal led by co-ordinator Darren Williams and board.

Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network now has 20 Landcare groups. The most recent are the Friends of Land & Water Landcare Group based around the new lifestyle village in Warragul and the Latrobe Urban Landcare Group.

South Gippsland Landcare Network recently held a community meeting in Foster to look at a new Tiger Quoll Corridor Project. More than 50 interested people attended.

Bass Coast Landcare Network, in partnership with two other networks, recently launched its Landcare Stewardship Project and Soil Project. GippsLandcare has started on a promotions campaign to raise awareness about how people can get involved in Landcare in the region with a series of advertisements and articles in the local print media.

For further information contact Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

Glenelg Hopkins

While the good rains in the region have been great there has been some flood damage to crops and infrastructure. The CMA is currently assessing whether there has been damage to completed Second Generation funded work. The CMA will apply for funds to rectify this damage.

The region will be holding its environmental awards this year. Applications are now being accepted across the different categories. This is always a great chance to recognise and celebrate the excellent work people carry out that contributes to the improvement of our environment.

For further information contact Tony Lithgow on 5571 2526.

North East

Flood events have continued in the region over spring and summer. Some floods have wiped away years of Landcare work from our waterways.

The regional Landcare awards will be running in May – June this year. The awards will be part of our celebrations of 25 years of Landcare in the region. Keep an eye out for the call for nominations. A DVD of Landcare in the region is also being developed to mark the 25th anniversary.

An Indigenous Women's Landcare Group has been formed in the region and includes members from both Victoria and NSW. The group has already completed their initial plan and will be working closely with local community health organisations and schools. This group, as well as the new Indigenous men's group – Bidja Bila, was formed through the support of the Victorian Landcare Program, Volunteer Recruitment Initiative, Caring for our Country and the CMA.

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

Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

North Central

The region continues to deal with the ongoing challenges from the several flood events that have occurred over the past months. Many groups have been unable to complete their projects due to the rain – a very different story to the previous ten years. However, groups are still active and finishing off their 2009-10 Second Generation projects.

Welcome to Ashley Beven, the new Regional Landcare Facilitator in the region. Funded by the Caring for our Country program, she will work with groups in addressing sustainable land management practices.

Groups are currently reflecting on the past year by completing the 'supporting your group' survey. The survey tracks group health and provides the Landcare team with information to help plan support for the year ahead.

For further information contact Jodie Odgers on 5440 1883.

East Gippsland

The region has been challenged by both fire and flood in recent months. Members of the Landcare community send their good wishes to those recovering from these events.

A fire in Far East Gippsland in early February burnt out in excess of 11,000 hectares of grassland and bush. More than 20 properties had damage to over 50 kilometres of fencing. Several Landcare revegetation sites were destroyed.

The expressions of interest received for the 2011/12 Victorian Landcare Grants are positive and indicate that Landcare is healthy in the region. The Far East Victoria Landcare Network and Snowy River Interstate Landcare Committee have secured Caring for our Country funding for a Regional Landcare Facilitator position.

For further information contact Sandie Brown on 5150 3581.

The fire that raged through Far East Gippsland in early February destroyed several Landcare sites.

Mallee

The region has experienced a number of challenges recently with locusts, rain, mosquitoes, bumper harvests and now, in some cases, waterlogging.

Many farmers are reporting high numbers of rabbits and with plenty of feed around they have the potential to escalate and become a major problem very quickly. In response to this a number of groups are underway with their rabbit ripping programs. Weed growth has also been strong with the extra moisture. Groups tackling weeds such as Bridal Creeper this year will be kept very busy.

Major flooding in the region means extensive areas of Landcare works including fencing and revegetation will have to be repaired or replaced. A lot of these works were completed when groups had more support so this will put a huge burden on already strained resources.

The increase in water in the region is seeing previously parched wetlands and riparian zones teeming with flora and fauna. We are witnessing the return of some species that have not been seen for many years and in some places were thought to be locally extinct. It is a unique opportunity for us to appreciate the beauty and diversity of the Mallee.

For further information contact Kevin Chaplin on 5051 4344.

Wimmera

The region faced many challenges over summer with locusts, late harvests and floods. The flood recovery effort continues to demand time and energy as scattered fence lines and debris are cleaned up across the catchment.

The region has three enthusiastic Caring for our Country funded facilitators based in local networks. Bindi Lee is active in the west Wimmera; Trevor Barker is supporting the Hindmarsh Landcare Network and Yarrilinks areas; and Bob Wallace is working for Project Platypus.

Hindmarsh Landcare Network, supported by the CMA, will host the third Wimmera Landcare Forum in early April at the Little Desert Nature Lodge near Nhill. Extra water and colour in the landscape this year will make for a spectacular backdrop as we plot future directions and opportunities for Landcare in the region.

For further information contact Joel Boyd on 5382 1544.

In brief

Victorian Landcare Awards

The Victorian Landcare Awards will be running again later this year.

Go to www.landcarevic.net.au/resources/awards for information on categories and nominations.

The Victorian Bush – back through time

The Victorian Bush – its original and natural condition by Ron Hateley is an examination of the Victorian environment pre-1788. Using primary source material such as diaries, memoirs, artworks and newspaper articles the reader is invited to see the landscape as the first European settlers and explorers saw it. The book also poses specific questions related to natural resource management.

The book is available from Polybractea Press at www.polybracteapress.com.au

Source Catchments

Source Catchments is a water quality and quantity model designed to help natural resource managers and consultants develop targets, prioritise improvement programs and measure the effectiveness of catchment management activities.

The software provides a framework for modelling the amounts of water and contaminants flowing through a catchment and into major rivers, wetlands, lakes or estuaries. It integrates an array of models, data and knowledge that can be used to simulate how climate and catchment variables (like rainfall, evaporation, land use and vegetation) affect runoff, sediment and contaminants.

A 12-month free trial of Source Catchments can be downloaded at www.ewatercrc.com.au

Early morning at Doctors Swamp, west of Murchison. A photograph by Beth Brisbane submitted to the Landcare magazine photography competition. See page 15 for more details.

Next issue – Sustainability

The next issue of the magazine will feature stories on all aspects of sustainability – on the farm and in the community. We welcome your contributions on this topic as well as your general Landcare news and views. We are also seeking stories to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Landcare in Victoria.

Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editor by 10 June 2011.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
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