

# North Central Chat

Keeping you up to date with all the Landcare and Waterwatch news



December 2020

## A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Well what a year 2020 has been. As we continue to work out what a COVID safe Christmas looks like, the number one priority of people I speak to on the phone is spending extended time with friends and family. Many of those conversations also include some silver linings from this past year.

Landcare Group coordinators have been telling me that people staying home and engaging with their local creek, park or bushland, have discovered the amazing work of their local Landcare groups. Signage, pathways and new plantings have signposted people toward Landcare and attracted new members wishing to be actively involved. This is so pleasingly to hear.

The way in which volunteering and group activity has had to change over the course of the year, has meant a suite of new skills and strategies have been brought into Landcare. Many of these skills and ways of engaging will continue to be drawn on. Landcare Groups will be looked up to as an example of how quickly community led volunteer organisations can adapt to challenging and unfamiliar circumstances whilst still getting the work done.

Andrew Borg (*Northern Buloke Grampians Landcare Network*) has written a story for us on his experience being a part of the 'Let's Pivot' program, which gathers community leaders to inwardly reflect on how they have changed strategy while still maintaining a community, group or individual vision during COVID.

It is with great pleasure that we received the Premieres [media release](#) announcing the continued investment in the Victorian Landcare Program among a host of other initiatives. The announcement confirms the extension of contracts for Regional Landcare Coordinators and existing Local Landcare Facilitators to 30 June 2021.

Over the course of January to June 2021, the North Central CMA's Landcare Program will continue to design



Hay, harvest, and heat...it must be close to Christmas! Wishing all our readers a safe and joyful Christmas.

Photo: Courtesy of Kia Hooke, Serpentine.

and deliver engaging and practical events, resources, grants and land management advice. The local Landcare Facilitators play a key role in connecting local communities and supporting actions across Landcare groups. A peer-learning and networking event is planned to bring us all together, alongside Landcare colleagues from other CMA regions, in May 2021.

We have so enjoyed bringing the North Central Chat to you all this year. With all the challenges of 2020, the willingness of our volunteer community to persevere, maintain activity levels, boost community morale and stay connected with nature endured throughout the year and we loved showcasing those achievements and stories.

Thank you to every one of our 160+ groups, landholders and land managers who have supported Landcare through 2020.

Darren and I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator  
North Central CMA

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## Connecting rivers, landscapes, people

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the region, their rich cultures, spiritual connection to Country.

[www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au)



## News...

### Let's Pivot - A Landcare perspective

Article by Andrew Borg, Facilitator, Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network

**In October, the 'Make-A-Change Australia' organisation, in collaboration with several partners including the NCCMA, launched a new program called 'Let's Pivot'.**

In business terms, *pivoting* is the correction of methods or practices to counter the impacts of an external influence. Along these lines, Let's Pivot is a free eight-week community and personal development program that challenges individuals and community leaders to inwardly reflect on how they can change strategy while still maintaining a community, group or individual vision.

The program is comprised of eight 90-minute sessions, and the participants have varying backgrounds and professional interests. To me as a participant, the common denominator was that we all want to improve our communities in one way or another.

The first four online meetings focus on personal/group goals and project ideas, and how these can be affected by an external influence in which we have limited control. The program starts with an evaluation of what an event like COVID can teach us about ourselves and how we can identify opportunities to trigger a positive outcome. (In my own case it was how lockdown provided an increased capacity to learn online through a variety of professional development webinars and workshops such as Let's Pivot!) The last four sessions place emphasis on how a broad array of community group objectives and visions can be met through the development of different strategies. By sharing ideas and experiences in an online forum, we can facilitate human resilience in response to unanticipated events.

Each session has a theme, building upon the initial individual assessment through to definition of alternate project/management strategies. Prior to each meeting, the Let's Pivot team send out an agenda, comprising a series of questions to get the interactive conversation started as well as a range of online resources to facilitate our thinking beforehand.



The Let's Pivot program is thought-provoking, collaborative and informative for community leaders, organisations and individuals. A supportive virtual environment facilitates the ability to bounce ideas between participants, and gain alternate insights through different suggestions and experiences.

In a changing world we need to keep finding alternate ways of delivering key messages and completing projects. Let's Pivot provides insight into how we can do this while, concurrently, revitalising community group interactions and energies.



Let's Pivot is open until the end of March 2021, so there are still plenty of opportunities to get involved:

- participating in zoom discussions
- accessing digital resources and information tools
- tuning into an online speaker program, and
- connecting with a network of great people doing great things.

## Spreading the word (not the alligator weed!) in Bendigo

Article by Agriculture Victoria's Incursion Control Team

**Agriculture Victoria has been working closely with local authorities, land managers and community groups in Bendigo to raise awareness of the State prohibited weed alligator weed.**

Of the Victorian alligator weed infestations, only one lies north of the Great Divide, in Bendigo Creek. The infestation threatens to displace local native flora, damage habitat for native animals, clog up drains and other infrastructure, and block water flow. The plant grows rapidly on both land and water.

Bendigo Creek flows through the city of Bendigo, then passes through high value farmland, Kerang's RAMSAR-listed wetlands and into the Murray River. Alligator weed poses a threat to all of these if it were to spread beyond its current 30 km extent, and cost tens of thousands of dollars more to control.

Local land managers are working to rehabilitate and improve Bendigo Creek, including the *Reimagining Bendigo Creek* project, however the benefits of these works would be lost if alligator weed invaded the proposed infrastructure, frog ponds and revegetation sites.

To protect the Bendigo Creek system, Agriculture Victoria complements its annual alligator weed eradication program by working with local authorities and community groups to raise awareness of the weed. A series of workshops over recent years have involved presentations, discussions and site visits, where participants learn to identify alligator weed and discuss its potential impacts. Through this engagement, Agriculture Victoria aims to increase the number of people looking for alligator weed and build partnerships so everyone can work together to protect Bendigo Creek and the downstream assets.

If you see alligator weed, or any other State prohibited weed, please report it to the Agriculture Victoria Customer Contact Centre on 136 186 or email [weed.spotters@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:weed.spotters@agriculture.vic.gov.au). To find out more about alligator weed, please visit <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/weeds/state-prohibited-weeds/alligator-weed>.



Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) found along Bendigo Creek. Photo: Agriculture Victoria.

## Bridal Creeper banished with new bridge construction

**The new Campaspe River bridge is currently having its beams put in place and should be trafficable for construction traffic by the end of 2020.**

Over 2ha of bridal creeper is going to be treated in Victoria Park as part of the project and all the woody weeds. Major Road Projects Victoria engaged Woka Walla crew to undertake this weed control. It also helps out the Echuca Moama Landcare Group who have been chipping away at these weeds for years. Major Road Projects Victoria is also doing lots of Squirrel Glider survey and nest box work in Victoria Park together with Strathallan Landcare Group.





## Platypus pride of place in the Coliban River

**Malmsbury Landcare Group are pleased to confirm there is a strong population of Platypus in the Malmsbury section of the Coliban River.**

The group has released the report for the October platypus survey undertaken in the Coliban River at Malmsbury. This survey was completed by Australian Platypus Conservancy and was funded by Malmsbury District Landcare.

President John Walter said "There had been some anecdotal reporting that residents were not seeing the platypus any more but the survey places the population at an equivalent level to that of the 2001 survey commissioned by CMA".



The APC report findings state "The Coliban River at Malmsbury currently supports a population comprising at least eight resident animals (2 females and 6 males)." The scientists also note that the timing of the survey (early October) coincides with the period some females are expected to be incubating eggs or caring for recently hatched young.

You can follow Malmsbury Landcare's wonderful work, via their active [Facebook page](#).

## Expression of Interest – Carbon landholder register in the north central region

The North Central CMA is actively looking to support large scale carbon projects across our catchment as we recognise the potential contribution of the carbon market to support our Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) objectives, such as climate change mitigation, retention and protection of on farm biodiversity, biodiversity links, stewardship and increasing soil health.

It is our intention to set up an interested landholder register to allow us to facilitate and enable large scale projects with our NRM partners in the region. We would like to hear from any landholders that would be interested in participating in the carbon market – soil or revegetation.

As a guide we have provided the following criteria, but we encourage anyone with an interest to register their details with us as opportunities may exist for smaller sites. Keep in mind that a longer-term commitment would be required on these projects.

### Criteria for land

- The preference would be for 50 hectares or more but 20+ hectares would be acceptable **OR**
- Long stretch of riparian zones
- Ideally area should provide opportunity for biodiversity, biolinks and indigenous outcomes
- Looking for ecosystems that hold carbon

Once we have an established list of interested landholders, we will be in contact in early 2021 with next steps. We will not share any personal information without your permission. The intention of this exercise will be to create project scale – if we get enough of you on board then we are more likely to have a viable project.



This is a very exciting development so please [register your interest here](#).

## Do you have Butterflies, Bees and Bugs in your backyard?

Article by Trudy Nelsson, Wedderburn Conservation Management Network

**What is it about butterflies? Is it their colourful beauty? Their non-threatening nature? Their fascinating metamorphosis, from caterpillar to a beautiful, winged creature? Their essential pollination services they provide to our native plants?**

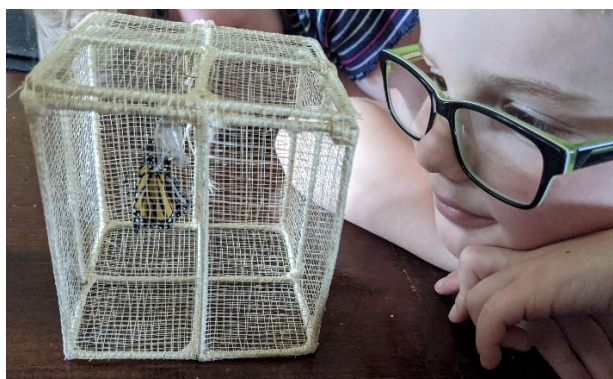
No one ever tells this insect to go away, nor are there repellent sprays on the shelves to get rid of them, in fact, having one land on you is a privilege!

All kids go through a butterfly phase at some point, and there are some adults I know who are still fascinated by them (I am one). There are so many wonderful species to discover in Wedderburn, and this project encourages local potential entomologists to discover them.

The 'Building Bee, Bug and Butterfly biodiversity' Garden project aims to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity in our own backyards. It teaches students how they can positively contribute to sustainability and ecosystem services in Wedderburn, through caterpillars, butterflies, and native flowering plants.

Each of our community's kinder kids and families have received Pupae, Caterpillars, and local indigenous plants. The kinder kids have been able to watch the caterpillars form pupae, and the pupae grow into butterflies, ready for release into their backyards.

Each family received local indigenous plant species to build an understanding of the importance of native vegetation for our caterpillars and butterflies in the local area, and to experience the butterfly's unique life stages, by hatching caterpillars and pupae themselves and closely observing their life stages. It also encouraged the students to create an ideal environment for them by planting the native plants they need to survive.



We invited students and parents to go on a nature scavenger hunt. We encouraged them to look for tracks, scat, and evidence of animals in our local area. We gave each child a planting pack and insect discovery kit, which included local plant species grown by the local Mount Korong Eco Watch nursery, together with acacia seeds to make seed bombs, magnifying glasses, butterfly nets, bug observation jars and field guides, notes and activity sheets.

This initiative was made available through a Junior Landcare grant, made in in partnership between the Wedderburn Community House, Wedderburn Conservation Management Network, Wedderburn Kindergarten, and the Loddon Shire.



We anticipate building a butterfly, bee and bug attracting garden and outdoor learning space at the front of the Wedderburn Kinder in the new year. The garden has been designed by local landscaper, James Cook, and will include a sand river, puddling rocks, local indigenous plant species, Bee Hotels, signage, seating and garden art all produced by locals including the Wedderburn Men's Shed.

*Images in this article C/O Adele George.*





What a year it has been for the River Detectives program! A year like no other forcing schools, and in turn us, to be flexible and resilient in what we do and how we do it.

Throughout the year we provided waterway-themed activity matrices to ensure students could continue to access fun, engaging, nature-based learning opportunities in the remote learning environment. Some great feedback showed us these were highly valued by schools.

However, due to COVID we understand that the experience of schools of the River Detectives program has been nothing like they had planned when they began their journey in February. For some regions, COVID hit before teachers had participated in the Introductory PD session, so the program really never got started.

This has been very disappointing for schools and for us but, let's be honest, schools have had more pressing issues to deal with for the academic and emotional support of their valued students. And that's OK.

We sincerely hope that schools are still passionate about environmental education and the wonderful learning that can come about through the River Detectives program.



In light of all we have learnt this year we have exciting plans in place to offer an even more flexible, supportive and engaging program next year, and we hope schools can see a place for the River Detectives program in 2021.

In times like these, connecting students with nature is more important than ever!

So, we are excited to announce that registrations are NOW OPEN to schools and youth groups for the 2021 River Detectives program.

If you are a participating school we have emailed you a link to the 2020 evaluation survey and 2021 registration form and we look forward to hearing from you.

In 2021 we are strategically aligning our program with current North Central CMA projects and inviting schools in certain locations within the region to join the River Detectives program and be part of the following exciting initiatives:

- Bendigo Creek Citizen Science project
- Caring for the Campaspe project
- A Healthy Coliban Catchment project
- RiverScan project (Gunbower and lower Loddon area)



If your school falls within one of those project areas you will be receiving an invitation letter this week and we'd love you to consider taking part!

To find out more about the program and how it could work in a school near you visit:  
[www.riverdetectives.net.au](http://www.riverdetectives.net.au)

I sincerely hope the last few weeks of the school year go smoothly and that all teachers and students enjoy a very well-deserved break over the summer holidays.

See you for a bigger, better year in 2021!

Nicole Howie

Waterwatch Project Officer

Email: [nicole.howie@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:nicole.howie@nccma.vic.gov.au)

## Sustainable Ag snippet...

### Regenerative Agriculture Farmer Groups

**There are four regenerative farmer groups we support through funding from the National Landcare Program.**

Even though we have been through some challenging times over the past few months, the four regenerative farmer groups have been active engaging with each other and engaging guest speakers to keep the groups involved and connected.

Some of the farmers have set up demonstration sites or weather stations, which will be a focus now the groups can gather on site. Also, the information gathered from these will be utilised by the groups to support better decision making.

The use of webinars has also made it possible for Project Manager Felicity Harrop and me to be involved in all the activities delivered by the farmer groups and support them with some of their technical requirements. Although we were not meeting face to face, we were still able to keep up to date with the activities delivered by each group from our home office.

All groups have used video technology to some degree engaging many speakers far and wide, such as farmer Grant Pontifex who runs a family farm at Paskeville and Kangaroo Island in SA, Greg Dalton, discussing dung beetles and beetle nurseries from SA, David Hardwick, an agroecologist from Albury and Colin Seis, a farmer from Gulgong in NSW. Many of the farmers involved in the project have also shared their journey in regenerative agriculture.

It has been fascinating to watch and listen to the stories of the farmers involved in the regenerative agriculture project. Even though they may have more questions than answers, they are enthusiastic about being involved in the project and keen to keep learning from their practices and each other.

The information presented by the guest speakers and the stories shared by these farmers is well worth watching. If you would like to know more about the project, you can watch some of the videos on the North Central Catchment Management Authority website <http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/projects/agriculture#node-2041> or contact the Project Manager Felicity Harrop [felicity.harrop@nccma.vic.gov.au](mailto:felicity.harrop@nccma.vic.gov.au)



Raywood farmer Dusty Pascoe with one of the weather stations installed in the district

### New Video: Siting and recording native pollinators

**Upper Campaspe Landcare Network President, John Walter teaches us how to site and record pollinator sightings in a fantastic new [10 min video](#).**

Grab a cuppa, have a watch and then next time you find yourself with some time to spare on a day that is sunny, warm and calm, find a flowering plant or tree in your area and choose a single large flower, or a group of smaller flowers and sit there quietly for ten minutes and just watch. Keep a close eye on any insect that visits the flowers and moves around on the pistil or stamens (reproductive parts).



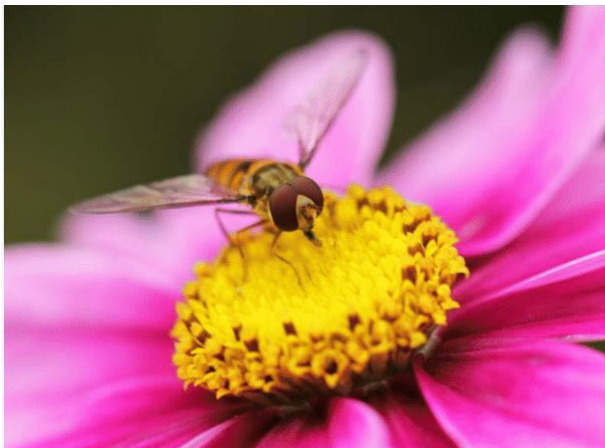
## Courses & Resources...

### A little more about pollinators – with Dr. Mark Hall

Last month celebrated National Pollinator Week and the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network marked the occasion with the launch of their Upper Campaspe Catchment Pollinator Corridor Project.

Landcare Facilitator Rebekah Ritchie was delighted with the interest “It is official! After months of planning and excited preparation behind the scenes, the Pollinator Corridor Project has officially launched!

“We couldn’t be more thrilled with the level of interest we have received in this community based project, and we are keen to keep the momentum going on this fabulous endeavour! Remember – we can’t deliver this project without our community.”



For those of you interested in tiny, winged beings, Dr. Mark Hall has very kindly provided a copy of his presentation for everyone to enjoy.

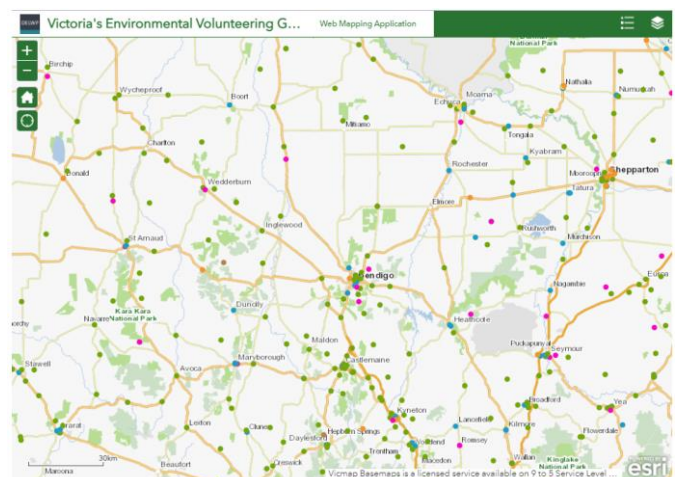
Visit the UCLN website for all the details and a copy of the presentation: [A little more about Pollinators – with Doctor Mark Hall | Upper Campaspe Landcare](#)

## Environmental Volunteering Opportunities - Interactive Map

DELWP is making it easy for people interested in environmental volunteering to get involved through local groups.

It's as simple as:

1. **Zoom** into the location you're interested in. Each dot represents a group.
2. **Select** the dot to see the following info: Group name, core activities, contact details (Facebook or website). (Multiple groups may be represented by an individual dot. To access all groups use the arrow keys at the top of the pop up box).
3. **Connect** with the group through their website or social media platforms and let them know you're keen to participate.





## Events...



Join BoM climate experts for an update on temperature, rainfall and other conditions to date, and an in depth look at the outlook for summer 2020–21.

Register now to learn how the Bureau's climate and water information can help you make important decisions for the season ahead.

If you have any topics for our presenters to cover - please include them when you register.

Upcoming webinar topics include

- **Summer 2020–21 climate and water update**  
Thursday Dec 3 from 2-3pm  
Register via: [Webex Events](#)
- **State of Climate 2020**  
Wednesday December 9 from 12:00 noon  
Register via: [Webex Events](#)



### An update from Landcare Australia Ltd.

If you'd like to find out a bit more about engaging and working with young people, the [Landcare Youth Summit Webinar](#) is right up your alley.

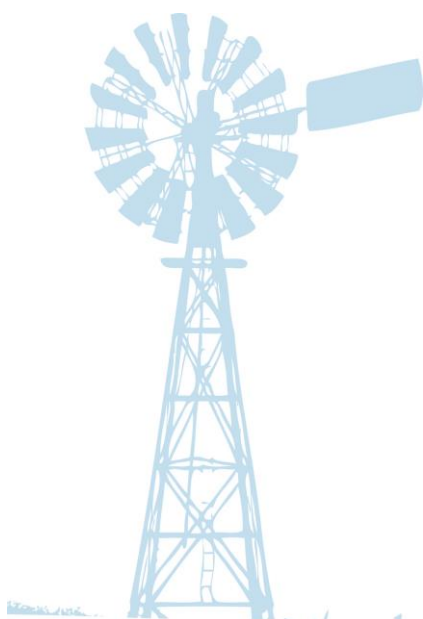
Taking place on **3 December at 4pm** (AEDT), Sky Gerhardy, Saskia Dunn and Mitchell Livingston from South Australia's Youth & Community in Conservation Action (YACCA) will share insights from the recent Landcare Youth Summit event.

Hosted by Landcare Ambassador, Sophie Taylor-Price, the session will include a discussion on ideas for Landcare groups to engage young people and involve them in their group projects, and how young people can volunteer and seek guidance from the landcare community.

**On 10 December at 12.30pm** (AEDT), we're talking soil with Sue Bestow from the Office of the National Soils Advocate.

In [Five interventions to improve soil health](#), Sue will share a vision to improve soil health at a meaningful scale. Joined by Landcare Farming Program Manager, Mick Taylor, Sue will explain how coordinated, collective action, and the support of committed partners can result in productivity, environmental and social benefits which will accumulate for future generations.

The National Landcare Conference webinar series will continue in 2021, with full details of the program to be announced early next year. Be sure to register your details to be kept up to date.



## Funding opportunities...



### Small Environmental Grant Scheme

**The WET award grants four times a year every year – February, May, August and November.**

The EOI is the first stage (just two questions) and if your project fits, then you go on to Stage 2 with a bunch of other questions, listed in this document.

Executive Director Beth Mellick says “There are opening dates for these grant rounds, but no closing dates – I close the round when I’m satisfied that I have a suitable number and spread of applications to present to the Trustees. So it’s best to get in as soon as you can when the round opens”

Dates for the upcoming opening round are:

- 1st December 2020 (funding released February 2021)

We are looking for projects around:

- flora and fauna conservation (Australia-wide)
- threatened mammal conservation (Australia-wide)

These projects should involve any of the following:

- monitoring, recording and sharing data
- delivering community education
- providing community capacity building (e.g. training)
- research and science

For further information on guidelines, EOI and application details visit: [Small Environmental Grant Scheme – Wettenhall Environment Trust](#)

## 2020 highlights & happy snaps



Mount Alexander Intrepid Landcarers (and two tiny recruits) joined Ian 'Higgo' Higgins for a crash course in native vegetation during a Campbells Creek Bushwalk, November 2020.



A new video production showcases the wonderful applied learnings and trials being undertaken by Regenerative Farmers from Blampied, Mt Bolton & Bung Bong, November 2020.



Our beloved school based trainees designed these shirts as part of their CMA work. Expressing culture, pride and identity, the shirt design includes drawings of totem animals, colours of the Aboriginal flag, the Torres Strait Islander flag and a symbol for a meeting place, showing the students, staff and Elders coming together.