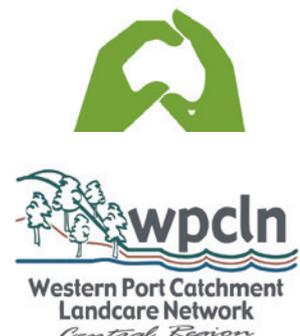


Western Port Catchment Landcare Network ANNUAL MAGAZINE / 2021



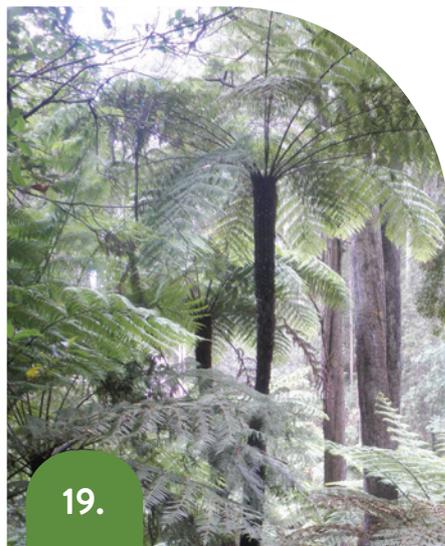
VISION STATEMENT

The Western Port Catchment Landcare Network seeks to enhance the biodiversity of ecosystems within the catchment to ensure they are connected and protected in perpetuity. This will be done by promoting regenerative land management practices to landholders and in collaboration with an empowered, diverse and supportive community.



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Graphic Design: Leap Creative Co.

NETWORK FLOWCHART

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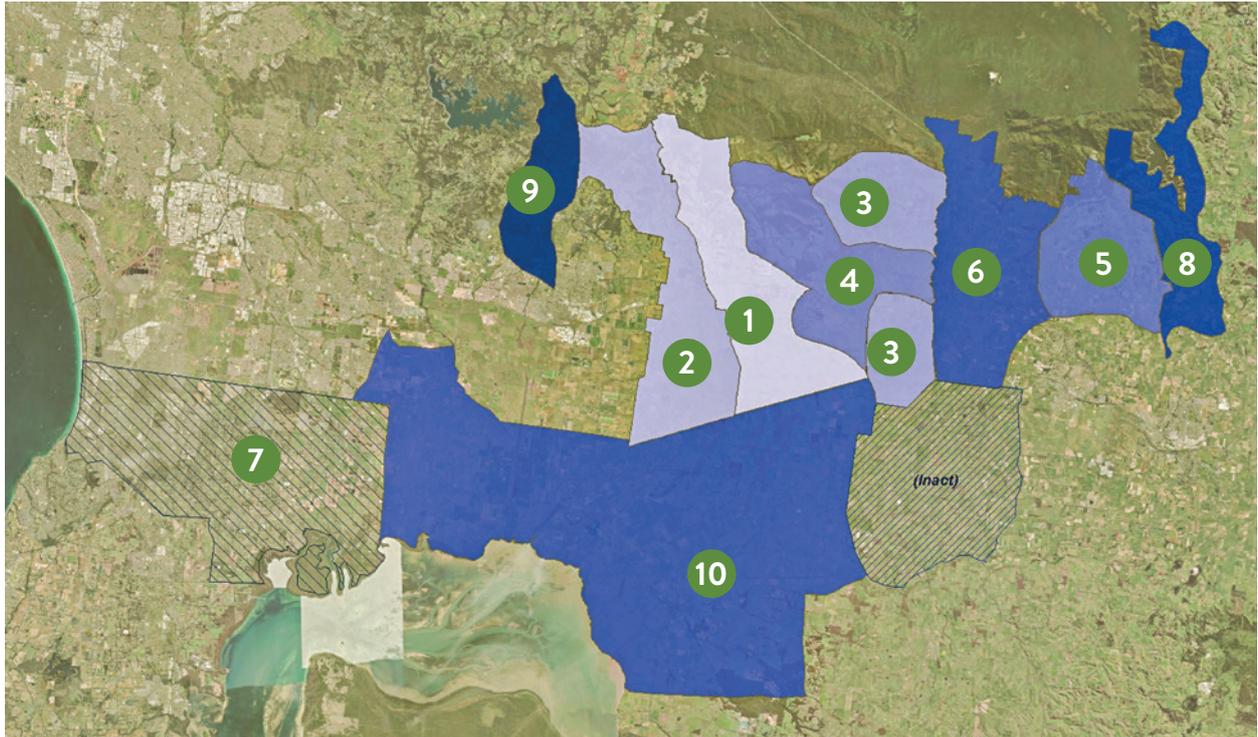
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NETWORK GROUPS

NETWORK MAP



NETWORK MEMBERS

1. Back Creek Landcare Group
2. Bessie Creek & Ararat Creek Landcare Group
3. Bunyip Landcare Group
4. Cannibal Creek Landcare Group
5. Jindivick Landcare Group
6. Labertouche Sustainable Farming & Landcare Group
7. Langwarrin Woodlands & Northern Western Port Landcare Group
8. Neerim and District Landcare Group
9. Toomuc Landcare Group
10. Western Port Swamp Landcare Group
11. Intrepid Landcare Group (aimed at 18-35 years olds)
12. Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link (HPNL)
13. Cardinia Waters Wetland Group
14. Cardinia Deer Management Coalition

EXECUTIVE OFFICER APPOINTED

ANNE BURKE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

After working as a thought leader, change manager and innovative digital transformer in education, government and corporate organisations, at the end of 2021 I was appointed to the position of Executive Officer at Western Port Catchment Landcare Network.

In 2019 after returning from the Arctic where I witnessed polar bears eating polar bears, the town of Svalbard slip off the side of a mountain due to lack of permafrost and was immersed in a program demonstrating how to achieve negative emissions, I decided it was time to 'walk the walk'. Hence, I sold my home in Melbourne and purchased a property in the seaside town of Inverloch.

In the first year I setup shelterbelts and planted over 3000 indigenous grasses, bushes and trees in an effort to revegetate my small section of the biolink passage. Having the privilege of joining WPCLN in a leadership role was the final piece in the puzzle. I am blown away by the amazing programs and projects under the banner of WPCLN and I look forward to meeting each and every one of you.

Anne Burke
Executive Officer
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

PRESIDENTS REPORT 2021

MARIJKE DE BEVER-PRICE PRESIDENT

What a year of challenges! We thought that fire recovery – while still ongoing, and COVID-19 lockdowns would be behind us, and better times would be ahead. Combined with the everyday issues in our lives and worsening COVID-19, our resilience has and continues to be tested. Despite these difficulties, Western Port Catchment Landcare Network has continued to deliver a range of environmental services and projects to the benefit of landscapes within and outside the Network.

On-ground works have continued to be a focus during the year. Real outcomes for the environment, community and landowners have been of utmost importance. Attention has been given to stream frontage assessments by Bridgette Sullivan, our Waterways Health Assessor, smart and regenerative agricultural farming practices, focusing on soils and grazing, and more recently, an Australian-first no-till trials in organic horticulture by our Sustainable Agriculture Manager Peter Ronalds, biodiversity projects, native pollinators, food systems as well as fire recovery revegetation by our Landcare Project Facilitator Natalie Mikecz, and last but not least, Geoff Lockwoods' expertise in managing projects to improve the natural vegetation along the Cannibal Creek corridor, focusing on pest weeds and animals. His involvement in surveying Mt Cannibal Reserve's indigenous species and completing Cardinia Shire Biodiversity grants to assist landowners particularly affected by recent fires has continued.

Nicole Walsh, our Landcare Facilitator kept members and friends informed of events and activities occurring locally and more widely in the Network's eNews. She maintained our website along with Peter Ronalds support, as well as the Facebook page which are both well subscribed. Nicole also managed enquiries from landholders for advice about planting guides, weeds and whole-farm planning, and questions about sustainably managing our landscape. Nicole has now left us and moved on to other fields in the environmental space. She was an invaluable support when planning and preparing important events for groups and the Network as a whole. We thank Nicole for her dedicated service over the past four years and for sharing her expertise with so many on a variety of levels. We now have Cecilia Imre filling some big boots and we know her youth, enthusiasm and professional qualities will service our Landcare community well.

Our Network staff and our support base have expanded in recent times. We have maintained our Office Manager Carol Hoskins who plays a valuable role in our network. We have also recently employed Anne Burke as our Executive Officer. She will support the Board and streamline governance and management responsibilities.

Every year I reference the wonderful work the Executive does along with the entire board in support of the important decisions and changes that have needed to be made. I appreciate their commitment to the Network and particularly when meetings have been on hold and then replaced by ubiquitous and very dry Zoom affairs.



Effective community engagement is central to promoting, delivering and sustaining the benefits of our Landcare communities. After perusing Victorian Landcare magazines for over twenty years and musing over the history of Landcare in Victoria since its launch in 1986, I observe that our situation has changed and I acknowledge that it will continue to do so.

There was, and still is, a growing awareness of the need to do something about land degradation, soil erosion, salinity, rural tree decline and the outbreaks of weed and rabbit challenges, however, the fauna has changed to include larger animals such as feral deer and the weeds have increased in number. Out of these concerns, agencies around soil conservation, farming and land protection were formed. Joan Kirner as Minister for Conservation, Forest and Lands, who became Victoria's first female Premier, in partnership with Heather Mitchell, the first of two female Presidents of the Victorian Farmers Federation, inspired and encouraged the involvement of the community to tackle land degradation and give practical and local expression to local needs with enthusiasm and initiatives, and to that end, integrated local community and Government strategies, plans and resources. And so, numerous Landcare groups were launched around the state.

While Landcare was a government initiative based on government and community partnerships, many early groups were concerned with the improvement of public land in their local areas and this focus continues today. Landcare groups had a sociological outlook. They needed to show that their members could work together to improve their local area – hence they became involved in the planning, implementation and ongoing maintenance of their local projects.

Continued On Next Page...



eDNA Sampling / Cannibal Creek Landcare Group

Sometimes the groups were small, but they had a common community bond with a project that had the potential for improvement in the productivity and/or amenity value of the local area. This became the emphasis for strong local group approaches. Issues such as water scarcity, protecting waterways from being used as waste dumps and understanding weeds assisted with the establishment of the CaLP Act [Catchment and Land Protection Act] '94; restoring wetlands, fencing off waterways from livestock, planting native trees, protecting and boosting threatened species, the inclusion of nest boxes, implications of climate change, how to live in a bushfire prone area and bushfire planning, peri-urban environments, gardening for wildlife, enhancement of habitat and biodiversity corridors, shelter for farm animals, garden escapees, transforming walking tracks, citizen science, maintaining bio-security with programs such as FarmBlitz, DNA analysis of waterways, analysis of invasive species and so much more came into the local environmental enthusiast's vision.

As skills and knowledge improved so did public profiles. The use of aerial photography enhanced perspectives, and hands-on doing, rather than telling, improved engagement while providing a positive commitment from the broader community. As time went on and partnerships formed with Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks were supported to undertake environmental protection and sustainable land management activities.

The Victorian Landcare Program invested millions of dollars, (which is today managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning [DELWP]) to deliver the Victorian Government's support of Landcare. In this, some 78 Landcare facilitators in the state, of which WPCLN is one, are funded through Landcare groups and Networks to build community capacity, assist with planning on-ground projects, facilitate increased local community participation and support groups to deliver on-ground works. Access to Victorian Land Grants provides support to address local environment and land management priorities, education and capacity building projects and group start-up, maintenance and costs.

Today there is an Aboriginal Landcare Facilitator working across the state to increase engagement between Landcare and Traditional owners, supporting partnership projects and building awareness.

The Junior Landcare program funds schools, scouts and guides and youth group projects. This enables young people to connect with and value their local natural environment while increasing awareness of the importance of a healthy environment and what it means for their health and wellbeing. They take on projects that create, restore and protect habitat for native plants and animals.

While Victoria has a strong history of environmental volunteering with volunteers contributing enormously to our biodiversity, our economy and our communities, things are changing. With increasingly busy lifestyles and changing community expectations, we need to adapt accordingly. We need to engage our future leaders - our young people to become involved and drive initiatives. We need to support environmental initiatives that are relevant and interesting to the young, which are also fun and enable them to be adventurous. The Western Port Intrepid group support Landcare structures – operating like a Landcare pop-up and adding value to current projects. Our young work alongside our legends, learning from their experiences. Activities provided create a space for young people to connect. Adventure activities such as bushwalking, abseiling, kayaking, or chatting around a campfire enable the group to form friendships and connections. Communities are created and multi-generations proudly work together.

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network is grateful to have a substantial and enthusiastic board and a highly skilled staff working with farmers and landowners, schools, environmental groups, waterways and on educational programs.

Landcare creates friendship and community and we must find ways to encourage ongoing enthusiasm in the hope that it becomes infectious in our communities.

Marijke de Bever-Price
President
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

STAFF REPORTS 2021

BRIDGETTE SULLIVAN LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

2021 was again another crazy year full of challenges, but it also delivered some amazing project outcomes, and the resilience of the community and their passion for improving the environment has been inspiring.

In March and April, Geoff Lockwood and I were engaged by Melbourne Water to scope two Capital Works Projects over eight properties. These projects are large scale waterway improvement works usually involving the removal of Willows and other invasive weeds species from long stretches of the waterway, usually several kilometres long. Capital Works projects are long term projects with maintenance being undertaken by Melbourne Water for three years. Geoff's detailed mapping of the project sites was an enormous help when writing up the project and calculating costs – thanks, Geoff.

I successfully tendered again to provide Assessor Services to Melbourne Water for the next three years (reviewed on an annual basis by Melbourne Water). It was exciting to see my hard work writing this tender pay off and to be awarded the contract. It is great to be able to continue developing relationships with landholders and watching the change in landscape with projects that continue each year.

Over the course of the year, I completed 65 mid-project reports, 13 end-of-project audits, 20 new project assessments (many of these were multi-landholder projects), and 39 audits and ongoing project assessments. As well as the Capital Works projects and several other extra visits to project sites.

Melbourne Water has developed a new Incentives Program; Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways, that brings together several Melbourne Water grant programs into a single streamlined application process. Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways is open throughout the year to all customers including landowners, councils and public land managers, school and community groups, universities and research institutions, not for profit and collaborative multi-stakeholder groups.

During September and October, I undertook training for the new project IT system that Melbourne Water are now using. I also assisted with the migration of old projects to the new system. This new system is part of the updated incentives that Melbourne Water have implemented.

I feel very privileged to work in this role and enjoy being able to continue to develop relationships with landholders and view the project sites each year. There have been some incredible transformations and waterway restorations, which is so encouraging. Thank you to all of the landholders and project partners that I am fortunate to work with, it is an absolute pleasure working with you all.

If you own land that fronts onto a river or creek, you may be eligible for funding to help you manage the land. Melbourne Water's Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways supports work that protects or enhances riverbanks, such as weed control, fencing and planting native vegetation.

If you are interested in knowing more about Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways please contact Bridgette on 0407 205 749 or visit: Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways Program | Melbourne Water

Thanks to Peter, Nicole, Natalie, Carol, Geoff, Cecilia, Anne and the WPCLN Board and landholders for another wonderful year!

Bridgette Sullivan
Melbourne Water Project Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



STAFF REPORTS 2021

CECILIA IMRE LANDCARE GROUP FACILITATOR

It has been an interesting start in the role of Landcare Facilitator. COVID-19 restrictions were in place when I started in September, hindering my ability to meet all groups in person and to have a look around their network area.

With the aid of technology, many groups were still able to hold general meetings and AGMs online which I happily attended. So, this was a great way to initially meet many groups and to introduce myself. I have also had many conversations over the phone to chat, hear and learn about all the groups making up the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network and about both the amazing successes and the many struggles and challenges faced during COVID-19 times, including of course, all the struggles and plans that had to be put on hold.

The resilience and determination are strong in all groups with many still remaining positive and thinking ahead to plan and deliver on current and future projects. Landcare groups continue to grow with new members joining.

With restrictions eased toward the end of 2021 I was able to meet Neerim and District Landcare Group, Labertouche Sustainable Farming Landcare Group and Cannibal Creek Landcare. Meeting in person and attending meetings was so lovely.

Through the monthly eNews and Facebook page, we have been able to continue sharing stories, upcoming events and grant opportunities throughout the network.

The Landcare Group Facilitator position has been secured for another three years until June 2024. The work plan has been submitted which outlines what, how and why I will be conducting my efforts in the role and supporting the network and Landcare groups. Thank you all for your input into its development. Some changes and support are now offered to Landcare facilitators. This includes training opportunities and networking with other facilitators in the region.

Well, I can also say that in my role over the past five months, I have learnt a lot about dung beetles. What fascinating little

creatures; something I haven't given much thought to. I now know they play a vital role in cycling nutrients through the soil and reducing pesky fly populations.

Australia has many native dung beetles but they were unable to keep up with the quantities of dung pads produced by livestock. So dung beetles from overseas were introduced to help bury the dung into the soil.

From a workshop held in March by Russ Barrow from Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineers Project. Cannibal Creek and Bunyip Landcare groups were inspired to try to breed them.

With the support of Karen Thomas at Melbourne Water (previously PPWCMA) and other grant funders, the two groups have been involved in a project constructing nursery beds to breed certain species of dung beetles suited to our conditions. The project is in its first year of testing to determine how best to raise dung beetles with different styles of nursery beds constructed to suit different dung beetle species known to breed well in our climate.

The young beetles can then be released into the paddocks to control livestock dung. The goal of this project is for Landcare groups to pass their knowledge onto local farmers on how to breed dung beetles for themselves to control dung on their properties year-round. As dung beetles can cost up to \$2, to be able to breed various species on your own farm and to be able to control dung all year round would be a huge advantage. This is such an excellent collaborative project and I look forward to seeing the success of the project and little baby dung beetles sent out for testing!

I would like to acknowledge and thank Nicole Walsh for her work as Landcare Facilitator for the past four years. She has been a tremendous asset to all the network groups. Thank you for your ongoing support as I take over the reins Nicole.

Thank you to the staff and board for welcoming me into the network and helping me find my feet, your support has been truly appreciated.

Landcare groups, I commend you for remaining strong and getting through another tough year. I look forward to being able to meet more of you in person, attend events and help you in planning projects. Please keep in touch, I am here to support you.

Cecilia Imre
Landcare Group Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Dung Beetle Beds

STAFF REPORTS 2021

GEOFF LOCKWOOD LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

It would be grossly understating that the last twelve months have proved to be very challenging for project participants in the network as we have endured varying and at times perplexing restrictions in response to COVID-19. However, if there can be a positive out of the last year it would be the resourcefulness and resilience displayed by groups and communities to continue with project activities while enduring substantial social disruption.

Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project

The Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project is now entering its seventh year and is resuming activities after the disruptions of last year. The key stakeholders for this project continue to be the local communities of Tynong North, Garfield North, Tonimbuk, and Bunyip North, as members of local Landcare or Friends groups. The strengths, resilience and resourcefulness of the stakeholder groups were demonstrated following the 2019 bushfires, and again during the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021.

The deer and fox control program has been a highlight of the project, with the outcomes achieved by volunteer participants being emphasised to DELWP as a viable option and key component for reducing the impact of deer on properties and the natural environment. As a volunteer program, this activity was severely curtailed by pandemic restrictions, but the results achieved in terms of numbers of deer and fox controlled was outstanding and a credit to the efforts of the control team members, and especially the activity coordinator.

A highlight for weed control was the eventual removal of large exotic trees from two roadside sites (Radiata Pine and White Poplar). Additionally, Cannibal Creek Landcare coordinated a project to remove a number of large Radiata Pine from the Garfield North Outdoor Education Centre, and subsequent revegetation of the school grounds. These works experienced hurdles such as applying for a permit to enable the removal of the trees (exotic invasive species), and then high demand for arborists, partly due to storms in the Dandenong Ranges. The project was able to trial forestry mulchers to remove a very dense stand of Sweet Pittosporum, which to date has shown to be very successful. The site will continue to be monitored for regrowth or resprouting of pittosporum, and the emergence of indigenous species.

Stakeholder groups were able to complete a number of revegetation activities when permitted, with some extensive projects being coordinated by Cannibal Creek Landcare. The project received funding partly to assist Parks Victoria with revegetation of two sites that had been impacted by the 2019 bushfire and historically been subject to varying grazing intensities. The revegetation proposals were instigated by



Forestry Mulcher

Landcare group members and the community support has been welcomed by Parks Victoria staff. The project is also discussing options for providing support to Parks Victoria for weed control at a site with high biodiversity values within the lower reaches of Cannibal Creek.

Two of the DELWP grants are now lapsing and are due to be finalised by February. These grants funded a range of project activities both prior to and following the 2019 bushfire. DELWP have indicated similar, funding rounds will be offered in the future, but no announcements to date, and unlikely to be anything of significance until the 2022-23 year due to budget constraints.

The Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project is a testament to the hard efforts and drive of the local community members together with the much-valued support and funding provided by agencies associated with the project. I acknowledge and thank the group leaders and members of Bunyip Landcare, Cannibal Creek Landcare, Cannibal Creek Reserve CoM, and Friends of Mt Cannibal Reserve. Staff from Cardinia Shire and Melbourne Water have been instrumental in the ongoing management of the project as have staff and the board of Western Port Catchment Landcare Network. Project funding is provided by Melbourne Water, DELWP, PPWCMA and Federal Government.

Cardinia Deer Management Coalition

The Cardinia Deer Management Coalition is an initiative of community members concerned with the impact of deer on the natural environment in the Cardinia Creek catchment and southern Dandenong Ranges. The CDMC joined the network in 2021 and is also supported by Cardinia Shire via the Cardinia Peri-urban Weed Management Partnership Project. While the group has a primary focus on controlling deer, they also investigate and implement new and novel approaches to deer control and monitoring of deer populations, and their impacts on the local environment. The project area comprises peri-urban communities and semi-rural landscapes with small allotments, which can be challenging for the group's controllers using traditional deer control methods.

Although activities were limited due to pandemic restrictions, the group were able to achieve some significant outcomes during 2021.

Continued On Next Page...

GEOFF LOCKWOOD

LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

An aerial survey of the catchment by a helicopter fitted with a thermal imaging camera highlighted the extent and density of deer populations.

The group was able to conduct a smaller targeted aerial survey of a site using a drone that supported the outcomes from the initial helicopter survey. The group had also intended to implement a survey examining the impacts and extent of deer browsing native flora, which potentially could be correlated to the population data from the aerial survey. While a series of community training days were able to be conducted during the year, the implementation of the survey encountered a number of impediments and is yet to be implemented.

The monitoring data obtained by the group has been instrumental in highlighting the impact of deer within the project area, both to local communities and to government agencies. Prior to advocacy by group members, government agency representatives did not consider deer to be a significant problem in the Cardinia Creek catchment.

Cardinia Shire Biodiversity Grants

We are fortunate that Cardinia Shire has continued to provide funding for the Biodiversity Grants scheme to assist local landholders to improve their local environment. There have been some excellent proposals received to date and there is the opportunity for additional sites to be included.

Tarago Catchment Project

Only in the very early development stages, the concept for this project originated from efforts by members of the Labertouche Landcare group to attract funding for pest animal control activities, and similar interest expressed by members of neighbouring Landcare groups.

Subject to group interest, there is potential for a community project similar to the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project within the broader catchment of the Tarago River from Labertouche to Neerim. The promotion of the project proposal received an unexpected boost in December when the Landcare Network was approached by DELWP seeking to promote a forthcoming deer control program as part of the Central Highlands Eden project via a presentation to the community.

Please contact me if you would like further information on these projects or would like to discuss a proposal to address a specific environmental issue in your area.

Geoff Lockwood
Landcare Projects Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Tarago Catchment

NATALIE MIKECZ

LANDCARE PROJECTS FACILITATOR

Wow, what another unusual year it has been! I have been fortunate enough to still contribute to enhancing biodiversity and delivering interactive education throughout the community. In my third year with the Network, I have had the privilege of completing my work on three inspiring projects across the region.

Cardinia Shire Biodiversity and Western Port Fire Recovery Revegetation

The 2019-20 biodiversity funding from the Cardinia Shire combined with the Port Phillip and Western Port CMA's 2019-20 Victorian Landcare Grants Program has enabled our Network to fund eight biodiversity and bushfire recovery projects within the region. Many of these projects focused on the land rehabilitation following the 2019 Bunyip Complex Fires, but also saw the creation of new shelterbelts, the fencing of remnant vegetation and new revegetation zones, as well as some weed management. With the undertaking of these projects significantly delayed by COVID-19-19 restrictions, thank you to the grant providers for their understanding and to everyone involved for persevering through the extra challenges posed during this time. Over the past year, it has been delightful to see these works progress and is so wonderful to see many of these projects now completed. These works protect and promote valuable habitat and vital resources for native fauna and flora, continuing to enhance the biodiversity throughout the region.

Linking Native Pollinators and Sustainable Food Systems

Over the past year, and after several postponed attempts, I was finally able to deliver interactive workshops to four Primary Schools – Cardinia, Bunyip, Drouin West and Chandler Park in Keysborough. During these workshops, I engaged 200 students ranging from grades 1 to 4 regarding the importance of native pollinators in maintaining sustainable food systems. From delivering a presentation, sharing videos and supplying printed resources to getting the students actively involved in building 120 bee hotels and planting hundreds of plants, the students were engaged and enthusiastic. Students, teachers and even the volunteers learnt why native pollinators are important for sustainable food systems and how we can help enhance the health of local pollinator populations. Delivering informative and interactive workshops aims to increase interest and a better understanding for the next generation. I received positive feedback from the teachers, some of who also committed to adding some learnings to their future curriculum.

Ripe for Change, a philanthropic source of funding administered by a not-for-profit organisation, Sustainable Table, predominantly funded our project aimed at 'Linking Native Pollinators and Sustainable Food Systems. Despite a range of challenges over the course of this project including multiple delays, Ripe for Change have been very supportive of the persistence, adaptability and resilience shown in the face of all



of these challenges and were accepting of the variations required to deliver the key messages.

In addition to this funding, this project would not have been possible without the many supportive people and groups within the community. The very willing and capable volunteers at the Cardinia, Bunyip and Dingley Village Men's Sheds for providing and preparing materials for the bee hotel construction. Additional funding for the purchase of the pollinator plants was received through the Network's Nectar Feeders project funded by DELWP. Adele and the team at the CEC Indigenous Nursery for storing and maintaining these pollinator plants through countless lockdowns. Bee enthusiast Karen Retra for her insight, support and sharing of learning materials and videos.

Many thanks to each of you, without this funding and assistance, we would not have been able to provide so many students with such a wonderful learning opportunity.

My thanks go to all of our grant providers as these projects would not be achievable without your support and generosity. We at the Network aim to continue supporting landholders and communities through a variety of projects and therefore continue to seek funding through various sources. As such, we encourage landholders and community members with projects in mind to submit queries or an expression of interest to Cecilia Imre at facilitator@wpcln.org.au.

Please visit our website <http://www.wpcln.org.au> for forms or further information. Please note that funding may not be immediately available, therefore projects may need to be added to a waiting list pending available funding.

I would like to congratulate all staff, board and everyone throughout the Network for achieving such amazing outcomes through yet another challenging year. After three years at the Network, it is now time for me to move on to the next chapter. It has been a pleasure and I am so grateful for the many rewarding opportunities I have been afforded to contribute to so many worthwhile projects throughout Western Port. I would like to thank everyone for their assistance, support and friendship and hope to see many of you again in the future.

Natalie Mikecz
Landcare Projects Facilitator
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network

STAFF REPORTS 2021

PETER RONALDS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MANAGER

My role is to increase the understanding and uptake of sustainable farming practices in the region to improve farmers profitability and our natural resources.

The main project that I am currently delivering is a 5-year Australian Government funded project running to June 2023, called 'Smart Farming in Western Port'. This is a region-wide project, and I work closely with several partners who co-deliver the project in other parts of the catchment. They include; Bass Coast Landcare Network, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, South Gippsland Landcare Network, AGVIC and Melbourne Water and Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority. We also utilise the services of farm consultants and scientists to assist with specialised support as required.

The main ways we support farmers is through running; farmer discussion groups, field days, farm planning programs and on-farm trials/demonstrations. These are proven methods of engagement, with a strong emphasis on farmer-to-farmer learnings and practical application.

We entered 2021 with high hopes that COVID-19 was behind us, and that farmers would be finally able to meet on farms and 'in-person', but unfortunately this was not to be. It was very hard to plan any 'in-person' activity, and our project team had to cancel many events at very short notice due to snap lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings. 2021, unfortunately, ended up being another year of engagement using 'Zoom'. Even with COVID-19 restrictions we still had 1926 people participate in 67 project events in 2020-21!

Interest in regenerative farming practices has increased significantly in the past 3-4 years and is now widely promoted in the press. Last year, we developed a 7-week regenerative agriculture training program in conjunction with a series of 8 videos hosted by Declan McDonald (soil scientist) focusing on the key principles of regenerative agriculture. The training program has been refined further with another 50 farmers completing the 7-week course in 2021. In addition, the regenerative agriculture videos have had over 24,000 views. The videos can be found on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/WPCLN>

It is over 15 years since I started working with Western Port Catchment Landcare Network and I count it a privilege to work with so many wonderful farmers, community members, staff and partners over that time. Your friendship and generosity in opening up your farms for field days, discussion groups and open days is appreciated. Thanks for your support over the past year, and also to staff and board for your support.

Peter Ronalds
Sustainable Agriculture Manager
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network





FEATURE ARTICLES

Beau Miles / A Tree A Minute



REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Regenerative agriculture is currently a hot topic, but the term ‘regenerative agriculture’ is confusing to many people as there is not a set of specific practices or a compliance scheme that defines whether a farmer is a ‘regenerative farmer’ or not!

Many farmers are applying practices that fit under the banner of ‘regenerative agriculture’ and would therefore claim that they are ‘regenerative’ farmers. However, the true measure of whether a farmer is a regenerative farmer may only be confirmed when a holistic assessment of the farm resources and systems is conducted to determine whether the farmer is actually ‘regenerating’, ‘sustaining’ or ‘degrading’ the land, people and community in which they live.

HISTORY

Robert Rodale (head of Rodale Institute) coined the term “regenerative organic” in the 1970s to distinguish a kind of farming that goes beyond sustainable. Together with his daughter, Maria, Robert penned the 7 principles of ‘regenerative’ as he saw them, which is highly recommended reading. Robert’s original philosophy of regeneration encompassed agriculture, community and personal spirit values¹.

The original intent of Rodale’s definition has been watered down considerably since it was first penned, with regenerative agriculture now more commonly defined as a holistic land management system that leverages the power of photosynthesis in plants to close the carbon cycle and build soil health, crop resilience and nutrient density.

Most regenerative agriculture advocates now agree there are 5 basic principles that need to be practised to achieve the maximum benefit when regenerating soils. These include:

1. KEEP SOIL COVERED
2. MINIMISE SOIL DISTURBANCE
3. MAXIMISE CROP/PASTURE DIVERSITY
4. MAINTAIN LIVING ROOTS YEAR-ROUND
5. INTEGRATING ANIMALS



Figure: Principles of Regenerative Agriculture (Lower Blackwood Catchment).

REGENERATIVE TODAY

Regenerative agriculture improves soil health and nutrient cycling, primarily through practices that increase soil organic matter through biological activity and natural processes, rather than external inputs. This not only aids in increasing soil biota diversity and health but increases biodiversity both above and below the soil surface, while increasing both water holding capacity and sequestering carbon at greater depths, thus drawing down atmospheric CO₂, and improving soil structure. Research continues to reveal the damaging effects to the soil from tillage, applications of agricultural chemicals and high input applications of fertilisers, and carbon mining. Regenerative agriculture reverses this paradigm to build for the future².

IS REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PROFITABLE?

Recent Australian research³ conducted by Vanguard Business Services has shown farm family businesses using regenerative agriculture principles have similar levels of profit to traditional farm businesses but with lower risk. The research also found that family members have higher physical and mental wellbeing, and the land is healthier.

Some of the findings are listed below:

The average profit levels of the regenerative graziers were consistently higher than the average ABARES farm survey participants and showed less variability over the study period.

The average profits of regenerative graziers were consistently better in years where there was low rainfall.

The regenerative managed farms had substantially lower cost structures, in key areas such as supplementary feed costs/DSE, pasture costs/DSE and animal health and breeding costs/DSE.

They had greater confidence in their ability to achieve farming goals, their optimism was higher, and significantly, they had higher levels of general health.

RESEARCH

Some claim there is little research or science on regenerative practices. Open Food Network Australia and Climate Works

Australia have compiled an excellent literature review of regenerative agriculture-focused science and research projects which can be found here⁴.

TRANSITIONING

The principles of regenerative agriculture are well researched and proven to work, however, the practical on-farm application will vary depending on your rainfall, soil type, topography, enterprise and available resources. When making significant changes to management practices, farmers should weigh up all the options, consider the most appropriate option, and start making changes in small trial areas. Most farmers who change over to regenerative management practices say they would transition slower if they were to do it again.

Do your research and look at what has worked and not worked for other local farmers. Join a farmer discussion group and attend farm walks with others. Monitor and measure changes in animals, pastures, soil health and profitability.

The WPCLN and other partners facilitate several farmer discussion groups and we can find a group that suits you. Have a look at the series of 8 regenerative farming videos on our YouTube channel⁵.

REFERENCES

- 1 <https://rodaleinstitute.org/blog/original-principles-of-regenerative-agriculture/>
2. <https://regenerationinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Regen-Ag-Definition-2.23.17-1.pdf>
3. Ogilvy, S., Gardner, M., Mallawaarachichi, T., Schirmer, J., Brown, K., Heagney, E. (2018) Report: Graziers with better profitability, biodiversity and wellbeing. Canberra Australia
4. <https://ofnaus.gitbook.io/regenerative-agriculture-literature-review/>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/c/WPCLN>

In 2022 the WPCLN will be running another 7-week Regenerative Agriculture Training Program. If you are interested in participating, please email peter@wpcln.org.au

FEATURE ARTICLE

A TREE A MINUTE



WHAT INSPIRES SOMEONE TO PLANT A TREE A MINUTE FOR 24 HOURS?

I live in dairy country, which needs lots of grass, and lots of grass needs good dirt. And in good dirt grows good trees. Some of the biggest trees in the world grow here, which is likely why I like trees so much.

I recently saw the places I live from the sky, for the first time actually, in a small plane. When I was given the controls I headed for home, intending to do some kind of flyby of the farmhouse. But instead, I noticed how many of the creeks and folds of the rolling hills were completely bare of trees. I'd never noticed the stark difference before. Then I had an idea.

Watch this inspiring story unfold at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbA-holuHM4&feature=youtu.be>



Beau Miles



A photograph of a dense forest. The foreground is filled with a thick carpet of green ferns. Several tall, slender trees with dark trunks rise from the forest floor. The background is a soft-focus wall of green foliage and more trees. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

GROUP REPORTS

Harbury Nature Reserve / Bessie Creek + Ararat Creek Landcare Group

BACK CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

Back Creeker's are looking forward to getting stuck into the 2022 season. We usually kick off our season with a supper meeting to catch up and firm up the calendar for the year.

We are also looking forward to welcoming some new members to our group. During lockdown periods we fielded a couple of enquiries from new residents who were interested in joining a local community group and doing planting on their properties, so it will be wonderful to finally welcome them in person.

Below is a photo I'm excited to share with you. This is a restio planted at one of our plantings a number of years ago. It is the sole survivor of a group of restio's and despite extreme conditions of drought and flood it is thriving and flowering for the first time this year and is a delightful display of nature.

Raelene Newham
Secretary
Back Creek Landcare Group



Restio

"This restio is the sole survivor of a group planting and is thriving despite extreme conditions of drought and flood."

BESSIE CREEK + ARARAT CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

"One of our group goals is to promote the natural treasures in our local environment among our local community."

Like many others, Bessie Creek/Ararat Creek Landcare Group has not been able to achieve anything of note in the past year. However, now that we are able to meet again we are hoping to push ahead with some plans made during 2021.

One of our group goals is to promote the natural treasures in our local environment among our local community, to spread knowledge and understanding of these areas of natural significance.

To begin we plan to organise and publicise an open day at Harbury. Harbury Nature Reserve is twenty hectares of wet and damp bushland between Gembrook Road and Bessie Ck Road in Pakenham Upper. It is owned by Trust for Nature who ensure the preservation of the flora and fauna of this beautiful forest. There are three creeks, including Bessie Creek, within the property. The property has a diversity of flora associated with the fern gullies, as well as with the different north and south-facing slopes. There is a Committee of Management that meets regularly and has monthly working bees. We would be pleased to showcase this lovely property. Enquiries are welcome for copies of Nature Trail notes or guided tours to elizabethfras48@gmail.com.

Local waterways are vital pieces of our natural environment. We would like to arrange a speaker from Melbourne Water to discuss the importance of our local creeks and to help landowners understand how best to care for the creeks running through their land. We'd like to understand any plans Melbourne Water has for Bessie and Ararat Creeks, and to learn about any funding initiatives available. We also plan to conduct some water monitoring along the creeks to check on water quality.

Kate Homes
Secretary
Bessie Creek + Ararat Creek Landcare Group

BUNYIP LANDCARE GROUP

Bunyip Landcare this year stepped into a partnership space with first nations people by holding an event with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.

On a cold damp day in autumn, we visited Bunyip Sanctuary. Members were welcomed to country by Uncle Shane Clarke and were invited to cleanse themselves in a smoking ceremony. A stroll to Tea Tree Creek gave members the opportunity to interact with Uncle Shane and with Steven Pepper, and to learn about how First Nations people lived in the landscape.

The weather drove us to plan B for lunch, and I thank Chris Kelly and Russell Pendlebury for welcoming us to their home. Apart from Bunyip Landcare members gaining a better understanding of First Nations people, there was an unexpected positive result of the event. On being told details of the axe heads that were shown to members, a relative of one of our members recalled finding similar artefacts and being unsure of what to do with them. They were duly handed to the Bunurong Land Council to everyone's satisfaction. We are keen to build on the relationship with an event next year.

Several members have volunteered their properties for cultural burning trials with First Nations people, and Bunyip Landcare is supporting the application of Tony Fitzgerald and the Community Fire Recovery committee for 3 years' funding.

Our normal calendar of farm tree planting was kicked off by two very successful days with Robert and Ingrid Green at their very wet Ellis Road property. Robert and Ingrid were also able to use the PPWCMA Working for Victoria team to plant a trial site based on the draft guidelines for Climate Change plantings. The guidelines look at the traditional shelterbelt form and question every aspect (length, width, height, orientation, placement and species selection) bearing in mind the effects of climate change.

The Guidelines for Shelterbelt Planting for Climate Change was an initiative of Bunyip Landcare Group that has been supported by Cardinia Shire Council and DELWP, and we await the release of the final document.

Unfortunately, just as we got accustomed to planting days and the excellent lunch and company that goes with them, the Delta variety of COVID-19 arrived in Victoria. Members were left to enjoy the zen of long-distance and lonely tree planting – a challenge accepted.

We continue to collaborate with Cannibal Creek Landcare Group and several statutory authorities to plan works for the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project. Diary date: a combined planting day on Sunday 1 May 2022. Members have benefitted from pest plant and animal control, and revegetation on both public and private land.

We have also contributed to the Western Port Landcare Network by advising our preferences for future programs and supporting their application for a new facilitator. Landcare Victoria asked for feedback on the role of Landcare Facilitators and we responded to that as well.



Learning About Indigenous Land Use

Stephen Pepper of the Bunurong Land Council explaining land use to Bunyip Landcare members.

We were invited to present to Bunyip Scouts which ended up being an online presentation to a very engaged group of kids of all ages. We have committed to making this an ongoing collaboration.

Several of our members are now the proud owners of new pets – hosting dung beetle nurseries as part of a PPWCMA agriculture project. Some have had a slow start, possibly due to the La Nina weather conditions but we hope to share their offspring in due course.

Bunyip Landcare takes this opportunity to acknowledge the work and support of the Port Philip and Western Port CMA, particularly the flurry of activity provided by the Working for Victoria teams in 2020/21. We look forward to continuing our work and activities with added support from Melbourne Water.

After the long haul of various pandemic restrictions, it was a pleasure to hold our AGM in person and we thank Amber McLeod for hosting us at her Trust for Nature property in Bunyip.

Susan Anderson
President
Bunyip Landcare Group

CANNIBAL CREEK LANDCARE GROUP

COVID-19 restrictions managed to interfere with our projects for 2021. Despite this, the group managed to have 11 sessions of preparation and planting days. This amounted to 610 volunteer hours and over 4000 plants in the ground.

Students from Pakenham Secondary College met with us for two plantings at two different sites. The students are studying environmental science and all worked well with our group members.

The Garfield North Outdoor Education Center was a site where we were successful in obtaining a grant from the Federal Government. This was to remove Pine trees and replant them with indigenous vegetation. The group had one combined meeting with the School and Friends of Mt Cannibal to help with new paths and do some planting. Holcim Quarry donated two truckloads of metal for the new paths which was well received. Members of the group met later to plant out the site after the pines were removed.

Our group had help from Intrepid Landcare and Australian Landcare Volunteers for two plantings and are grateful for their help. It was an enjoyable experience to be working with people from Melbourne Metro areas.

Our dung beetle nursery bed project continues with three species already in nursery beds. December will be the first time we will have some idea if we are on the road to success. Our thanks for the grants we received go to the Cardinia Shire Bushfire Recovery Committee, Garfield Community Opportunity Shop, Bunyip Committee Shop and PPWCMA.

The Feral Animal Control Programme continues between restrictions. Garry Burns who has managed the project since it commenced has decided to step down - a great pity. Many thanks, Garry.

It is, without doubt, our busy year would not have been possible without the commitment of all our members. A great friendly and hardworking group.

Geoff Lockwood continues to be the force behind the Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project of which our group is a member. This project has provided the funding for several of our plantings. Thank you Geoff for your help.

"It is, without doubt, our busy year would not have been possible without the commitment of all our members."



Pam Cunningham
Secretary
Cannibal Creek Landcare Group

CARDINIA DEER MANAGEMENT COALITION

Like all of you, I am looking forward to the end of COVID-19 restrictions. It has been a challenging time for everyone and we could perhaps be excused for biding our time and waiting till things "open up."

But this is not what has happened. Though control activities and engaging property owners slowed considerably, there has been a lot happening in the background, both within the CDMC and across the state.

Aerial Survey – Completed August 2021

- Helicopter thermal image survey of Cardinia Creek catchment
- Large numbers of deer (15/km²)
- Data shared with DELWP, Melb. Water, Parks Vic and local councils
- This now allows us to make targets and set goals
- Injection of further funds from Cardinia Council enabled a further thermal drone survey which put the deer numbers in the surveyed area at the upper limit of the heli survey figures

Vegetation Survey – In Progress

- Severely disrupted by COVID-19
- Initial training day with Dr Ami Bennett, Melb Uni, instructing 12 volunteers has been held
- Limited numbers of surveys are being conducted in a COVID safe manner
- Contract with Prof. E Ritchie, Deakin Uni for scientific oversight, survey design and data interpretation has been signed. Work will commence early Feb

Australian Vertebrate Pest Management Conference (AVPMC) & launch of Victorian Deer Community Control Network (VDCCN)

- 3 members of the CDMC attended the AVPMC to hear the latest research and learnings into deer control. Held as a zoom conference due to COVID made access more affordable for us
- VDCCN was launched during the conference by Johannes Wenzel, CDMC and Peter Jacobs, Invasive Species Council. This initiative of the CDMC, now backed by ISC and funded by DELWP, will be a major boon to the statewide effort to control deer. <https://invasives.org.au/our-work/feral-animals/feral-deer/feral-deer-in-victoria/vdccn/>

Peri-urban Weed Management Project (PWMP) - Ongoing

- CDMC was invited to join this project, which has been extremely valuable to us and we hope, in return, to the PWMP, in that controlling deer will reduce their capacity to spread weeds
- Funding from PWMP has enabled the purchase of 2 x thermal imaging monoculars, 3 x trail cameras and assorted equipment to assist with the vegetation survey

Animal Control App – In Progress

- CDMC is partnering with Monash University, using final year IT students as a part of their assessment project, to develop an app designed to collect data from animal control sessions.



- Data from the app will help us assess the most efficient and effective techniques, and to record hours worked among other things
- The student team have developed a prototype but ran out of time before the app was complete. We have applied for this year's student cohort to continue its development
- Breaking News: we are in discussions with Peter West, developer of the FeralScan suite of apps, with the backing of the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions to incorporate the app, or something similar, within the FeralScan app family

Landcare Facilitator – Geoff Lockwood

- Where would we be without Geoff? Geoff has been a mountain of intellect, support and inspiration for the CDMC. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Deer Control

- Severely disrupted by COVID-19 this year
- We can now use the aerial survey results to target the most impacted area and set goals for the coming year

Grants

- PWMP grant for \$10,000 to assist with deer monitoring and control
- Cardinia Council grant for \$1800 for community education and engagement and sundries

Advocacy & Extension

- Creation of VDCCN
- Meeting with Cardinia Council representatives to advocate for more council leadership. Meetings with Casey and Yarra Ranges councils were also planned.
- Planned meeting with local federal member Jason Wood. Meeting with state representatives also planned
- Regular articles prepared for the local press and appearance on the ABC's 7:30 Report

Mike Hall
President
Cardinia Deer Management Coalition Inc

HEALESVILLE TO PHILLIP ISLAND NETWORK LINK

Have you ever felt frustrated that good work you're doing for indigenous flora and fauna on a dearly loved patch of our planet may be compromised by lack of connectivity as urban expansion seems to blindly mushroom?

HPNL (www.hpnl.org.au) was formed in 2018 as a citizens advocacy group with a landscape-wide, multigenerational approach to conservation. Our objective is to create bio-links of national significance connecting three of Victoria's iconic ecotourism attractions (Healesville Sanctuary, Puffing Billy and Phillip Island Nature Parks) via natural corridors on public and private land.

This is a complex, long term, but very important goal. Most of our members are also members of Landcare and other environmental groups and have local projects with which they are involved. We share a concern about the 'big picture' and can see worth in spending time and talents towards this end alongside on-ground and local advocacy work. We aren't out to duplicate work of other groups but rather to support and work with each other to achieve the Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link goal.

Our original 2018 strategic plan (download from our homepage www.hpnl.org.au) is due for renewal this year and we would be very grateful for input from Landcare and other friends. The hazy corridors along waterways in that first plan are taking shape in some areas while other parts have become battlefields. Wins from the many meetings and workshops over the past four years include:

- Cardinia Council adopting The Cardinia Biolinks Plan See Cardinia Biolink Plan. Certainly, there are compromises in the plan and it does not yet have planning permit status, but we are very grateful for the support and vision that Environment Planner Rob Jones and many other professional and citizen scientists have put into this. Strengthening and linking Biolinks Plans in Yarra Ranges, Bass Coast and Casey is fundamental to achieving the HPNL goal. On-ground work, on both public and private property and covenating is essential follow up.
- Work with Professor Nigel Bertram and Monash University Urban Lab (who were particularly interested in areas likely to be impacted by sea level rise) in developing concept plans for a Great Swamp Regenerative Park and an Environment/ Interpretative Centre at Tooradin. (Download from our homepage www.hpnl.org.au). Local discussion has been lively with general support for an environmental centre but debate about configuration and where it should be placed. Overall concept plans for the Tooradin township are currently being drawn up by City of Casey with an environmental centre expected to be part of the draft plans. Federal Member for Holt, Anthony Byrne and Boonwurrung N'Arwee Carolyn Briggs have been particularly supportive for the centre.
- Nearly completed and to be finalised early this year is a video supporting the Tooradin project, and an ebook on The Nature of Tooradin. A Commonwealth Environment Project Grant assisted vegetation survey work associated with these projects and that of the Monash Urban Lab Report, we thank them for this.

- Working with grants from Melbourne Water, HPNL has been involved in weed removal and revegetation projects along Cardinia Creek.

The biggest immediate challenge to the Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link is existing and proposed extractive industries leases in Bass Coast Shire that are damaging beautiful grass tree forests, other native vegetation and transecting existing wildlife corridors. The Save Western Port Woodlands Group have stepped up to try to right this wrong and prevent further damage, it is important that we all get and remain behind them in this campaign. With the former Holden Proving Grounds site again up for sale there is an excellent opportunity for all levels of government and community groups to unite to protect this important land for generations to come. We fully support the work that is being done there by this dedicated and energetic group and their supporters.

COVID-19 permitting, Landcare and Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link will be having a stall at the Harewood Heritage Day on Sunday 3 April 10 am to 3 pm at 3300 South Gippsland Highway, Koo Wee Rup. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV4fMz8qZ4o. Ongoing landscape remediation at Harewood, a coastal heritage property, has seen farm paddocks transformed into 11 different local Ecological Vegetation Communities, six of them endangered with multiple endangered species found on site. I have it on good authority that HM Queen Victoria and dear Prince Albert will be gracing the charity day with their presence this year and there will be garden and house tours, nature walks, lost trades and craft demonstrations.

Hope to see you there.

Pat Macwhirter
President
Healesville to Phillip Island Nature Link



Sue Davies

WESTERN PORT INTREPID LANDCARE GROUP

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network has a wealth of knowledge, wisdom and action within its member landowners who know landscapes intimately having looked after them for some time.

Landcarers are passionate about intergenerational connections, working with Traditional Owners, knowledge sharing, bringing like-minded people together for social connections as well as the benefits we get out of being in the great outdoors and sharing adventures with others.

The projects the Intrepid group becomes involved in are underpinned by collaboration and connection, helping environmental communities to grow and thrive so that we can all find creative solutions and work towards a sustainable and regenerative future.

Activities include critical on-ground action such as regeneration of native forests and planting for new habitats, citizen science and ecosystem monitoring, threatened species recovery and environmental education activities.

It is known that Intrepid does 'Stuff that Matters' and endeavours to support young adults to do just that enabling them to share stories and experiences that create memories. These experiences support self-discovery for impact and empowerment, as well as encourage exploration and fun.

Over the past 2 years, little on-ground action has occurred due to COVID-19 restrictions, however, the Intrepid Group managed to collaborate on a couple of activities focusing on shelterbelt plantings as well as supporting the provision of specific eucalypts for our local koala population.

Having a future focus enables the Western Port Intrepid group to participate in activities such as; learning new skills, planting out wildlife corridors enabling fauna to move through the landscape, becoming involved in a Biolink project, renewing waterways by stabilising banks, looking at the impact of deer, supporting data collection through monitoring citizen science work and so much more.

Intrepid's know that facing climate change is SCARY, but they believe that if we all act locally we can make a difference globally. Planting trees is one way we can all create greener and healthier spaces.

Marijke de Bever-Price
President
Western Port Catchment Landcare Network



Group Members



Planting Day

"The Intrepid's know that facing climate change is SCARY, but they believe that if we all act locally we can make a difference globally."

JINDIVICK LANDCARE GROUP

For the second year running, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely curtailed our activities.

The 2020 AGM was conducted via Zoom; less than desirable, but a competent alternative to 'face-to-face'. Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions and uncertainty of what's around the corner, it was necessary to repeat that again this year.

In March 2021 we held a night where the results of DNA testing of local waterways to identify wildlife was revealed. The sampling was undertaken by Landcare members from Jindivick, Neerim District and a few other community members during 2020. The night was a great success with forty-five people in attendance and an informative presentation given by Josh Griffiths from EnviroDNA. The water samples, collected across eight catchment areas and one wetland, identified forty-nine species including four frogs, twenty-five birds, thirteen mammals, five fish and two reptiles. We provided pizzas and there was much chatter and catching up after the presentation. A rare, but successful get-together.

In September 2021 we were approached, along with other community groups by Melbourne Water, about our views on the possibility of opening up Tarago Reservoir for passive recreational use. Your committee decided to survey the membership as we recognised that opinions could be quite diverse. Thirty-two people responded to the survey; twenty-six were supportive, four were non-supportive and two were neutral. Those in favour supported, in order of preference, kayaking, walking, fishing, sailing/windsurfing, cycling, picnicking and swimming. Many of the respondents, including those in favour, had concerns around water quality/pollution, rubbish left on site, damage to the natural environment and possible increased traffic on local roads.

The results of the survey have been forwarded to Melbourne Water who indicated that in addition to specific community groups, there will be wider community consultation early in 2022 prior to any decision. It's noted that the project is dependent on receiving Victorian Government funding, so realistically, it's probably a long road to approval.

We hope that this wretched pandemic will end soon and we can all get back to landcaring and social interaction. We hope that you and yours have stayed safe during the last year and look forward to a "more normal" 2022.

Brian Morphet
President
Jindivick Landcare Group

"In September 2021 we were approached, along with other community groups by Melbourne Water, about our views on the possibility of opening up Tarago Reservoir for passive recreational use."



LABERTOUCHE SUSTAINABLE FARMING AND LANDCARE GROUP

Labertouch and Districts Landcare, like many community groups, was restricted in activities this year by COVID-19. Nevertheless, six new members joined, and we look forward to the benefits of fresh eyes. Sadly, our Secretary Tammy Barns elected to retire after many years of service, and we wish her all the best.

Initial planning is underway for a Community Funday event at Labertouch Hall, which will encourage local groups such as Labertouche Men's Shed, Labertouche CWA, and Labertouche CFA to join with Labertouche Landcare to showcase and raise awareness of their individual groups to the local Baw Baw community.

We hope to report more on this later.

eDNA sampling of Labertouche creek

What is eDNA?

Melbourne Water eDNA is a monitoring facility that helps track the health and numbers of fish and animals in rivers and creeks across the region.

It is a simple and non-invasive way of capturing the DNA of many species with a single scoop of H₂O in a test tube fitted with a special filter. That water is then sent back to the EnviroDNA lab for DNA meta barcoding.

Results can show numerous types of animals within a specific waterway. Melbourne Water has been using the innovative approach to successfully monitor the biodiversity of Melbourne's creeks and rivers. Volunteers take water samples from up to seventy sites which are then tested for environmental DNA.

What we found

Jim Armstrong and Geoff Hudson from Labertouche Landcare group undertook the sampling from the local Labertouche Creek, a small waterway that starts near the Labertouche Caves and eventually joins up with the Tarago Creek.

The findings were a delightful surprise and reinforced the need to maintain all waterways to support diversity.

At least seventeen species were recorded collected in November 2020; four fish, nine mammals and four birds, which was an exciting outcome.

Jillian Goudie
Secretary
Labertouche Sustainable Farming
and Landcare Group

SPECIES DETECTED

COMMON NAME / SCIENTIFIC NAME

Brown thornbill / *Acanthiza pusilla*

Genus of dabbling ducks / *Anas* sp.

Australian shortfin eel / *Anguilla australis*

Cow* / *Bos taurus*

Cat* / *Felis catus*

Genus of small, freshwater fish / *Galaxias* sp.

Chicken* / *Gallus gallus*

Eastern grey kangaroo / *Macropus giganteus*

Genus that includes pygmy perch / *Nannoperca* sp.

Platypus / *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*

Sheep* / *Ovis aries*

Redfin perch* / *Perca fluviatilis*

Common ringtail possum / *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*

Genus that includes blackbirds / *Turdus* sp.

Common wombat / *Vombatus ursinus*

Red fox* / *Vulpes vulpes*

Swamp wallaby / *Wallabia bicolor*

"The findings were a delightful surprise and reinforced the need to maintain all waterways to support diversity."

NEERIM + DISTRICT LANDCARE GROUP

The biggest challenge this year has, of course, been COVID-19. The Group held a strategic planning session early in the year where it confirmed the ongoing importance of tree planting and stream habitat restoration on key waterways in the area. However, COVID-19 restrictions have severely hampered the group's ability to progress this work. The Group had also worked with the Neerim South Primary School to build a frog habitat and native garden on the school grounds. This work will continue as restrictions allow.

Wildlife In Tarago Farm Waterways – A Citizen Science Program

In March, Neerim District Landcare Group in partnership with Jindivick Landcare Group and EnviroDNA, found a COVID-19 window to hold the final information session for this project, for which the sampling had been carried out the previous year. At least forty-nine vertebrate species were identified, including four frogs, twenty-five birds, thirteen mammals, five fish and two reptiles. The decapods assay identified at least six species. Different species mixes were identified at each site. There are opportunities for further study to build on this project and the earlier Farm Dams citizen science project.

Tarago Catchment Healthy Farms Project

NDLG continues its important ongoing work, funded by Melbourne Water, with approximately 80 landholders, covering 2,800 hectares of private agricultural land in the Tarago Reservoir Catchment. The project aims to improve water quality through land management practices such as stream protection with fencing and revegetation. While curtailed somewhat by the COVID-19 restrictions, significant on-ground works and maintenance are currently being undertaken on seven properties in the Tarago Reservoir catchment including specific weed control and infill planting.

Over the life of the project more than 60 km of new stock-proof fencing has been built, almost 120 hectares of unproductive land revegetated, 18 hectares recovered from willow infestation and 228,000 native plants established.

The Group also grabbed an in-between-lockdowns opportunity to tour around the Reservoir inside the Melbourne Water fence to see the direct impact of the Healthy Farms project on the Reservoir.

Future Plans

There are a number of exciting possibilities ahead. There is interest in the community to sustain and increase wildlife habitat around the peri-urban fringes of Neerim South as housing development expands. There is still more stream protection and restoration work needed on Red Hill Creek. Another significant waterway, Scalp Creek, needs protection. The Group is exploring the opportunity to work with the Network and neighbouring Landcare groups to monitor feral deer populations with the ultimate goal of controlling the pests. Of course, the ongoing Tarago Healthy Farms project provides opportunities for community engagement in innovative projects such as the eDNA citizen science projects of recent years.

Phil Darton
Secretary
Neerim District Landcare Group

“Over the life of the project more than 60 km of new stock-proof fencing has been built, almost 120 hectares of unproductive land revegetated, 18 hectares recovered from willow infestation and 228,000 native plants established.”



Tarago Field Day



Tarago Healthy Farms Project

WESTERN PORT SWAMP LANDCARE GROUP

We have thirty-two members. Our area covers Tooradin to Koo Wee Rup to Lang Lang. We hold four meetings a year interspersed with field days. We aim to protect and enhance local landscape and wildlife. This year despite COVID-19 restrictions we managed three successful projects below.

“Bandicoot Hollow” Wildlife Sanctuary

Greg Dunkley and Janet Shelton of Manks Road, Tooradin North, received a Community Environment Program - Holt Grant of \$22,000 for earthworks and plants towards creating their wildlife sanctuary.

They worked tirelessly to transform a cattle paddock into the most magnificent reserve with lakes, dams, mountains, plant and habitat corridors. The Koo Wee Rup Year 10 Outdoor Education class also planted 1,000 trees. Sadly, Greg passed away in November but has left an outstanding legacy for the future!

Frog Pond at Koo Wee Rup Secondary College

Students, with help from John Boekel, created a frog pond in a derelict corner of the school grounds.

Lang Lang Primary School Arboretum

We received a \$12,000 grant from Beach Energy for the Lang Lang Primary School Arboretum which is home to an amazing array of native flora and fauna. Timber seats were installed in the four acre reserve. In November the whole school attended Bug Blitz sessions held over three days. Topics were bug surveys, soil testing, skeleton trail, pollinators, artwork. Students also planted shrubs. The Pakenham Gazette featured this event in “On the Land”.

Southern Brown Bandicoot Sightings

Some bandicoots have been sighted around the Koo Wee Rup Swamp – endangered boom and bust species, including one spotted along Monomeith Road.

Sue Davies
Secretary
Western Port Swamp Landcare Group

“The whole school attended Bug Blitz sessions held over three days. Topics were bug surveys, soil testing, skeleton trail, pollinators, and artwork.”



Lang Lang PS Arboretum



Group Members

ABOUT WPCLN

BACKGROUND

- The Western Port Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) was established in 1999 and incorporated in 2012. It comprises 14 groups and covers an area of 129,241 hectares with natural, rural, semi-rural, peri-urban and urban landscapes.
- The WPCLN facilitates landholder education, knowledge sharing and behaviour change through field days, planting days, trials and workshops to support landholders to revegetate areas to increase biodiversity, protect waterways and adopt sustainable land management practices.

OUR MISSION

We will work to:

- Collaborate and share our vision to the broader community
- Facilitate communication between Landcare groups and the Network
- Maintain relationships with key stakeholders and establish new ones
- Provide opportunities for landholder education and knowledge sharing to help foster positive behaviour change
- Secure funding for and manage catchment wide projects
- Grow Landcare and Landcare activities across the Western Port region
- Help Landcare groups to plan and collaborate, be responsive to their needs
- Provide a representative voice for natural values e.g. native vegetation, soils, waterways, and wildlife

OUR VALUES

We will be guided by these values:

- Passion & Commitment
- Inclusion & Empowerment
- Collaboration & Building Successful Partnerships
- Clarity of Purpose
- Honesty & Integrity
- Respect of Community & Culture

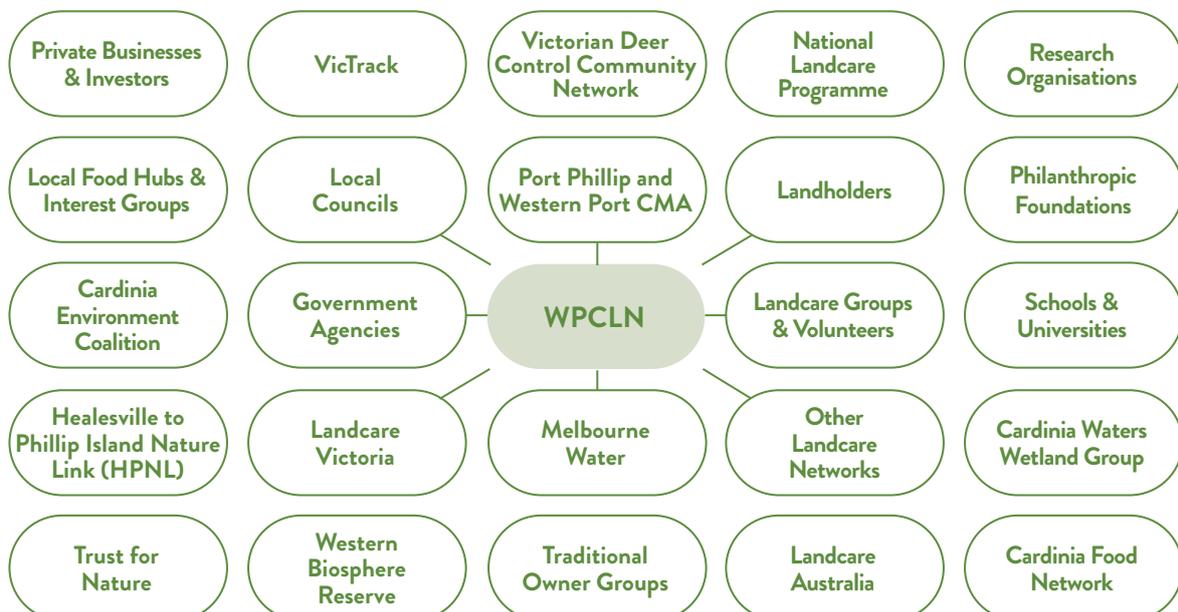
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

- Climate Change
- Loss and Fragmentation of Habitat
- Pest Animals and Plants
- Maintaining Soil Health
- Degradation of Waterways
- Sustainable Water Use
- Loss of Farming Land to Urbanisation
- Land Use Conflict
- Biosecurity Issues
- Plastics in the Environment
- Ageing Farming Community
- Expansion of Extractive Industries

PAST PROJECTS

- Demonstrating Sustainable Farming Practices in Western Port
- Clyde Rail Bandicoot Habitat Corridor
- Connecting and Increasing Habitat for Nectar Feeders in Western Port
- Cannibal Creek Catchment Biodiversity Project (ongoing)
- Linking Native Pollinators and Sustainable Food Systems
- Western Port Fire Recovery Vegetation
- Cardinia Shire Biodiversity Grant (ongoing)

KEY PARTNERSHIPS



KEY FOCUS AREAS

CARING FOR THE LAND

- The WPCLN empowers community members to focus on caring for the local landscape by promoting the adoption of new techniques to assist with protecting our environment
- The total area of land protected or better managed is increased through the participation of landholders in conservation activities to improve the condition of their land

SUPPORTING OUR LANDCARE GROUPS

- Provide a Landcare Group Calendar of Events – publish in eNEWS (monthly) or on website
- Landcare Facilitator to attend at least one group meeting (per group) and at least one group event per year
- Identify funding opportunities for groups - once a month via eNEWS or email
- Provide networking opportunities for groups - four times per year
- Provide training opportunities for groups to increase their capacity – twice a year
- Increase the number of groups within the Network area to include non-traditional or special interest groups (establish 1-2 new groups a year)

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

- WPCLN adopts a collaborative approach to support member groups to grow their base
- Landcare seeks to identify opportunities to collaborate with other groups on projects where there is a mutual benefit e.g. Traditional Owner groups
- Landcare shares skills and resources to support other groups to fulfil our mutual vision

PROMOTION & COMMUNICATION

- Communicate the Landcare message to individual groups and the broader community using social media
- Promote the activities of the Network using social and traditional media (social media at least monthly, 5 articles in local newspapers per year, 1 Annual Magazine and 1 article for the Victorian Landcare and Catchment Magazine per year)
- Encourage Landcare related research through collaborative partnerships with at least 3 research institutions

FUNDING

- Secure funding to maintain current staff levels for a minimum of 3 years
- Diversify funding sources by identifying and collaborating with a variety of funders such as philanthropic, government (all levels), corporate as well as through carbon offsets
- Projects – identify and secure funding for on-ground works that engage landholders to increase biodiversity by 5% across the Network area over three years

GOVERNANCE

- That the Network has a properly constituted Board in accordance with its Constitution
- Provide an induction kit for new Board members
- New Board members to participate in governance training within 12 months of commencement in role
- Staff are required to have Working with Children Check (current for 5 years)
- Staff are required to have First Aid training every 2 years
- Every position within the Network has either a Position Description or an agreement between the Network and independent contractors
- Network policies to be reviewed by WPCLN Board every two years



The WPCLN gratefully acknowledges all the landcare group members and farmers who have contributed to the 2021 WPCLN Annual Magazine.

We particularly thank the funders of the three major projects that WPCLN delivers:

1. *'Smart Farming for Western Port'* project funded by the National Landcare Program and the PPWCMA. This project is supporting Sustainable Agriculture in the region.
2. *'Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program'* funded by the Victorian Government.
3. *'Stream Frontage Program'* funded by Melbourne Water.

We also acknowledge other partners who have funded WPCLN projects during this past year. These include the Port Phillip and Western Port CMA, Ripe for Change, Cardinia Shire Council, Landcare Australia, VicTrack and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land making up the lands upon which we meet. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge that their connection to Country is both ancient and ongoing.

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