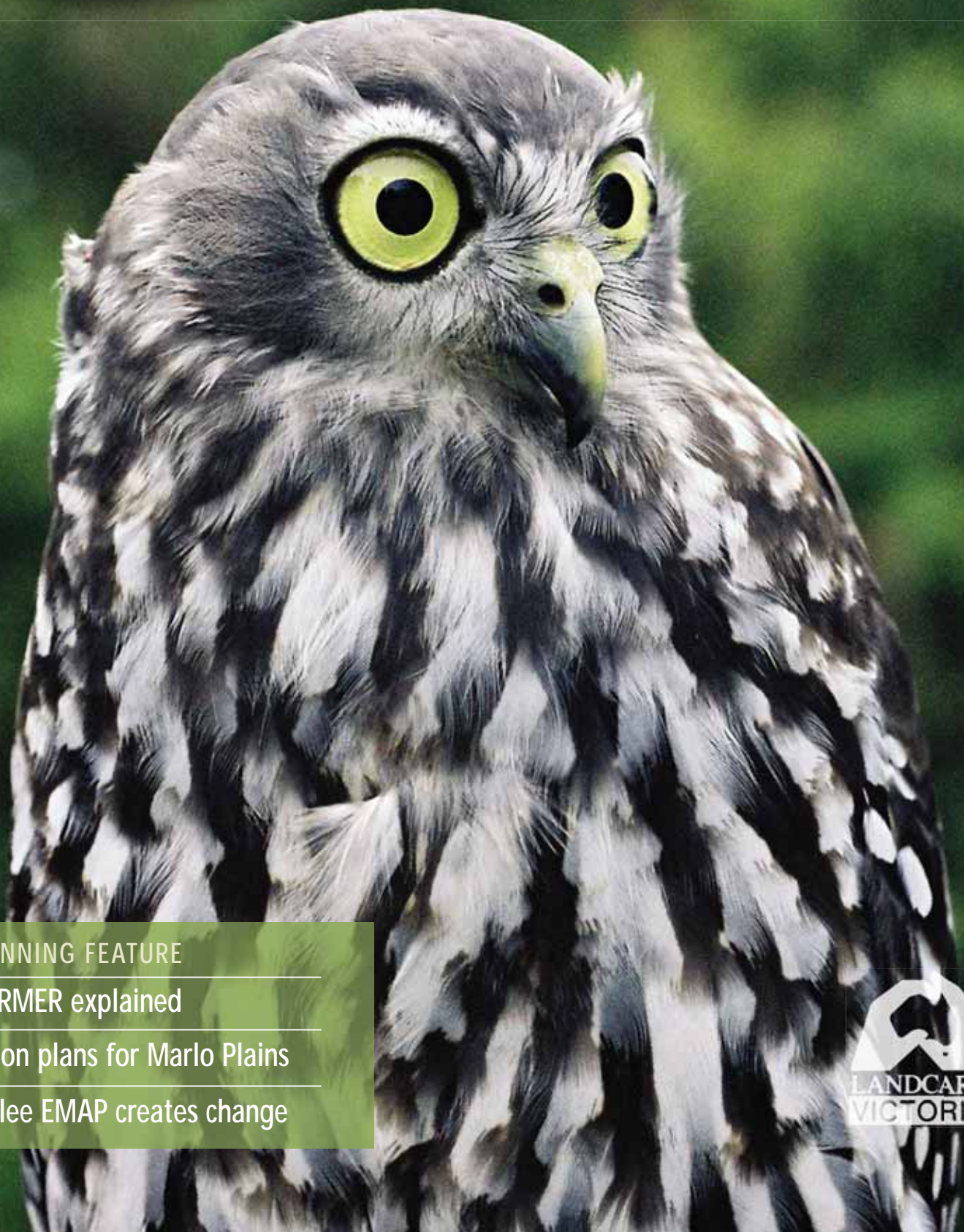


VICTORIAN

LANDCARE

Autumn 09 Issue 45

& CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



PLANNING FEATURE

eFARMER explained

Action plans for Marlo Plains

Mallee EMAP creates change



Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management

AUTUMN 09 ISSUE 45

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Waiting for the smoke to clear: Rex O'Keefe, a farmer at Bruarong, gets an update from Yackandandah CFA volunteer Neil Padbury. Rex had about 200 acres of his property burnt out during the Beechworth/Yackandandah fire in February, but was thankful not to have lost his house or stock.

From the editor

Welcome to our Landcare planning issue. When the editorial committee sat down to discuss this issue and came up with the theme of Landcare planning we had no idea that another kind of planning – fire planning – would be on everyone's lips.

We acknowledge the terrible loss that many people in the Landcare community have suffered as a result of Victoria's February bushfires. The people that get involved in Landcare are often also involved in their local CFA brigade and the many other community organisations that have been responding to this tragic event. We thank them.

In this issue of the magazine you'll find stories on some very sophisticated planning programs like eFARMER, EMS and EBMP, as well as the planning experiences of the successful Marlo Plains Landcare Group who started out with a wall of sticky post-it notes.

Landcare Expo

The country will come to the city on Saturday 18 April 2009 for the first major Landcare expo in Landcare's 22-year history.

The expo will kick off with a free big Landcare breakfast of bacon, eggs and tomatoes for the first 2000 people to arrive at Caulfield Racecourse.

Many Landcare networks and groups will be represented at the free expo. The aim is to show the people of Melbourne what Landcare is and give them the opportunity to become involved in existing Landcare projects or assist them to start urban groups.

The big Landcare breakfast will run from 8-10am. The expo will run from 9am-3pm. Contact your network co-ordinator, as many districts are organising transportation to and from Caulfield.

For further information on the expo email Trevor Colvin at tcolvin@bigpond.com

Next issue

The next issue of the magazine will feature some more stories on planning, under the banner of *planning for changing times*. Stories on how groups and individuals are coping with economic uncertainty and the rapid pace of change in the environmental and agricultural sector and fire risk are most welcome – along with general Landcare news and views.

Contributions to this issue should be sent to the editor by Friday 15 May 2009.

Carrie Tiffany, editor
carrie65@optusnet.com.au

Reader survey – the early bird catches the worm juice

It's time to find out what you think of the Victorian Landcare magazine so we can do some fine-tuning and give you the best possible read.

A printed reader survey will be included in the next issue of the magazine, but we are strongly encouraging readers to complete the survey online as it is cheaper for us to process. The online survey is open now.

If you complete the online survey before 30 June 2009 you'll go into the draw to win one of two 2.5 litre bottles of Worm Wizz. Christy Buck from Worm Wizz says the product is a biologically active worm extract that helps promote plant health and improves soil structure by stimulating plant root growth.

Worm Wizz can be used on native plants, ornamental trees and lawns and is suitable for most crops, pastures and fodder trees.

To complete the survey online go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/victorianlandcaremagazine

The results of the reader survey will be collated and we'll report on them later this year. All respondents will be in the running for a range of great prizes.

The Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management magazine is published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment and distributed in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Catchment Management Council. The magazine aims to raise awareness of Landcare among Victorian farmers, landholders, the Victorian Landcare community and the wider community.



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Feather-heads (*Ptilotus macrocephalus*) can be found on the critically endangered grasslands of south-west Victoria.



Nerida Anderson with her son Will and Meg the dog at the saline site on their Meredith property.



Fire recovery is at the top of the list for many Landcare groups across the State.

National Landcare heroes celebrated

Three Victorian groups were winners at the National Landcare Awards held at Parliament House last October. Longtime Landcare supporter and movie legend Jack Thompson congratulated the winners in front of a packed audience from Australia's fast-growing Landcare movement.

Jack Thompson said the awards were an opportunity to stop and say thank you to our Landcare heroes.

"These are heroes that might otherwise not get a thank you. The awards shine the spotlight on remarkable people turning

the tide against land and water degradation. Landcare has been an astounding success in Australia. The concept has travelled overseas. Our message is that people power can make an incredible change to the environment."

Hume City Council is an excellent partner

Hume City Council took out the Leighton Holdings Local Government Landcare Partnerships Award. Hume City is on the northern fringe of Melbourne. It is an area of very diverse land use with growing residential areas, industry and a vast rural green wedge. Over 30% of Hume's population speaks a language other than English in the home.

Hume City Council is meeting the challenges of this complex mix through the Hume Environmental Sustainability Framework 2002 which provides a clear analysis of the state of play in the area and what needs to be done to meet targets and outcomes.

The council offers a farm rate rebate to 430 primary producers with a focus on weed control. There is an 80% uptake of this rebate. A rural areas plant donation scheme provides 18,000 indigenous plants to landholders undertaking revegetation works. The focus is on works that complement remnant vegetation protection and riparian restoration.

Information nights, field days and tours are tailored to provide landholders with



The Leighton Holding Partnerships Award – from left, Penny Bingham-Hall from Leighton Holdings; Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts; Mohammad Abbouche, former Hume City Councillor and Mayor; and Jason Summers, former Manager, Sustainable Environment.

practical skills on using chemicals on the farm, healthy horses and healthy pastures.

A yearly multicultural planting day best represents the flavour of Hume City Council's work. For the past ten years this special day sees 28 different cultural groups coming together to learn about the local environment, plant trees and celebrate what it is to live in the beautiful environment of Hume.

Karen Wilson from Hume City Council says it was a great thrill to receive the award.

"It has been terrific to get this acknowledgement about the important work the council and the community are doing across Hume City. And there's been a practical benefit too – the \$1000 prize money has been used to supplement Hume's plant donation scheme, which supplies indigenous plants to rural landholders."

Camperdown College cultivates our future leaders

The Camperdown College Environment Group took out the National Westpac Landcare Education Award. The College Environment Group was established in 2002 and has around 20 volunteer secondary student members every year.

The group addresses environmental issues locally, nationally and internationally and works to help others to learn about Landcare. They organised an Environment Expo where various NRM organisations, including Landcare groups,

Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Corangamite Shire set up environmental displays and activities for community members to learn about the environment.

According to Frances Grundy, environment group mentor at Camperdown College, the group was astounded at its win.

"When we heard the other category finalists talk at the finalists' forum in Canberra we felt that we had no chance

of winning. It was amazing to hear what they had been doing in their own patch – from fighting dieback in Western Australia, to one of the smallest schools in NSW doing waterway restoration work, waste minimisation, vegetable gardening and water harvesting. Those primary students spoke with so much passion and conviction.

"This was one of the biggest rewards we received – simply finding out what other students in other states were doing and

Entries now open for the 2009 Victorian Landcare Awards

Do you know a local Landcare hero? Are your neighbours innovative sustainable farmers? Has your Landcare group achieved some important milestones? The Victorian Landcare Awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the efforts of people in the Landcare community.

The awards recognise the outstanding environmental achievements of individuals, schools, universities, community groups, councils, farmers, businesses, Indigenous groups and many others. Winners of

the Victorian Landcare Awards will go on to represent Victoria at the National Landcare Awards to be held in Canberra in 2010.

The Victorian Landcare Awards also incorporate four State-specific awards – the DPI Sustainable Farming Awards, the CitiPower/Powercor Landcare Network Award, the Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship and the Sidney Plowman Award.

For full details of all of the award

categories, including how to enter, see the brochure included in this issue of the magazine, or go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/landcareawards.

Nominations close at 5pm Wednesday 1 July 2009. The Victorian Landcare Awards will be held at Government House on Tuesday 8 September 2009.

If you submit a nomination by 1 June 2009 you will go into the draw to win \$500 towards your community group, or a charity of your choice.

Grand scale biolink rewarded

The Hindmarsh Landcare Network took out the CarbonSMART Nature Conservation Award. The network's initial aim was to link the Big and Little Deserts by planting out roadside corridors from detailed, professionally made maps. These maps showed existing remnant vegetation. They also showed huge gaps where vegetation was missing.

Because the project attracted so many volunteers (mostly from the Victorian National Parks Association), for the annual plantings, more was achieved than anticipated in the first four years and the revegetation then continued on the properties of private landholders for a further seven years.

According to Brett Wheaton, Chair of the Hindmarsh Landcare Network, volunteers are thrilled to return year after year to see the fruits of their labour.

"They can look back with satisfaction and plainly see the progress of vegetation



The CarbonSMART Nature Conservation Award – from left, Councillor Michael Gawith, Hindmarsh Shire Mayor; Ron Dodds, Greening Australia; Rob Youl, Landcare CarbonSMART; Jack Thompson; Darryl Argall, Vice Chairperson of Hindmarsh Landcare; Karen Wheaton and Brett Wheaton, Chairperson of Hindmarsh Landcare.

growth. And it is interesting to note that in these tough, dry times where our cereal crops are failing, the native vegetation is not. It is a stark reminder of what nature is trying to tell us."

The benefits are also evident for landholders. In the summer months when bare paddocks often blow for miles, the vegetated sections are holding firm, providing shade and shelter to livestock, stability to the soil and habitat for native wildlife.

Brett Wheaton said the trip to Canberra to the National Landcare Awards in October 2008 generated a great feeling of pride.

"To be able to represent the network, the partners, the sponsors, the landholders and more importantly the volunteers, was such an honour. We met many wonderful, interesting and creative grass-roots people who are full of passion and commitment. We came home truly inspired.

"It was certainly affirming to be amongst what we considered the best in the country and we are so proud that our project now has national recognition for all those volunteers who gave of their time, energy, vision and passion without any expectation of reward. They truly deserve it," Brett said.

Camperdown College Environment Group students worked with Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative and Parks Victoria to plan and develop a Koori bush tucker garden at the school.



the chance to share these experiences and learn from each other," Frances said.

The prize money that Camperdown College received will help them to continue working with local Landcare groups, working with Greening Australia on the revegetation of a local RAMSAR lake, propagation work and water watch.

“
If this grassland is growing on your property it is likely that you are already doing good things for the environment and your farm.
”



Feather-heads (*Ptilotus macrocephalus*) can be found on the critically endangered grasslands of south-west Victoria.



Small clumps of spear grass (in the centre of the photograph) are commonly found in this nationally protected grassland.



The Masons' property is home to the recently listed natural temperate grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

Farmers nurture protected grasslands

By Ross Rowe



Ken and Loris Mason have received support and assistance in managing their grassland.

The presence of a protected native grassland community on Ken and Loris Mason's farm west of Geelong has opened up new environmental and financial opportunities to improve the farm business.

The natural temperate grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (VVP) was recently listed under the Federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) as critically endangered.

Since discovering the grassland on their property the Masons have set aside areas for conservation which has improved the farm's sustainability.

The Masons were alerted to the grassland when they read a call for expressions of interest from the Corangamite CMA for the Plains Tender process for promoting native vegetation management across the Victorian Volcanic Plain. A walk-over survey by the CMA confirmed that some sites

suitable for a management plan and tender application were present.

According to Ken Mason the discovery of the grassland has had very little impact on the farm operation.

"The land we have set aside was not a highly productive area. Apart from being very interesting work, ultimately it has improved the bottom line of our business because we received funding from the PlainsTender process. The funding covered the cost of our time and the materials to manage those areas we set aside.

"The Corangamite CMA, Trust for Nature and Landcare have all been helpful at different times in providing information and assistance," Ken said.

The Masons have also been pleased to contribute to the protection of such a special ecological community.

"The biodiversity benefits are really worth the effort. When you look at maps of the extent of this grassland before 1770 and where it is found today less than five per cent remains. Some ecological communities have completely gone and others are highly endangered – every bit we can do helps," Ken said.

"Our advice to other farmers with native grasslands is to have a serious look at what assistance might be available

to help manage and protect the area. We've found it a very rewarding part of our farm business."

Grassland alert

Landholders in south-west Victoria who have kangaroo-grass, wallaby-grasses, spear-grasses or tussock-grasses may have natural temperate grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain on their properties. Areas of naturally exposed rocky outcrops in paddocks are also an indicator.

This type of grassland is most commonly found in the quaternary basalt plains of south-west Victoria. These stretch from the western suburbs of Melbourne to near Hamilton in rural Victoria – known as the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion.

The grassland can vary in appearance depending on the time of year and its history, but a good indicator is that it is mostly made up of a native ground layer of tussock-forming perennial grasses. These are interspersed with a variety of wildflowers and other herbs including daisies, lilies, peas and orchids. It has very few, if any, large shrubs or trees.

The grassland is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild and in the immediate future. It is also home to a variety of nationally threatened animals and more than 20 threatened plants.

These include the Striped Legless Lizard, Eastern Barred Bandicoot, Plains Wanderer, Growling Grass Frog, Golden Sun Moth and Button Wrinklewort.

Landholders who have the grassland on their properties need to seek approval from the Australian Government if their activities are likely to have a significant impact on the grasslands.

Some activities are exempt from this approval process. These exemptions allow people to continue activities that were lawful or fully approved before the EPBC Act came into force and have continued without substantial change.

The listing of this ecological community does not prevent landholders from continuing to use their land in the usual way, provided they do not significantly change or intensify activities.

Activities that may need approval include clearing native vegetation, cutting new tracks and fuel breaks, converting from mowing or slashing to using herbicides or substantially intensifying stocking rates on the grassland.

Introducing fertilisers or other chemicals to native remnants, or introducing potentially invasive exotic pasture species in or near to remnants are also classed as activities.

Seeking approval is relatively simple and free of charge. Landholders can download,

complete and submit a referral form on the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/assessments/referral-form.html>.

For landholders who are unsure if the grassland is present on their property or how a particular activity may impact on the grassland, it is best to seek further advice or make a referral. Penalties apply for carrying out an unapproved activity which significantly impacts on a protected grassland or species.

For further information contact Ross Rowe at the National Farmers Federation on (02) 6273 3855 or by email

environment@nff.org.au

A detailed description of the grassland, its key features and how to identify sites in good condition can be found at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/42-listing-advice.pdf

A brochure to help identify the ecological community is available at www.environment.gov.au/epbc/information/farmers.html or by calling 1800 803 772.

For a list of nationally protected species and ecological communities that may occur on your property go to the environment reporting tool at www.environment.gov.au/erin/ert/index.html

Find out more about managing your grassland

If this grassland is growing on your property it is likely that you are already doing good things for the environment and your farm.

It is important to protect the remaining patches of grassland by continuing to use good land management practices, such as zero till and cell grazing, avoiding superphosphate, practising good weed management and making sure you don't carry out any activities that are likely to adversely impact on the grassland.

Information and advice on managing this ecological community is available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website which has a range of general information as well as details about grants and funding options.

If you have the listed grassland on your property you may be eligible for funding to help preserve or restore remnants. There is a variety of options available under Australian and State Government initiatives. Visit www.environment.gov.au.

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”



Mexican feather grass is similar in appearance to serrated tussock and could have an even more damaging impact on farms and the environment.

Weed alert: Mexican feather grass

By Katie Le Blanc

DPI has been working to reduce the threat of Mexican feather grass becoming naturalised and impacting on Victoria's environment, economy and social values.

Mexican feather grass (*Nasella tenuissima*), a declared State prohibited weed, was inadvertently supplied to and sold by a number of retail chain stores in Victoria in 2008.

Suspected Mexican feather grass plants were labelled as *Stipa capillata* or *Stipa lessingiana* and grown in pink pots under the Regal Sensations line. Oasis Horticulture's Visions range had plants in blue pots, labelled *Stipa capriccio*. Potted plants without labels were also sold in decorative metal jugs or wooden slat boxes under the Summerhill range.

The prompt action of DPI officers and the continued support of retailers and the community has seen 65% of the plants originally distributed being recovered.

Mexican feather grass is a potentially serious new weed to Australia. It is closely related and similar in appearance to serrated tussock, widely regarded as the worst pasture weed in Australia.

DPI is responsible for the eradication of State prohibited weeds and urges residents not to attempt to control or dispose

of Mexican feather grass in any way themselves, but to make contact with the Department.

There is still considerable recovery work to be done with approximately 3500 plants unaccounted for. DPI recovery works will be focused on surveillance in areas where trade was known to have occurred with the continued monitoring and treatment of known infestation sites.

If you suspect you may have purchased or seen a Mexican feather grass plant please contact DPI on 136 186 or see the website for more information at www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

Reader weed alert: Caper spurge

Traralgon reader David McPhee is concerned that current conditions could lead to an outbreak of Caper spurge (*Euphorbia lathyrus*). David first came into contact with the weed 30 years ago when he innocently encouraged a seedling that appeared in his home garden. More recently he has noticed a proliferation of Caper spurge on the gravelly margins of the Thomson River upstream of Coopers Creek and at the Traralgon railways reservoir.

Caper spurge is an extremely toxic herb. Its milky sap is strongly alkaloid and can

cause irritations and swelling in people, particularly around sensitive areas like the eyes. A DPI impact assessment refers to a two-year-old girl who suffered from blistering and lesions for more than five months after contact with the weed. Caper spurge has been associated with stock poisoning.

Caper spurge is an annual herb which can grow up to 150 centimetres tall. It germinates in autumn and spring. The flowers are tiny and green and are often hard to distinguish from the leaves. It produces a three-segmented capsule that splits open, releasing numerous seeds close to the parent plant.

Caper spurge is usually found in neglected gardens, roadsides, wastelands and along waterways.



People should take care when removing Caper spurge as it is highly toxic.

Barking Owls star in Landcare film

The rare Barking Owls of the Chiltern-Mt Pilot area are the stars of a docu-drama produced by the Wooragee Landcare Group.

The short film, which was three years in the making, is based on former PhD student Natasha Schedvin's research into barking owls in the North East.

The film is narrated by Betty Barker. Betty shares some of the significant events of her life's story; finding a mate, raising a family and the dangers that are always lurking in the bush. Betty and her partner Todd survived the disastrous wildfire of 2003, but Betty's life is changed forever.

President of the Wooragee Landcare Group, Graeme Missen said many locals in the area were unaware of the Barking Owls before Natasha's study.

"The film came about because we thought others in our area, or even visitors passing through, may be interested to learn

more about this special, yet threatened, Australian owl. After all, it is pretty amazing to have an owl that barks like a dog!"

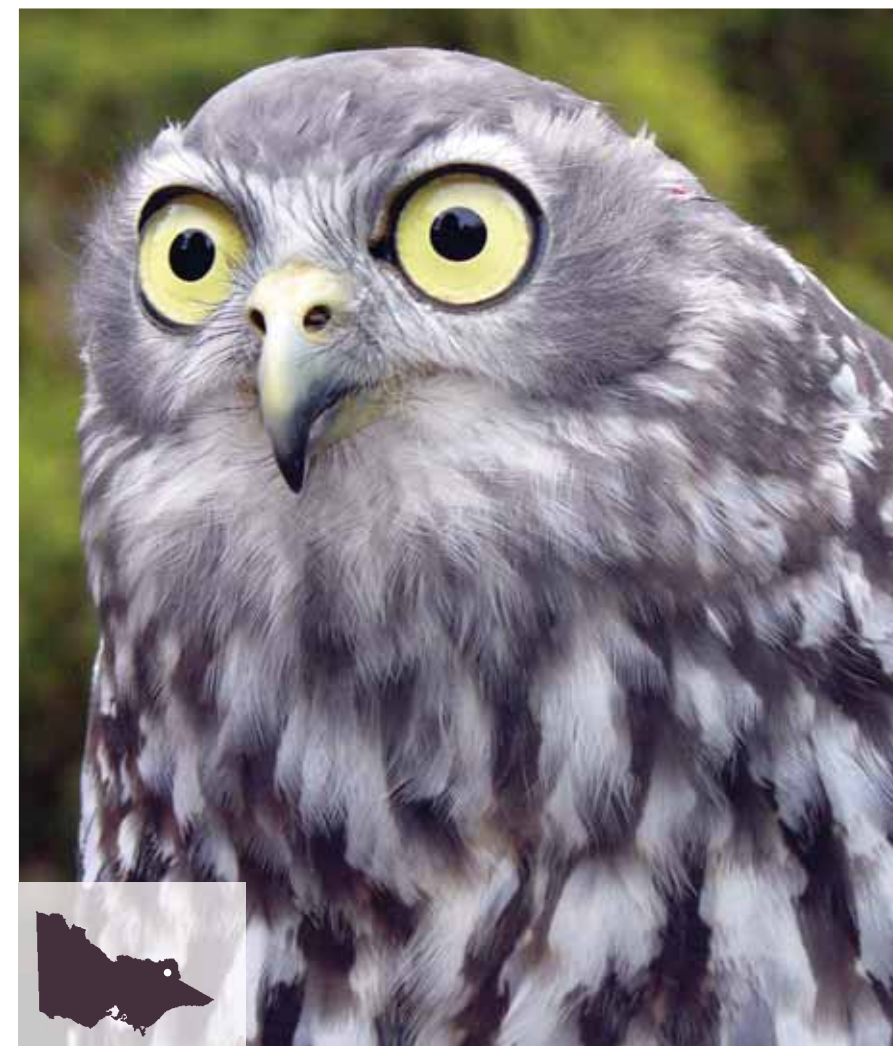
The film is intended to increase awareness of the owl and its habitat requirements in order to help secure its survival as a species. It is the work of local film maker Jan Osmotherly and co-director Glen Scholfield.

Jan Osmotherly was fascinated by the research on the Barking Owls.

"I was surprised to discover we had our own rare species here for a start and then a bit alarmed to find they are not only endangered, but declining because of continued loss of habitat, poor seasons and fire in our area," Jan said.

For copies of the DVD contact Glen Scholfield at osfield@optusnet.com.au or phone 5766 2626. A four-page information sheet is also available to accompany the DVD.

Betty the Barking Owl is the star of a new film made by the Wooragee Landcare Group.



Gateway revealed

Tom Croft from the North East CMA has been involved in the recent upgrade of the Landcare Gateway website. He spoke with a Gateway user to find out how the site is performing.

Q. Do you use the Landcare Gateway much?

A. I use a gateway every time I go into another paddock, but I don't go into the revegetation paddock that often.

Q. How about the new improved Landcare Gateway website, www.landcarevic.net.au?

A. Ah, that gateway. Yep, I put our Landcare group information on the website. I got handed the job because I have broadband.

Q. Do you add information to the website about your group?

A. We have all our current projects listed, and list all our field days, meeting notices and community events when they are planned. We also put all our newsletters on the site as well. And we have a heap of photos in the album of our projects and field days.

Q. Did you get training in using the website?

A. Not yet, although I hope to get some soon. So far I can get the group information on the site without too much trouble and people can find and understand what's there. I use the help pages when I can't figure out the process.

Q. Are there any particular tools on the Gateway you find very useful?

A. Well for a start it's free, and it works well on dialup. There are a couple of things I like, such as the way I can add a photo to some pages and it automatically displays it. Being able to map where things are happening is good for field days and community events. And our secretary is really pleased that her email is hidden in the contact section for the group, but people can send a message to her.



eFARMER can help farmers identify works on their properties that will contribute to an improvement in catchment condition.

eFARMER explained

By Geoff Park

eFARMER is a web-based application which supports the capture, viewing and sharing of natural resource management information across farms, landscapes and catchments. Developed by DSE and DPI working closely with a number of CMAs, the application was first released in 2006.

“

Farmers are willing to take on new and often challenging environmental management issues when they are supported through the process.

”

eFARMER informs private land managers of the natural resource management priorities of the CMA where they live and allows them to identify activities on their properties that will contribute to achieving CMA catchment-wide targets.

eFARMER is also an effective tool to assist with whole farm planning. It allows viewing of a wide range of spatial information on-line, but also allows for this information to be manipulated, helping with planning. The application has been designed to be intuitive so that the viewing, editing and sharing of natural resource management information is as practical as possible.

eFARMER allows users to:

- View a range of spatial datasets, including native vegetation, hydrology, soils and groundwater flow systems – up to 35 spatial datasets are supported in the prototype.
- Access high-quality aerial photography and satellite imagery at a farm scale.
- Develop, visualise and analyse scenarios associated with on-ground actions, such as revegetation, pasture establishment and waterway protection at farm and landscape scale.
- Record farm-scale data, including soil tests, climate records and production information.
- Aggregate information from farm scale actions across multiple properties, improving the understanding of the contribution that land managers make to catchment outcomes for land, water and biodiversity.
- Link farm and catchment scale scenarios to predictive modelling tools.

A catchment planning tool in the North East

By Suzanne Johnstone

The North East CMA has been developing tools and materials to assist landholders and Landcare groups to strategically target on-farm investment so it achieves the greatest possible benefit across the catchment. Planning staff identified that the tools should also assist with property planning, be complementary for landholders participating in EMS and have the ability to guide planning, mapping, prioritising and funding applications for on-ground works.

After a review of the available tools and materials, eFARMER was selected. A simple prioritisation scoring matrix of ten questions was also developed to allow a self-assessment of any proposed site against catchment priorities. eFARMER has the ability to answer spatial questions about a proposed site. These include the site's Ecological Vegetation Classes and its conservation status, size in hectares, width, connectivity to other remnant areas and proximity to a waterway. Other questions were based on the

level of property planning that had been undertaken at the site.

After an individual project design was mapped as an action plan on eFARMER the matrix enabled scoring according to the catchment priorities. Participants then had the opportunity to redesign and achieve a higher score, or what could be deemed a higher public benefit score, for the catchment.

The score achieved can then be linked to the level of funding. Potentially works achieving a high score and a higher public benefit towards catchment priorities could be funded to a higher level. This should help to identify really worthwhile projects. Works that scored in the lower range could be redesigned, or targeted with extension or further research to assist in their implementation.

A community reference group with members from the Kiewa Valley Catchment Landcare Group and local DPI, DSE and CMA staff was formed for training in eFARMER and to evaluate the matrix tool.

The results show that the system gave landholders and Landcare groups the information they needed to strategically prioritise proposed works. It also increased their capacity to target priorities and enabled them to monitor change in their area (using the eFARMER landscape and property aggregated data reports).

The eFARMER training had also improved participants' knowledge of property planning, gave them computer mapping skills and made the assessment and submission of incentives easier. It was good to see that these results were clearly evident right across the reference group no matter what the age group, background, or education level of the participant.

The project shows it is possible to prioritise the funding of proposed works to achieve catchment targets in an equitable, clear and consistent fashion.

For further information contact Suzanne Johnstone at the North East CMA on (02) 6024 9104.

eFARMER in the dairy industry

By Marguerite White

Australian milk company Murray Goulburn Co-operative (MGC) has conducted a pilot program with 20 dairy suppliers exploring the realities of reporting on environmental management at the farm level and developing the technology to make this process burden free for dairy farmers.

According to Andrew Gallagher from MGC, the program is designed to emphasise nutrient and effluent management issues and solutions, but participants have also

found that it offers many opportunities for exploring and implementing on-farm management projects in other aspects of their businesses.

“We gave participants access to the web-based aerial photography and mapping tool, eFARMER, which allows farmers to map their property to the paddock level. Data relating to soil testing, fertiliser application or harvest results, for example, can be uploaded using information provided by the farmer or a third party such as a fertiliser spreader,” Andrew said.

Participants undertook the nutrient loss index, developed by Dr Alice Melland of DPI Victoria, to help them identify where they are losing valuable nutrients from the farm or demonstrate their good planning and management around fertiliser usage. Regular group gatherings were held to explore topics of interest which brought farmers together to discuss common issues and introduce new concepts, technologies and skills.

The final outcome of the project is a comprehensive, evidence-based environmental report. This is produced automatically through MGF@rm, MGC's



Jeff and Kylie Mumford from Won Wron are using eFARMER to assess paddock sizes rather than relying on memory.



Peter and Judy Johnson used eFARMER to plan new paddocks and fence lines on their dairy farm at Carajung Lower. They also completed a willow removal project along the Bruthen Creek with assistance from the West Gippsland CMA.

milk supplier internet site, from information captured primarily by eFARMER.

Andrew Gallagher said the project has demonstrated that farmers are willing to take on new and often challenging environmental management issues when they are supported through the process.

The Co-operative is currently extending this program with assistance from a Caring for our Country grant. Now called the Murray Goulburn Farm Environment Program, many new milk suppliers are keen to get involved.

Planning environmental farm management with EBMP By David Lean

The Environmental Best Management Practices program (EBMP) is a popular version of an environmental farm plan. Over the past five years 2500 Victorian farmers have been involved in the EBMP program. The program is run by DPI, the VFF, CMAs and consultants.

The EBMP program was customised for Australia from a Canadian program by DPI staff, landholders and Geoff MacFarlane. Graham Corless from Oaksford P/L provided the software package.

EBMP allows for self-auditing or assessment with a systematic approach to management, aiming for continuous improvement and transparency.

Farmers who have completed an EBMP often say it turns them into deep thinkers. It challenges them to think more about their farms assets. For example, with soils they will consider how to manage soils to achieve profit, how to be sustainable for the long-term, how to respond to the challenge of climate change, how to plan for the increasing cost of inputs and how to address fluctuating markets and prices.

Self-assessment

Farmers doing an EBMP program, usually in a workshop setting, start by assessing or rating themselves as to where they are now with managing their soils, water, vegetation, cropping, irrigation, dairy, forestry and other issues and where they want to be in the next one to five years.

The program is divided into 13 chapters starting with whole farm planning and ending with detailed action plans which show farm budgets and farm priorities. As farmers complete the self-assessments and action plans they can be emailed into a DPI database via workshops run by local co-ordinators.

The action plans, including urgent issues identified by farmers themselves, are then combined to form business plans, which agencies can use to identify priority issues. This allows agencies to target incentives at specific areas, although many farmers often go ahead with capital works under their own steam.

Electronic mapping programs such as eFARMER can be added to EBMP to make a more complete package, especially in the whole farm planning section.

Industry approval

An EBMP can bring potential commercial and marketing benefits for farmers. It's a mechanism for farmers to demonstrate that their products are grown under best management practices; that they are clean and green and can be backed by an auditable and examinable system. The VFF Egg Industry has recently added their standards to the EBMP platform.

EBMP is also recognised by local government planning departments. The Surf Coast Shire is sponsoring EBMP workshops for local landholders. The Shire was keen to support a program that promotes farmer education and increases access to information that will ultimately improve decision making.

Because EBMP is a system that validates farm environmental management it could also be used in the future as a platform for carbon assessment and trading. The chapter on greenhouse gases could be upgraded to allow farm registrations, carbon storage self-assessment and business plans with auditing options.

EBMP has been very successful in the Corangamite region and is attracting interest from other States and regions. A new EBMP website will be launched later this year to respond to the increasing demand.

David Lean is an EBMP co-ordinator with DPI in Geelong. For further information on EBMP contact David on 5226 4620.



Nerida Anderson with her son Will and Meg the dog at the saline site on their Meredith property.

EBMP helps protect waterways at Meredith

The EBMP program has assisted Nerida and Richard Anderson with funding a salinity project on their property near Meredith. A saline wetland on the property is being revegetated and fenced off to exclude stock and encourage trees and grasses.

The Andersons are aiming to reduce the impact of salinity in their local waterway which flows into the Leigh River from Ballarat and then feeds the Barwon River downstream at Inverleigh, west of Geelong.

Nerida Anderson's interest in natural resource management has blossomed after

completing the EBMP and she has returned to university to study natural resource management at post-graduate level.

"EBMP takes a holistic approach to environmental management which makes you think about how you manage your natural assets. I'm keen to gain a better understanding of sustainable farm productivity and the impact of climate change in the future."

The Andersons don't live on the property at Meredith, but they have still received a great deal of support and advice from the Meredith Landcare Group led by Rob McColl.



Meg inspects the revegetation site prior to planting.

New peak Landcare body seeks input By Roger Hardley and Geoff McFarlane



Members of the Victorian Landcare Council at their first meeting in November 2008.

The Victorian Landcare Council was formed in November 2008 to represent the interests of volunteer Landcarers in pursuing a healthy and sustainable environment. The council is a democratic body with two Landcare members from each of the ten CMA regions.

The task for the Council over the coming months and years is to determine how best to represent Landcare.

The aims of the council are to:

- Connect to and communicate with Landcare groups and members to understand more fully their issues and concerns.
- Learn how to tell the Landcare story more effectively, including developing an overview of the complexities and dynamic processes that exist for Landcare, as well as compiling a more comprehensive view of the outcomes achieved by Landcare projects.
- Create regional forums to bring Landcare members together more frequently so that knowledge and connections are strengthened.
- Advocate for Landcare issues by representing the Landcare perspective at policy and decision-making levels while respecting the diversity of the Landcare community.
- Create co-operative partnerships to effectively impact on the issues identified by Landcare groups and networks.
- Develop an information hub and brokering role by fostering

communications between the various NRM agencies and volunteer Landcarers.

- Link with peak Landcare organisations across Australia to develop a national Landcare network.

The challenges for Landcare are currently as great as the movement has ever encountered and funding pressures are beginning to take a serious toll. It is imperative that the Landcare message is heard and explained.

The Victorian Landcare Council Committee of Management is Leon Trembath – Chair, Peter Schwarz – Deputy Chair, Roger Hardley – Secretary and Julia Gibson – Treasurer. The committee members are Wayne Bryce, Barry Elliot, Judy Griffiths, Iestyn Hosking and Peter Huthwaite.

The regional delegates are: Corangamite – Geoff McFarlane and Roger Hardley. East Gippsland – Irene Butterworth and Ian Clues. Glenelg Hopkins – Wayne Bryce and Alanna Burton. Goulburn Broken – Peter Schwarz. North Central – Barry Elliot and Rod Allen. North East – Judy Griffiths. West Gippsland – Mike Carnell and Leon Trembath. Wimmera – Iestyn Hosking and Ross McDonald. Port Phillip and Westernport – Julia Gibson and Peter Huthwaite. The Mallee delegates are to be advised.

Contact Leon Trembath on 5186 1333 or by email churinga@wideband.net.au. Alternatively email Roger Hardley at wilddogs2@bigpond.com with any issues, comments or suggestions for the council.

Planning to succeed in the Mallee

By Merryl Whyte

Seven years ago a group of Mallee farmers got together to talk planning with staff from DPI and the Mallee CMA. The result was Mallee Environmental Management Action Planning (EMAP).

EMAP has quickly become a yardstick for environmental management planning in the Mallee dryland and a template to which other areas of Australia look for guidance. EMAP is multi-faceted. It contributes to environmental planning at various levels; the individual property, the community and region, and across the catchment. EMAP is now going into its fifth round in the dryland and is soon to be extended to irrigated horticulture properties.

What is EMAP?

At its simplest, Mallee EMAP is a free-to-landholder program that helps dryland farmers create positive change on their properties through environmental works and improved management practices.



Saltbush is a good option for many Mallee farmers.

EMAP tackles all the major aspects of environmental management, linking up resources available to farmers and acting as a one-stop shop for access to expertise and on-ground assistance. It covers land class and capability, salinity, crop and livestock management, pest plant and animal control, chemicals and waste management, native vegetation management, as well as developing issues such as climate change.

Participants complete an on-farm self-assessment and then attend up to three local workshops to discuss and consolidate their knowledge. Maps and action plans are developed for each individual property.

EMAP training is accredited through the Sunraysia Institute of TAFE. Participants gain two units of the Diploma of Rural Business Management.

Once the EMAP program has been completed targeted incentive support is provided through individual case management, largely by local Landcare co-ordinators. The graduate support program assists farmers to implement their planned changes and on-ground works. It also delivers follow up training. Graduate support has been a popular aspect of EMAP as it helps to ensure that participants can turn their planned environmental management actions into reality.

Since the program started in 2005 over 225 farm businesses spanning 530,000 hectares of the Victorian Mallee have now completed EMAP. This represents approximately 23% of the agricultural land in the Mallee region, or around 3% of Victoria's total available agricultural land.

The program is funded by the Mallee CMA and delivered in partnership by DPI, Landcare, Sunraysia Institute of TAFE, and SunRISE 21 – a Mildura-based mapping and spatial information service.

Farmer benefits

Farmers participating in EMAP receive access to the latest land and water management information in the Mallee, free mapping for their farm, and on-farm assistance to develop a farm plan and

identify future management actions. They are also linked to regional incentive programs and gain priority access to monetary support for projects and actions included in their farm plans. EMAP participants also have an opportunity to better inform government on the management needs of farmers.

As well as planning for the environmental management of a property, EMAP participants have indicated that the program helped them to carry out a general stocktake and develop strategic visions for their property; address succession and inheritance issues; consider risk management; develop and strengthen their local networks; improve communication and understanding between partners; and increase confidence.

Landcare group-based EMAP

The principles of Mallee EMAP are not only confined to individual dryland farm planning.

In 2006 Landcare group-based EMAP was delivered to 23 of the 27 Landcare groups across the Mallee with existing Local Area Action Plans (LAAP). Based on the principles of farm-based EMAP, the program assisted the groups to identify environmental assets and threats and develop future actions. It resulted in the revision of each group's LAAP, incorporating the new ideas, trends and solutions presented in the EMAP program.

Results from each Landcare group were captured in an environmental plan, overlaying digital aerial photography to allow them to clearly visualise what they need to do and where. The environmental plan has been described as a living document that will continue to be reviewed by groups as they progress through the tasks within it. The plan links to the regional Landcare strategy and to Regional Catchment Strategies and helps to inform future funding allocations in the Mallee.

New Landcare co-ordinators benefit from the environmental plans, as they are a ready-made to-do list. The plans also help to streamline Landcare co-ordinator activities as funding applications can be made at a regional rather than group level.



Mallee EMAP team members provide advice in the paddock.

The Landcare group-based EMAP program has now covered almost 100% of agricultural land managed under Landcare. This has enabled the development of a strategic direction for Mallee environmental management in the short to medium term. This achievement is a first for Victorian Landcare and has created targeted change, improved group capacity and a strengthened case for future funding.

Malcolm Thompson, Co-ordinator for the Western Murray Landcare Network, has high praise for the process. Malcolm is based in Swan Hill and co-ordinates the Nyah West, Swan Hill West, Mid Murray, Waitchie and Ultima Landcare Groups.

"My groups have used EMAP to take a district view in planning works and projects. We have mapped pest plant and animal infestations (rabbits, foxes, boxthorn and cactus hard heads) and areas for revegetation. Through the mapping exercise we have identified future works required – a vital benefit to me as Landcare co-ordinator.

"The process gets the group to think of their area as a whole – resulting in bigger picture projects – and it has provided us with strategic direction," Malcolm said.

Catchment-scale contribution

Environmental plans developed through EMAP provide the Mallee CMA with a clear understanding of the priorities of the region's Landcare groups; including their scope, necessary resources and the timeframes of the work required. This results in more targeted resource allocation

by the CMA and impacts on policy and delivery mechanisms.

The EMAP graduate support program also provides a platform for monitoring and reporting on the actual on-farm actions completed by landholders, feeding back into regional planning by the CMA.

Peter Hamence from DPI Mildura's Sustainable Landscapes Mallee Dryland team believes the success of Mallee EMAP is due to sound planning and co-operation between all the regional organisations involved.

"We have gone back to the basics of extension and are seeing real change in the importance farmers place on environmental issues – they are doing things differently and better.

"Over the first four years of EMAP we have seen much better links between regional policy and planning to actual on-ground works. This has been reflected by a corresponding increase in the uptake of financial incentives following participation. We have seen huge changes in adoption with 40-fold increases in some instances.

"Through EMAP we provide the knowledge and inspiration for change and the tools to plan for it. The graduate support program provides the resources and support to actually make changes on-farm, and woven into this process is a continual two-way flow of information between our regional policy makers and our farmers. It's a mix that is proving a great success," Peter said.

“

Farmers participating in EMAP receive access to the latest land and water management information, free mapping for their farm, and on-farm assistance to develop a farm plan and identify future management actions.

”

For further information contact Peter Hamence at DPI Mildura on 5051 4352.



Mallee Landcare group members at work together on EMAP.



VFF Livestock Council members experience environmental farm planning on Bill and Deb Bray's property.



Farmers work together at an EBMP workshop in Nhill.

“
There is plenty of scientific data that shows how improving environmental management improves farm productivity and profitability.
”

VFF backs environmental management systems

By Greg Smith

Drought, devastating fires, climate change, water shortage, biodiversity decline and genetic modification are all very real issues for farmers in these changing and challenging times.

“
In these times of uncertainty about how climate change will impact on agricultural production and the future of farming, environmental farm planning will be an important issue for all farmers.
”

An Environmental Management Systems (EMS) training project undertaken by the VFF has given farmers an opportunity to better understand and cope with these crucial environmental issues.

The VFF is involved in many significant environmental issues such as Landcare, water management, bushfires, climate change and biodiversity. The VFF has also been proactive with EMS for several years as it recognises that environmental farm planning can help farmers become more profitable and more sustainable.

During 2007 and 2008 the VFF ran an environmental management and farm sustainability training program with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Over 200 farmers in 20 groups participated in the training which centred on the Environmental Best Management Practices (EBMP) workbook and processes developed by DPI. The training was conducted by Geoff McFarlane.

One hundred percent of workshop participants rated all of the components of the workshop sessions as very high or high.

Pinpointing priority actions

The training involved an initial group meeting of three hours for instruction in using the EBMP workbook. Participants then had several weeks to work through the self-assessment process in the workbook before getting together for another three-hour session to discuss results and the priority actions that they had identified as the basis of their action plans.

The EBMP workbook is a user-friendly training manual as well as a comprehensive resource on environmental management. The workbook guides users through a self-assessment of environmental management for their property. It covers property management planning; soil; water; vegetation and biodiversity; pest plants and animals; pastures and livestock; cropping; farm forestry; nutrients; irrigation; chemicals; greenhouse gases and climate change; and farm wastes.

The greenhouse gases and climate change section was developed in conjunction with the Australian Greenhouse Office and more climate change material will be incorporated as it becomes available.

A DVD explaining how to use the EBMP workbook was produced during the workshops and the EBMP workbook is now available on CD.

Each workshop participant identified an average of 23 key priority issues and 17 actions.

The actions are all planned for implementation over the next five years with most costing at over \$2000. This amounts to over \$6 million of on-ground works identified by workshop participants.

The EBMP process is a powerful tool to assist farmers in developing their own environmental farm plan using a logical, informative and practical process.

Key lessons from the planning workshops

In these times of uncertainty about how climate change will impact on agricultural production and the future of farming, environmental farm planning will be an important issue for all farmers.



Bill Bray explains his farm plan to EBMP workshop participants.

The different interpretations of the term EMS have caused considerable delays and confusion in the understanding, acceptance and implementation of environmental management plans. The confusion is aggravated by some claims that any EMS must comply with the international ISO 14001 standard. EMS is a generic term for on-ground demonstration of improvement in environmental management based on an environmental farm plan.

The benefits to farm production and profitability of implementing ongoing improvement in environmental management (based on an environmental farm plan) must be effectively

communicated to farmers. There is plenty of scientific data that shows how improving environmental management improves farm productivity and profitability.

With so much attention on climate change there is a great opportunity to highlight the connection between environmental management and climate change issues. In particular, topics such as greenhouse gas production and carbon trading and the implications for agriculture will attract increasing interest from farmers.

For more information on environmental farm planning contact Geoff McFarlane on 0407 822 525.

Five-year action plan keeps Marlo Plains on track By Becky Hemming

The Marlo Plains Landcare Group was established in 1997 when a group of concerned landholders formed a committee to address farming issues in the district. In order to provide strategic direction for the group and its members the local Landcare facilitator suggested some action planning.

With support from their Landcare Facilitator the group completed two planning sessions. At the first meeting members developed a vision and then stuck notes on the wall describing why they took part in Landcare and where they might like to be in 20 years time. These were then collated into seven key areas: community awareness and activity, water management, education, Landcare farming, pest plant and animal management, vegetation management and tourism.

A draft five-year plan was developed from these notes by the Landcare facilitator and circulated prior to the group getting back. At the next session the document was refined and made workable by deciding when the actions should occur and who in the group should be responsible for them. It soon became clear that one of the highest priorities was a learning group for farmers to get together with guest speakers, have farm walks and most importantly, learn from each other.



Marlo Plains Landcare Group members working on their whole farm plans.

Landcare members then formed a sub-group, the Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group. This group researched relevant activities and then listed them on a sheet. Members were given three sticky dots each and asked to stick them next to the activities they wanted to undertake.

This process led to the decision to work with the Beefcheque program which is focused on growing more grass, utilising more grass, growing more beef and ultimately making more money. Participants were involved in whole farm planning, pasture management, stock management and more.

According to Penny Gray, the Landcare Co-ordinator for Far East Victoria, the whole farm planning session run for the Far East Sustainable Agriculture Group was an outstanding success.

"It was so successful we ran five more whole farm planning sessions across East Gippsland, involving the two other Landcare networks and over 50 landholders."

Over the years the Marlo Plains Landcare Group planning process has become a regular, scheduled, annual task. At their first meeting each year the group now completes an action review and a 12-month calendar to break their actions

into tasks that the group and individuals can complete.

Good planning and governance have helped the group complete numerous successful projects. They have revegetated a large cutting on a major road, cleaned up along roadsides and foreshores, co-ordinated a fox control program and completed fencing and revegetation works on Cabbage Tree Creek which flows into the Brodribb River and then into the Snowy. Group members are also involved on the executive committee of the Far East Victoria Landcare Network.

The five-year action plan outlines the group's intentions and sets realistic goals. The latest plan shows that the group intends to have guest speakers talk about a wide array of subjects, hold farm tours and education days, run more fox control programs, run thistle and blackberry control programs, fence off riparian zones and promote shelterbelts and windbreaks to the wider community.

By putting a little time away for planning the group has been able to maintain a strong direction and can get on with the job for the rest of the year.

For further information contact Becky Hemming at the East Gippsland CMA on 5150 3577.



Through effective planning and preparation the group runs many different field days. Here they are learning about stock movement and behaviour.

News from the VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association

By Susi Johnson

The annual general meeting (AGM) of the Farm-Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) will be on 10 June 2009 from 10am-12 noon. This is the day prior to the start of the VFF conference. Landcare researcher Professor Alan Curtis will be the guest speaker.

All member groups are encouraged to attend, or send a representative. The FTLA is a member-based organisation that depends on participation. The FTLA is also an important forum for community Landcarers to have a state-wide voice. Observers are welcome at the AGM.

Individuals who may be interested in nominating for the FTLA committee of management are encouraged to contact the current committee or executive officer for information.

The deadline for agenda items to be submitted for the AGM is 15 April 2009. The nomination deadline for office bearer positions is 3 June 2009.

Who are the FTLA?

Three-quarters of the magazine's readers are members of FTLA member groups and are therefore automatically individual members of the FTLA as well. All members have the right to vote at FTLA AGMs, be elected to the Committee of Management, join sub-committees, and participate in FTLA activities. FTLA exists to support Landcare groups.

According to immediate past president and long-time committee member, Andrew Stewart, the FTLA helps rural landholders build resilient and robust communities and landscapes.

"The type of support the FTLA offers promotes sustainable and productive farming systems. This role is particularly relevant today given the forecasts for climate change and the demand from the world's human population for increased food and fibre production."

Andrew Stewart believes that farmers need to take a greater lead on environmental agendas, which could lead to a greener image and less regulation.

"Sustainable natural resource management is also good risk management. Landcare and the FTLA have an important role to play in embedding best management practice in farming communities," Andrew said.

Susi Johnson is the Executive Officer of the VFF Farm Tree and Landcare Association. She can be contacted on 9207 5527.

Port Fairy forum inspires networkers By Kevin Spence

Over 110 dedicated Landcare co-ordinators and facilitators travelled from across Victoria to participate in the 2008 Victorian Landcare Network (VLN) Forum held last October. The forum was hosted by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA in the beautiful coastal town of Port Fairy.

The forum lived up to its promise of being fun, interesting and motivating as well as providing a great opportunity for professional development and networking.

After arriving and registering at the Victoria Hotel, participants settled in and caught up with colleagues and friends – many they had not seen since the previous forum in Mt Buller in 2007.

Participants were introduced to the region by an extensive Landcare expo showcasing the activity and achievements of local groups. A welcome barbecue that evening set the relaxed and friendly tone of the forum.

Next morning, however, it was down to business. An official welcome from Peter Dark, Chairperson of the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, was followed by a welcome to country by Vicki Couzens of the Gunditjmara people and then proceedings got underway.

Forum workshops ran all day, with two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon.



Tower Hill guide, John Sutherland, addresses Landcarers at Tower Hill.

Each session had five presentations being made simultaneously in separate venues.

Workshop topics included the benefits of revegetation in farming landscapes for wildlife; taking the mystery out of carbon trading; the social impact of drought; soil health; weeds; whole farm planning and environmental management systems.

Working with constant change

Coral Love, the National Landcare Facilitator, spoke on working in a changing environment – including program change and structural change – and being able to roll with the punches. For many of the co-ordinators and facilitators present Coral's talk was particularly relevant to their concerns about job security and ongoing Landcare support.

After the intensity of the day, that evening brought some light relief. A 1970s night and a riotous murder mystery at the Port Fairy Golf Club saw many participants in outrageous wigs, psychedelic colours and platform shoes – not the usual Landcare-wear!

The next morning an open forum was held to determine the future direction of the VLN and clarify its role within the Landcare movement. The session, called 'meeting your needs', identified a number of strengths and weaknesses the VLN executive can act on.

The workshop highlighted the value of having a network that represented facilitators and co-ordinators and advocated to improve the condition and security of their tenure.

Members also found value in the peer support and information exchange facilitated by the network. However, they felt the network could improve in the areas of communication; organisational structure and in providing stronger leadership and direction.

Members also highlighted a role for the network to be proactive in building strong partnerships and relationships with other stakeholders.



The 1970s murder mystery attracted many colourful characters.

One of the new voices at the VLN forum was the Victorian Landcare Council (VLC). The VLC is a grassroots organisation that seeks to represent the voice of community Landcare.

The relationship between the VLN and the VLC is likely to become an increasingly important alliance in the future.

Following the workshop, participants chose between two tours of the region. At the Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected area, part of the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape, participants were given an insight into how this prosperous community thrived on the banks of the Darlot Creek. A side trip to the Codrington Wind Farm looked at a DSE monitoring program for the threatened Orange-Bellied Parrot.

The second tour took in the Tower Hill State Game reserves and estuaries and looked at the geological history and volcanic wonders that are a feature of the Western District.

New faces at the VLN

Back at Port Fairy the VLN annual general meeting commenced. Andrea Mason from the Leigh Catchment Landcare Network stepped down after two years as president and Sarah Canham from the Port Phillip and Westernport region was elected in her place.

Trevor Barker from the North Central CMA was elected as vice-president. Karen

Brisbane from the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network stepped down as secretary after seven years of service and I was elected to the position. Both Andrea Mason and Karen Brisbane received a warm vote of thanks from members for their considerable contribution.

The AGM was followed by a formal dinner where marathon swimmer Tammy Van Wisse was the guest speaker. Tammy talked of her experiences and the challenges of being a long distance swimmer. The message for everyone in the room working so hard to improve our natural environment against the tide of ongoing decline was to keep swimming!

Presentations were made during the dinner to VLN members who have spent more than ten years providing Landcare support to the community.

They were Andrea Mason, Jenny Sedgwick, Bronte Payne, Sue Longmore, Jennifer Clarke, Pat Corr, Geoff McKernan and John Robinson.

On the final day of the forum presentations were made by representatives from Habitat 141, Caring for our Country and Treesmart. This was followed by team building exercises including kite flying and an historical walk.

The forum left participants inspired and enthused about the work ahead of them. One Landcarer said on their evaluation

form: "There was only one thing wrong with the forum – when we had to leave!"

Thanks to the team from Glenelg Hopkins for organising the event: Carolyn Rundell, Bruce Knee, Damien Henty Anderson, Leanne Nicholson, Peter Waldron, Trevor Sevier, Bernadette Cincotta, Leonard (Reggie) Cooper, Garry Milich, Peter McPhee, Megan Campbell, Tony Lithgow, Dave Nichols, Lilian Parker and Linda Jemmett.

For further information about the Victorian Landcare Network contact Kevin Spence at vlm@inet.net.au.



A Budj Bim ranger talks about fish trapping on the Darlot Creek.

Around the State – News from the Regional Landcare Co-ordinators

Corangamite

The Corangamite Landcare team has been working hard over the past few months, with Caring for our Country and Victorian Government funding applications. Attempting to secure funding for projects and employment as well as continuing to co-ordinate current projects has been challenging.

Training for Landcare staff and members in the use of the Victorian Landcare Gateway website took place in January.

Several Landcare networks have been working with ACF and the GreenHome program, assisting landholders to make simple changes on farms by identifying ways to save energy and water and cut down waste.

Stephen Guy has recently taken a new position in South Australia. After five years co-ordinating the Lismore Landcare Network he will be greatly missed in the region.

The 2009 Corangamite Landcare awards are now open. Information and nomination forms can be found at <http://corangamite.landcarevic.net.au/>. Nominations close 8 May 2009 and the winners will be announced at a celebratory dinner on 12 June 2009.

For further information contact Tracey McRae on 5232 9100.

North East

The North East celebrated its regional Landcare awards last November. The McIntosh family was awarded the river health award and Glen Johnson of the Baranduda Landcare Group was presented the individual award. In addition, 21 people with a combined involvement in Landcare of some 285 years also received active service awards at the event. Full details of the awards are available on <http://northeast.landcarevic.net.au>.

A successful region-wide proposal by North East Landcare groups for Caring for our Country funding, called 'doing it with dung – from the Mountains to the Murray' is now underway. The project will provide training in farm planning, livestock and grazing management, dung beetle identification and monitoring, and releases of new species. The project is being managed by Kiewa Catchment Landcare.

The CMA has produced two roll-up banners for use by Landcare groups at their events in the region. These banners feature images of Landcare activities across the region in recent years and are available to help promote Landcare and encourage discussion.

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

Wimmera

The Wimmera has seen some very dry, dusty and smoky times of late. Many rural communities and groups are stretched to the limit and hoping for the elusive early break and above average rainfall season that will come to the rescue of community and environment.

Despite the difficulties the resolve of Landcare members and groups is clearly evident in the Wimmera Landcare projects and events planned for 2009. The next major event is a Project Platypus, Mt William Creek walk to be held from April 4-9. Call 5358 4410 for more information.

We're also looking forward to the Landcare Expo at Caulfield on April 18 where we get the chance to promote and display our Landcare achievements and successes. Our Landcare members hope to meet urban Landcarers and others interested in learning more about what Landcare does.

For further information contact Max Skeen on 5382 1544.

East Gippsland

Landcare in East Gippsland has been very busy in delivering their Second Generation Landcare projects; some of the projects include restoration of Cabbage Tree Creek in the Snowy catchment, soil carbon field days and blackberry control in the Bonang area.

The Regional Landcare Support Strategy is currently in the process of being renewed into a Regional Action Plan for Landcare in East Gippsland. The team have also been working on promotional materials, whole farm planning, farm tours, land management with horses, Certificate IV in Business and reporting frameworks.

The Far East Victoria Landcare Network received funding from the Helen McPherson Smith Trust for a community

driven approach to blackberry control and funding from the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce for a project officer.

Snowy River Interstate Landcare Committee received a Caring for our Country open grant for a cross-border project on the strategic management of serrated tussock. A successful erosion day was held, viewing works and discussing erosion management processes.

For further information contact Becky Hemming on 5150 3577.

North Central

We welcome a new full-time Landcare Co-ordinator for the Shires of Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges. Krista Patterson-Majoor has experience leading teams with GreenCorps as well as employment with DPI. She brings fantastic social and technical skills to the role.

Second Generation Landcare Grants were heavily sought by community groups this year. Over 100 groups applied for \$537,883 worth of projects. Sixty-four Landcare groups, schools, councils and sports clubs in North Central Victoria were successful in securing \$340,000 of grant funding.

Landcare co-ordinators are currently supervising and co-ordinating works for ten Drought Employment Crews who are on the ground in the region.

For further information contact Jennelle Carlier on 5440 1814.



Krista Patterson-Majoor is the new Landcare Co-ordinator for the Shires of Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges.

West Gippsland

A new landholder welcome pack has been developed by South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) in partnership with the real estate agents of South Gippsland. All new landholders in the area now receive an information pack about Landcare and how to be involved.

The pack is proving to be an effective communication, awareness and recruitment tool. For further information contact Belinda Brennan at belindab@wgcm.vic.gov.

For further information on the networks across the region contact: Peter Steller, Maffra & District Landcare Network, peters@wgcm.vic.gov.au, Peter Newgreen, Lake Wellington Landcare Network, petern@wgcm.vic.gov.au, Paul Martin, Yarram Yarram Landcare Network, paulm@wgcm.vic.gov.au, Moragh Mackay, Bass Coast Landcare Network, landcare@nex.net.au.

For general information about Landcare in West Gippsland contact Phillip McGarry on 1300 094 262.

Goulburn Broken

Goulburn Broken Landcare is working hard on how to fit into Caring for our Country priorities.

Adding to these issues much of the Upper Goulburn area has now been burnt or was under threat of fire. There will be many biodiversity issues arising from this. The communities' first concern is to consider the human and social needs.

The Goulburn Broken CMA and community leaders are currently working on options for action to get the recovery of the area underway. Landcare is well positioned to be effective in community recovery activities.

For further information contact Tony Kubeil on 5761 1619.

Glenelg Hopkins

The efforts of local Landcare individuals and groups in improving the environment of the south west have recently been recognised at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA Environmental Awards in Port Fairy. Among those recognised were the Ararat Landcare Group, the Tarragul Landcare Group and its president, John Keiller.

John Keiller, a farmer from Cashmore, was also joint winner of the Individual Achievement Award. One small indication of John's personal effort for improved habitat for wildlife is shown in his installation of 45 nesting boxes for sugar gliders on his property.

The Ararat Landcare Group was recognised as the outstanding Landcare or community group. They are a dedicated group with a passion for weed eradication on both public and private land. The group's next big challenge is contributing to the creation of an Ararat to Great Dividing Trail network biolink.

For further information contact David Nichols on 5571 2526.

Port Phillip and Westernport

The Victorian bushfires that started on Saturday 7 February 2009 have affected the landholders of many Landcare groups in the region.

Those Landcare groups who cover some of the area burnt include: Arthurs Creek, Bunyip, Christmas Hills, Jindivick, Kinglake, Labertouche, Merriang, St Andrews, Steels Creek, Strathewen and Upper Merri Plenty.

The regional team of co-ordinators has been working with the leaders of these groups to gather more information on the impact on landholders, their immediate and short-term needs, and then matching

these to available services and offers from the wider community.

Preparations for the longer term land management needs, priorities and support are also underway. Our thoughts are with those who suffered losses of life and property.

For further information contact Doug Evans on 9296 4662.

Mallee

The Mallee Regional Landcare network hosted a highly successful forum in February focusing on the ways Landcare can prepare itself to meet the challenges posed by climate change. The forum was attended by about 700 Landcare members from across north west Victoria.

The first day of the forum included free presentations from respected environmentalist Rob Gell, as well as Australian Farm Institute executive director Mick Keogh; leading researcher Professor Allan Curtis; and Greening Australia's Ron Dodds.

This was followed up by a day of field trips for Landcare members, visiting a range of sites in the region including Ned's Corner Station, which is managed for conservation by Trust for Nature.

For further information contact Brendon Thomas on 5051 4576.

Fire recovery is at the top of the list for many Landcare groups across the State.





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