

North Central Chat

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



February 2021

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Happy 2021 to all our North Central Chat readers. We hope you had a safe and enjoyable New Year.

Our first edition of the year is always full of fantastic summer events, upcoming courses and a 'Rabbit Buster' month feature. The furry foe is not always one that is easy or enjoyable to control, but this edition includes plenty of helpful information, further reading & resources. We also have expert contacts to support ongoing rabbit management action across our region.

Landcare is the most effective tool for having an ongoing conversation about the collective responsibility and local practicalities of controlling rabbits. Landcare groups from all corners of our catchment, including Lexton, Fairley Bael Bael, Barkers Creek and Northern Bendigo have decades of experience running community rabbit control programs, inviting new residents to engage in rabbit control and supporting them with information. If rabbits are an issue in your area, reach out to your local Landcare group, shire, Agriculture Victoria or myself, to kick off a conversation this 'Rabbit Buster' month.

February also marks annual World Wetlands Day celebrations. Local, regional, state, national and international events are hosted in some of the most incredible locations on earth and you can join in many of them [online](#). If, like me, you are itching to get out in the field some more, then our Kerang Wetlands event on February 28 is for you - see the 'Events' page to register.

Darren and I are busily working behind the scenes to bring together our ideas for 2021 training, workshops, field days and information resources. We welcome your input, so if you or your volunteer group have a topic or training course you would like to see rolled out in your area (for example *Cultural Heritage and Competency, Community Group governance, First Aid, Ag Chemical Use, Atlas of Living Australia use, Soil Health*) please don't hesitate to touch base with us to discuss it.



'Breakfast with the Birds' is on again this February. In 2021 World Wetland Day celebrations mark the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention (1971)

Photo: Courtesy of North Central CMA

Over the coming months, the focus for much of our regions landcare support staff will be submitting an Expression of Interest for the [2021-24 Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program](#). Your local group may be called upon to write a letter of support for a Network's EOI, and we strongly encourage you to do so. We wish every applicant organisation the very best of luck in securing a Landcare facilitator position in the new program.

Enjoy the read,

Tess Grieves

Regional Landcare Coordinator
North Central CMA

Phone: 03 5448 7124

Email: tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au

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





Rabbit Buster Month

February marks our annual 'Rabbit Buster' month campaign where landholders and communities are encouraged revisit their control plans.

Whilst Rabbit Buster field days have been postponed until later in 2021, there is plenty to be done now. While the grass is dry and prior to autumn rains, numbers are usually at their lowest..

The Victorian Rabbit Action Network published the '[Rabbit Recipe](#)' in October 2020, advocating the following steps:

- Make an assessment of the rabbit population = *the size of your problem*.
- Following this, undertake and monitor a baiting program.
- Baiting should be followed by ripping. The deeper the better.
- Warren destruction is the key to effective rabbit control 'Destroy the warren, Destroy the rabbit'
- Continue monitoring on an ongoing basis to detect and treat any re-infestation of your property.

**It is noted that dozer ripping is site specific and can only be done where practical and culturally safe to do so.*

Resources to support you...

Agriculture Victoria

Ag Vic has a wealth of information to help you start or support your rabbit control program.

"Rabbit control is most cost effective in late summer and early autumn as breeding has generally paused at this time. Biological control and naturally harsh environmental conditions can cause added stress on the rabbit population and may lead to longer lasting results."

Controlling rabbit populations when they are low is the most cost effective control and efforts are more likely to be sustained.

Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity Officers are always willing to discuss rabbit control options with you.

For more detailed information on Victoria's research and best - practice integrated rabbit control methodology visit: [Integrated rabbit control](#) | [Invasive animal management](#) | [Pest animals](#) | [Biosecurity](#) | [Agriculture Victoria](#)

Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN)

VRAN are committed to promoting community led action on rabbit management in Victoria and supporting people to work together for more effective and sustainable rabbit control.

VRAN can help you through:

- Running training and mentoring programs, delivering workshops on best-practice rabbit control, and supporting people and organisations to collaborate on rabbit action
- Occasional funding grants to support community learning, innovation, and rabbit management (**See [Funding Opportunities section of the Chat](#)**)
- Short, easy to view YouTube Videos on all aspects of a rabbit control program: [Resources | Victorian Rabbit Action Network \(vran.com.au\)](#)

You may even have a VRAN mentor or leader in your area, to check, get in touch with Heidi Kleinert: VRAN Exec Officer via heidi.kleinert@agriculture.vic.gov.au



RabbitScan remains one of the most user-friendly tools to record rabbit populations.

RabbitScan is a free resource for landholders, Landcare groups, community groups, local Councils, professional pest controllers and biosecurity groups. It has been designed by landholders for communities, and it is very easy to use.

What to record:

- Rabbit activity (such as sightings and warrens).
- Damage, such as soil erosion.
- Control activities (such as warren ripping).
- Disease in rabbit populations (such as RHDV).

[The RabbitScan website](#) has all the information you need to use the webpage, download the app, and includes





supporting resources. You can even speak with a member of the RabbitScan team to organise some training for your local community.

Rabbit Buster Field Days

Each year, North Central CMA and Agriculture Victoria support a local landcare group or network in our region to host a 'Rabbit Buster' month demonstration field day.



The 2021 event was unable to take place this February, however the Buloke Northern Grampians Landcare Network will host the event later in the year in the Avon Plains area in partnerships with Ag Vic.

I encourage you to keep an eye on the [BNG social media channels](#) for updates or contact Network Facilitator Andrew Borg directly to express your interest in attending: bnglandcare@gmail.com

Ute Guide to Rabbit Control



Connecting Country and North Central CMA recently reproduced the Third Edition of the popular "Ute Guide to Rabbit Control".

If you would like hard copies of this guide, or other rabbit management materials we have on hand, get in contact via tess.grieves@nccma.vic.gov.au

News...



The Landcare Farming Program team will deliver a series of carbon footprint and natural capital accounting workshops nationally throughout 2021.

The Project Team is encouraging producers to apply if they are genuinely interested in knowing about carbon footprint and/or natural capital schemes. The workshops will show how the schemes underpin industry/sector sustainability strategy reporting, future investment, and potential new markets.

This project looks to develop an awareness and adoption pathway for on-farm integration. Both schemes offer new concepts to Australian agriculture producers and are increasingly aligned to stakeholder investment and reporting objectives. End-user input (producer input) is essential to move both schemes from 'proof of concept' and into standard agricultural management practices.

The Landcare network is uniquely placed to help deliver input and ground-truthing into how the concepts (and associated decision support tools) are developed, extended, and applied.

The workshops will include:

- 25 carbon footprint workshops, with 10 participants per workshop (250 participants).
- 25 natural capital accounting workshops with 10 participants per workshop (250 producers) and up to ten resource management experts for local support.
- Workshop participants completing the training will receive a tailored property report, comparison against industry benchmarks, and a personalised SWOT of their carbon/environmental account.
- Participants will have the opportunity to be accredited as natural capital accounting expert or develop their basic understanding of trade carbon. Each accreditation opens up potential new income streams for regional groups and landholders.

Prior to completing an EOI, please consider the time commitment, business information and participation requirements you will need for successful completion. Contact the Landcare Farming Program Manager to discuss. Email: mick.taylor@landcareaustralia.com.au.

North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release

Earth Resources Victoria has a [November 2020 newsletter](#) containing information about four minerals exploration blocks in Greater Bendigo. Landholders and Landcare groups around townships such as Axedale, Elmore, Rochester and Lockington may be interested to read to find out more.

You may recall we initially featured this topic in the Chat in October 2019 when the Victorian Government released four minerals exploration blocks through a competitive tender. The blocks are located east of Bendigo and include the townships of Axedale, Goornong, Elmore, Rochester and Lockington.

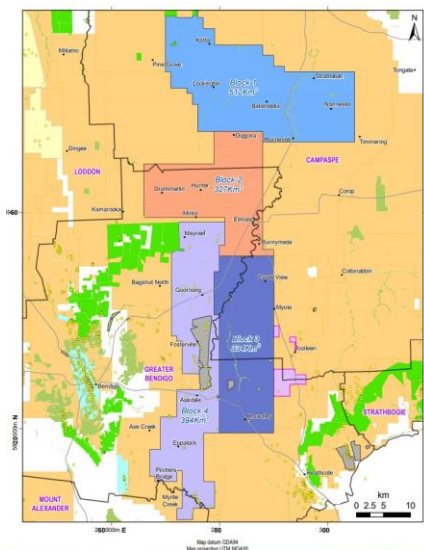
Assessments of North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release tenders are well underway with a decision expected in March 2021.

Strathallan Family Landcare Group wish to learn more about what is being proposed in the local area and have set up a Landcare meeting with Minerals Development Victoria. Group President Veronica Groat welcomes everyone interested to attend, "You're all welcome. If you do not wish to organise your own local meeting, you can come to ours," Veronica says. "Landcarers usually want to ask the same kinds of questions".

If this conversation interests you, please register via Veronica Groat (03) 5484 3600

When: Thursday February 4th from 7:30pm

Where: Rochester Town Hall



Map image taken from the North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release Update



General Jeffery Soil Health Award

Nominations are open for the General Jeffery Soil Health Award and will close on March 31, 2021.

General Jeffery Soil Health Award

Nominations are now open for the General Jeffery Soil Health Award for any individual farmer, land manager, extension specialist or educator making an outstanding contribution to improving soil health in Australia. The award:

- recognises, honours, and celebrates an individual's outstanding contribution to improving soil health through activities including:
 - good management practice on the ground and/or:
 - extending knowledge, and advocating for, improved soil management, and/or
 - educating and raising awareness about the importance of maintaining and improving soil health.
- promotes better management practices to improve soil health across the landscape.
- provides a platform to promote what is being done to improve and encourage soil health at a meaningful scale.
- honours the remarkable work of Australian's first National Soils Advocate, Major General the Hon Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd).

For more information and to nominate please visit: www.generaljefferyaward.com.au



Hi folks and Happy New Year to you all.

I hope everyone had a nice break over the festive season and enjoyed some nice times together with loved ones.

Not a great deal to report in this newsletter as we slowly ramp up for the year.

There has been a flurry of water quality monitoring going on since COVID guidelines have eased. I'm proud to say that since 1 October there have been **over 100** water testing events undertaken! This huge amount of monitoring simply could not be undertaken by staff. To know that we have such a dedicated army of volunteers keeping a watchful eye on our precious waterways is just so fantastic.

We are planning two new citizen science programs to commence this year. If you have an interest in the upper Campaspe River or our internationally significant Ramsar wetlands (Kerang and Gunbower) and are interested in becoming a citizen scientist, or know someone who might be, then watch this space.

These volunteers will provide significant data and contribute towards on ground works programs being rolled out by the North Central CMA to protect and enhance these significant waterways. Do get involved if you can.

It has been ages since the Waterwatch community has been able to get together or have any of our usual catch ups. I look forward to trying to catch up with many of you over the next few months.

Stay well and best regards,

Britt Gregory
 Acting Regional Waterwatch Coordinator
 North Central CMA
 Phone: 03 5448 7124
 Email: britt.gregory@nccma.vic.gov.au

Water Storages update

Region	Water Storage	% full at 21 Jan
Murray Storages	Dartmouth Dam	62.15
	Hume Dam	57.00
	Torrumbarry Weir	100
	Third Lake	65.47
	Reedy/Middle Lk	97.12
	Kangaroo Lake	92.40
	Kow Swamp	79.72
	Lake Boga	83.40
	Lake Charm	89.18
Loddon Storages	Cairn Curran Res	44.90
	Tullaroop Res	52.17
	Laanecoore Res	39.50
Bullarook Storages	Newlyn Res	89.34
	Hepburns Lagoon	79.88
Goulburn Storages	Lake Eildon	64.97
	Waranga Basin	69.64
Campaspe	Lake Eppalock	41.67
Coliban Water Storages	Upper Coliban Res	97.80
	Lauriston Res	92.20
	Malmsbury Res	46.70

Source:
www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/catchments/storage-levels
www.coliban.com.au/about-us/reservoir-levels

Sorry we missed including the storage levels in the December 2020 Chat.

Upcoming events and special days

February	
World Wetlands Day	2 Feb
International Day of Women & Girls in Science	11-12 Feb
March	
Business Clean Up Day	2 Mar
ABARES Outlook 2021 conference	2-5 Mar
World Wildlife Day	3 Mar
Youth and Schools Clean Up Day	5 Mar
Sea Week	6-14 Mar
Clean Up Australia Day	7 Mar
World Parks Week	6-14 Mar
Sustainable Seafood Week	8-14 Mar
National Ride2School Day	19 Mar
National Groundwater Awareness Week	8-14 Mar
International Day of Forests	21 Mar
World Water Day	22 Mar
World Meteorological Day	23 Mar
Earth Hour	28 Mar

Courses & Resources...

Best Practice Weed Hygiene Guide: Now Available

The new industry-first Best Practice Weed Hygiene Guide is aimed at improving the operations of staff and contractors, providing appropriate oversight and strategies to prevent the spread of weeds.

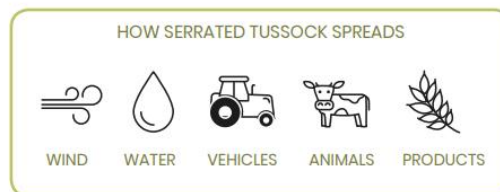
The guide provides recommendations on;

- planning site works,
- implementing weed hygiene practices, and
- contract management, capacity building and oversight.

The best practice guide was developed by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) in collaboration with stakeholders, including a survey of land managers to understand the complex networks involved in weed management.

The survey established that three-quarters of respondents employed contractors to work on their land, with a range of formal and informal weed hygiene control mechanisms in place. However, only 20% audit their contractors annually or more often, with many reporting they have never conducted an audit.

The newly published weed hygiene guide can be viewed by visiting <http://www.serratedtussock.com/management/reducing-spread>



Above: A serrated tussock plant (*Nassella trichotoma*)

Hard copies of the guide are also available on request by contacting the VSTWP on info@serratedtussock.com

The weed hygiene guide was prepared by RM Consulting Group on behalf of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party. This project was supported with funding from the Australian Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and Agriculture Victoria.



LODDON PLAINS LANDCARE NETWORK



Farm Chemical Units

Access Skills Training are holding a two-day training session in Bendigo for what is commonly known as the Chemical Users Course.

Participants will learn the practical skills and knowledge to select, transport, store, record, mix and use chemicals used in the agricultural and horticultural sectors. Completion of this course will lead to participants applying for their Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).

When: Wednesday 14th and Thursday 15th April 2021

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM.

Where: PepperGreen Farm, 44 Thunder Street, North Bendigo. Eco-Pod 1

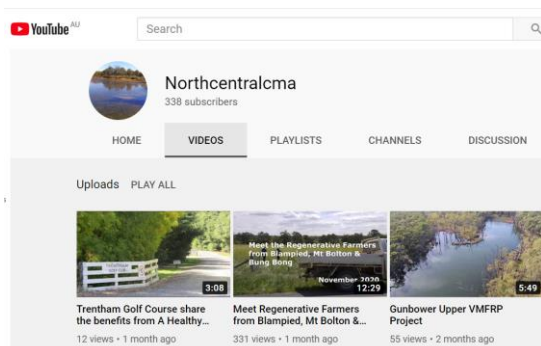
Cost: \$299.99

For further details contact ast@aag.org.au or call (03) 5445 9880

Have you seen what we are up too?

The North Central CMA hosts a [YouTube channel](#) containing lots of information about agriculture, environmental watering and river and catchment health.

Have a look and let us know what other information you would like to receive via video from us. The channel is updated regularly with project highlights, landholder stories, drone footage and catchment condition updates.



Are you based on or near the Loddon Plains and interested in undertaking study in agriculture and natural resource management?

Loddon Plains Landcare Network is entering into an exciting partnership delivering a Certificate III in Ag Conservation and Land Management in Inglewood this year.

LPLN and partners will deliver a Certificate III in Agriculture with emphasis placed on Sustainable Agriculture and biodiversity outcomes (CLM and natural resource management).

Classes will be delivered online, in person at Inglewood and on properties across the Loddon Plains.

The course will also put a focus on getting students local on-ground experience on farms and public land visits across the LPLN region.

If you are interested in expressing your interest in undertaking a Cert III in AgCLM [click this link](#) to express your interest or visit the Loddon Plains Landcare Network Facebook page.

Enquiries can be directed to

Danny Pettingill
0490 412 430
facilitator@lpln.org

Events...



Make it happen in 2021!

Friendly, inclusive community discussions designed for not-for-profits, community groups, leaders, and anyone who wants to be more effective at what they do.

Take this FREE opportunity to bounce ideas, get support, develop plans, and connect with others working on adapting to a new normal.

Sessions will be held weekly, every Wednesday 10:30 AM-12:00 noon for eight weeks from **February 3rd to March 24th**.

Topics will help you support your big picture and grow your success.

Weekly themes will build upon one another, to include:

- taking care of self & others
- recreating vision
- strategizing,
- digital systems for success
- being heard, and more.

Why not have a look at the experiences of the 2020 participants to see whether these sessions are for you.

Everyone is welcome to attend any or all of the sessions, however **each session has a limit of 30 places**, so it's best to register now, to secure your place!

Regenerative Agriculture Workshops

Central Victorian Regenerative Farmers will be hosting a Perennial Pastures workshop at Bung Bong on Sunday 21 February from 1pm.

This event is part of a planned series of workshops designed to provide skills and information on establishing health soil. This will result in good, healthy, nutritious, and resilient grazing pastures. The presenters will provide real experience and expertise that we all can benefit from and you will share in a great afternoon of learning and chatting. RSVP essential to Facilitator, Ross Davey.

Dates for the diary

February 21– Perennial Pastures workshop, Bung Bong

March 23/24 – 2 day workshop Grazing Naturally (Dick Richardson)

April 18 – Stock containment field day, electric fencing options and methods

May 21 – Nutrisoils Regenerative Farming Round Table

June 21/22 – Bus Tour Vic South West regenerative farms

**If COVID-19 guidelines on numbers apply at that time CVRF members will have priority for places and we will need to cap attendance accordingly.*

These events are supported by the North Central CMA, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

To view the amazing work of the CVRF visit: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/291403711731532>

Ross Davey

Facilitator

Central Victorian Regenerative Farmers

4665 Ballarat Road, DUNACH 3371

M: 0417 548 608

E: ross@glengreenock.com.au

W: www.glengreenock.com.au

Invitation to Landcare Link-up - 22nd February 2021



Connecting Country is holding the biannual Mount Alexander region Landcare Link-up. Representatives from Landcare/Friends groups in the Mount Alexander Region Landcare Network, along with other interested community members and stakeholders, are invited.

As always, the February Link-up will be focused on Landcarers sharing stories of their work. In lieu of in-person presentations, this year local groups have been invited to share a short video update to minimise COVID-19 risks. These will be shared at the Link-up and on the Connecting Country website. Along with the video updates, attendees will be invited to gather in small discussion groups, each focussed on a topic of interest to local Landcarers. Hot drinks and light supper will be provided.

When: Monday 22nd February 2021, 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Where: Please book for venue details, as places may be limited due to COVID-19 measures.

RSVP: Please book online at <https://www.trybooking.com/BNRGB> by Monday 15 February 2021.

More information: Email asha@connectingcountry.org.au or call 0418 428 721.

Breakfast with the Birds

The CMA's Bringing back the Bittern project team are proudly hosting the 2021 Breakfast with the Birds event, an annual part of our World Wetlands Day celebrations.

You and your family are welcomed to join in an early morning of bird watching, expert speakers and a light breakfast.

After recent deliveries of water for the environment, the Kerang Ramsar wetlands have become home to thousands of waterbirds including Australasian bittern. This year, participants will have the opportunity to hear from a guest speaker who has a wealth of waterbird experience.

When: Sunday 28th February 2021 – 6:30 AM to 10 AM

Where: A Kerang Ramsar wetland (meeting spot to be confirmed after registration)

Please note that this event is currently capped at 50 participants and due to COVID-19 that may change at any given time or even be cancelled at a late stage.

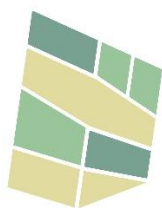
Bring: Bring a hat, water bottle, reusable coffee cup, chair if required, binoculars & camera (optional). Please dress for the weather including long pants and enclosed footwear.

Cost: This is a FREE EVENT. Coffee, tea and a light breakfast will be provided.

Register via
<https://2021breakfastwiththebirds.eventbrite.com.au>



Funding opportunities...



Victorian Rabbit Action Network

VRAN are inviting community groups and organisations to apply for their new grant program.

VRAN Chair, Gerald Leach, says "VRAN have grants up to \$5,000 to help community groups and organisations to raise awareness of the rabbit issue and best practice control methods".

Applications for Community Action Grants close on the 29th of January. More information on the grant program can be found at www.vran.com.au.

VRAN's new website, digital resources and the grant program were developed through funding from the Australian Government Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper in collaboration with Agriculture Victoria.

Visit the VRAN site today to apply for a grant and help plan your summer rabbit program www.vran.com.au

For all VRAN info contact
Heidi.Kleinert@agriculture.vic.gov.au or 0472 877 472

Building Better Regions Fund – Infrastructure Projects Stream – Round Five

Does your community have BIG ideas coming out of a prolonged time spent within your local area? This grant opportunity could be for you.

Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources have released Round Five of the BBRF program which includes \$100 million of targeted support for tourism-related infrastructure, with \$100 million for broader community infrastructure and investment.

The **objectives** of the program are to:

- drive economic growth.
- build stronger regional communities into the future.

The **intended outcomes** of the program are to:

- create jobs.

- have a positive impact on economic activity, including Indigenous economic participation through employment and supplier-use outcomes.
- enhance community facilities.
- enhance leadership capacity.
- encourage community cohesion and a sense of identity.

There are two grant opportunity streams as part of this program:

- Infrastructure Projects Stream, [as outlined in these guidelines](#)
- [Community Investments Stream](#).

Read through the grant overview, guidelines, and eligibility criteria to see how your ideas can fit into this funding stream.

Applications close: **05 Mar 2021 05:00 PM AEDT**.

Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program



As mentioned in my intro, the planned release of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program 2021-24 EOJ process will be underway from January 28.

This funding stream is vital for ongoing local landcare support through Landcare Facilitators who support environmental groups, networks, landholders, and the wider community to:

- undertake on-ground natural resource management works and other activities for the protection, enhancement and restoration of our land and natural environment.
- build group, network and community capacity and resilience.

Details on the programs key dates and decision making process are available [here](#).