

ground cover



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

www.nccma.vic.gov.au

Keeping you up-to-date with all the Landcare news

March 2012

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the latest edition of Ground Cover, I hope you enjoy it.

Each group will have received a hard copy of this years annual Landcare survey 'Supporting Landcare in North Central Victoria'. I can't stress enough how important it is for groups to complete this survey- yes, I really do want you to fill it in!

The survey is an easy way to update your groups key contact details (very important for us here in the office), it also lets us know how you are travelling as a group in terms of strength, but most importantly it informs us of what events and training opportunities you would like throughout the year. A huge thank you to the groups and individuals that have sent back the completed survey or who have had a go at filling in the electronic version on Survey Monkey- we have already had some terrific responses and suggestions... so keep them coming!

Coming up over the next few months there are some great events that will cover a range of issues. Be sure to check out the events section of the newsletter so you don't miss out on some fantastic opportunities. Currently we are in the planning phase for future activities and training days for the next financial year. However we already have several weed themed events pencilled in, which will coincide with the publishing of the North Central Weed ID guide in June. The guide, which is now being revised, is a fantastic resource to help individuals identify and manage weeds.

Speaking of great events, the North Central Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) Cass Davis, Regional Waterwatch Coordinator, is busy organising the first 'Annual Water Science Forum'. For its inaugural year the forum will be held in Newstead on Saturday 28 April. The forum will have a focus on frogs and is being held on *International Save a Frog Day*. Topics covered at the forum will include; frogs of the north central Victoria region, food chains and healthy ecosystems, building frog friendly habitats and threats to populations such as the Chytrid fungus. This event is free and more information about the event will be available in the April edition of Ground Cover.

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Cass has also organised another print run of the hugely popular North Central Waterwatch Frogs Field Guide so we will have more copies available soon. Coinciding with the re-print of the field guide there are individual fact sheets on the fifteen frogs that call north central Victoria home. The factsheets will be available on the North Central CMA website soon (www.nccma.vic.gov.au) so you can download them at home!

As I said in the last edition of Ground Cover, the 2012-13 Victorian Landcare Grants will be opening in April and close late May 2012, now is the time to start planning your projects. Groups will be sent the guidelines and application forms by mail; they will also be available on the North Central CMA website.

Until next time,

Jodie Odgers

Regional Landcare Coordinator

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NEWS

Something fishy is going on at Kerang Weir

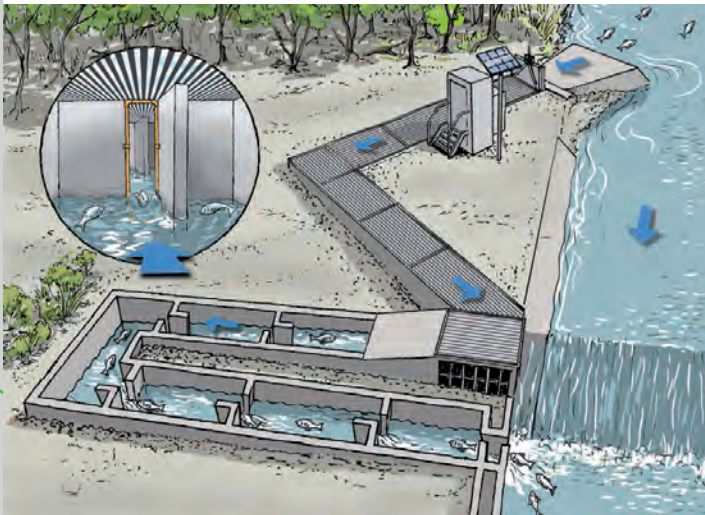
Written by Tess Grieves, Project Officer, Loddon Stressed River.

In September 2011 a new system and the first of its kind in Australia for recording fish movement became fully operational at the Kerang Weir fishway. The weir is the first significant structure on the Loddon River upstream from the Murray. Until 2008 the weir had been a barrier to fish swimming up the Loddon from the Murray River. In 2008 a vertical slot fishway was constructed to enable fish to migrate beyond the Kerang Weir.

After much delay due to the 2010-2011 flooding the fishway has now been fitted with a passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag reader system which is used to monitor the movement of fish passing through. The PIT system works by gathering data from the tag placed on specially tagged fish as they move through. Each time a tagged fish migrates through the Kerang fishway, a data series including antenna number, a unique fish number, date and time is generated and sent to a central database.

This system is the first permanent solar powered PIT reader to be installed in Australia. The PIT reader comprises three antennas located within the fishway. For the system to be effective a number of fish were fitted with a PIT tag which is similar to the microchips used in domestic pets. A total of 140 fish, from four native and two introduced species, were tagged, including 51 bony herring, 40 golden perch and eight Murray cod.

The information gathered from tagged fish and monitoring their movement through the fishway will contribute towards improving; the efficiency of the Kerang Weir fishway; our knowledge of fish migration in the Loddon River; and ultimately contribute to improving the health of fish populations.



PIT tag readers have been installed at most fishways along the Murray River as part of the 'Sea to Hume' river restoration program. The Kerang Weir fishway is now part of this PIT reader network and will log any of the over 35,000 fish that have been tagged as part of the 'Sea to Hume' project.



The installation of the system and the tagging of fish were carried out by the Arthur Rylah Institute of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) working with the North Central CMA. Information gained from fish movement between the Murray and Loddon rivers will provide researchers and managers with important ecological information on the movement of fish populations.

If you capture a tagged fish you can keep it or release it. In either case, it will assist in ongoing research if you record the date and location of capture, the external tag number, an accurate length of the fish and whether the fish was released or kept. You can also call the phone number on the external tag to report the details to receive a reward. If you keep the fish it will also be helpful if you return the internally located PIT tag to the address shown on the external tag.

Welcome to the new faces of Landcare in the region

As many of you would be aware there are some new people on the Landcare scene in the north central Victoria region and we are thrilled to welcome them.

The Victorian Coalition Government has delivered on its election commitment to invest \$12 million over the next four years to support Landcare Facilitators and help local community volunteers protect and restore Victoria's environment. In our region the Landcare groups and networks were fortunate to secure eight positions. The facilitators will be working at the grassroots level and providing much needed support. Please make the new facilitators welcome!



Worrisome Needle Grass

Written by Mike Jones, Campaspe Valley Landcare Group

The Campaspe Valley Landcare Group together with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) held an informative morning on 11 February to help local landowner's identify Texas needle grass and learn methods of how to control this tenacious tussocky weed.

Nearly 40 people converged on the Barfold Hall for an initial presentation by DPI agronomist and agricultural weeds research scientist Charles Grech and Elders agronomist Meaghan Jeans. The audience, made up of producers, Landcare members and government agency staff from across the state then walked a few demonstration paddocks at Lyal and Jeannette Metcalf's Barfold property. They gained a better understanding of how to identify this weed and to differentiate it from indigenous tussock grasses. "The paddocks quickly became over run by Texas needle grass, spreading along the Campaspe River and replacing desirable grass species," said Lyal Metcalf.

At the meeting Phillip Don, Campaspe Valley Landcare President, said "It is a major concern that land managers do not have an obligation to control Texas needle grass as it is not a noxious weed in Victoria". Several landowners at the meeting supported this view and added that in the past authorities have indicated it was nothing to worry about so it has not been declared a noxious weed.

Texas needle grass is very similar to Chilean needle grass which has been declared a noxious weed but as both needle grasses are aggressive, and once established very difficult to eradicate, it was agreed at the meeting that they should both be considered in the same light by the authorities. This may avoid future confusion and delays in control.

Dr Grech discussed recent findings from needle grass controls field trials and added that the grasses are difficult to accurately identify and could easily be overlooked because of their similarity to indigenous grasses. This leads to landowners not knowing they have the weed until it's too late and the paddock becomes totally infested. The general consensus of the meeting was that the last couple of good seasons had been especially kind to the spread of the weed and it had slipped under landholders guard.

Dr Grech went on to say that in a normal year needle grass would seed in November and that would be it for the year. But on plots under Dr Grech's care at Greenvale, there had been four or five seed flushes last summer due to the continuing wet weather.

In its early growth stages needle grass has the feed value of cocksfoot. But once it grew a seedhead, it rapidly became unpalatable to livestock and developed into tussocks which were sometimes 1.5m to 2m high.

Seeds are relatively heavy and spread mainly by rivers, animals and uncleaned machinery like slashers. They can easily come onto the property from adjoining roads and laneways transported initially by a piece of dirty machinery or relocated animals and can last in the soil for seven to twelve years. "The needle grass started on the roadside and we now have it across most of the farm, we can't stop its spread," said Craig Petherbridge, a grazier from Taradale.

Chipping, burning, slashing and chemical control (flupropanate and glyphosate) by spraying and wiping were all control options discussed at the meeting. However, it was determined that the best method of control is very much dependent on the extent of the problem and a coordinated control plan is needed for the area.

The Campaspe Valley Landcare Group is committed to containing the spread of needle grasses and is actively looking for means to manage a control program in the area. For further information on needle grasses contact Dr Charles Grech, Agricultural weeds on 03 9217 4120 or Phillip Don of Campaspe Valley Landcare on 03 5423 4182.

Biodiversity and agriculture - a match made in heaven

Biodiversity and agriculture are often seen as separate entities, however, this doesn't need to be the case. On Tuesday evening 20 March internationally renowned scientist Dr Denis Saunders will present a free public talk at the Newstead Community Centre on the reasons why. With a long and distinguished career in landscape-scale analyses of agricultural rangelands and studies of Australian bird ecology, Dr Saunders is well placed to deliver this presentation – which will be of great interest to conservationists and farmers alike.

Connecting Country Project Coordinator Chris Timewell said "Biodiversity - the variety of all life forms and their geographic patterns - is integral to a functioning landscape and provides critical environmental services such as nutrient cycling, water filtration and soil stability. Everyone benefits from a biodiverse environment. When biodiversity is diminished these benefits, such as life support processes, are decreased." Dr Saunders will present a case that agriculture is an enterprise that is critically dependent on biodiversity services and will describe how we might go about integrating them. A question and answer session will follow the presentation.



Dr Dennis Saunders, former CSIRO chief research scientist, member of the Wentworth Group, and president of World Wildlife Fund, is coming to speak to the Mount Alexander community.

The evening talk, the first of Connecting Country's 2012 Education Program, commences at 6.30pm with a pre-talk supper. The free event is fully catered and the food will be sourced from locally grown ingredients. All the evening talks and field days are open to all members of the public.

Also coming up on Sunday the 25th of March is a field trip to Pilchers Bridge where participants will learn about the process of identifying Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) and learn how they can be used in revegetation and biodiversity management. There are still places available for the field trip so register now to guarantee your place.

For more information and to RSVP please contact bryan@connectingcountry.org.au or call the Connecting Country office on 5472 1594. Full details of the program and a registration form can be found at the Connecting Country website; www.connectingcountry.org.au/2012-education-program.

The 2012 Education Program is facilitated by Connecting Country and funded via the Yellow Box Woodland project. It is delivered in partnership with the North Central CMA and is co-funded by the Federal Government's Caring for our Country Program and the State's Natural Resource Investment Program.

Connecting Country appoints their Landcare Facilitator

Connecting Country is happy to announce that Max Schlachter has commenced as the Landcare Facilitator for the Mount Alexander Region. Max comes to the position with a background in environmental science and forest ecosystem science. Over many weeks in 2011 and 2012, Max also volunteered with Connecting Country to produce the recently launched local action plan for Forest Creek.

The Mount Alexander Region has over 30 active Landcare and Friends groups working on private and public land. There is great variety between the groups and how they work across many landscapes from urban areas to large grazing properties.



Max's role will be to assist Landcare and Friends groups in the Shire to achieve their goals. This may include helping to gain funding from government and non-government sources, produce strategic local area plans and action plans and also to link groups with each other and with useful information. For some groups, this may be a great opportunity to re-invigorate their efforts with the extra bit of assistance available. For others, it might be an opportunity to expand their network and enhance their existing projects.

Max will be working from the Connecting Country offices in Castlemaine on a part-time basis and his office days will typically be Monday, Thursday and Friday. He can be contacted by phone on 03 5472 1594, or by email at max@connectingcountry.org.au.

Myrtle Rust in Victoria

Article courtesy of the Department of Primary Industries(DPI)

The destructive plant disease Myrtle rust has been found in Victoria for the first time. The disease poses a threat to Victoria's nursery and forestry industries, as well as to public parks and gardens and native forests. Under the right conditions, it could slow regeneration of Victoria's native forests after harvesting or bushfire, and even change forest biodiversity.

All members of the *Myrtaceae* plant family are potential hosts of Myrtle rust. It attacks young, soft, actively growing leaves, shoot tips and young stems, as well as the fruits and flowers of susceptible plants. Plants at risk include gum trees, bottlebrush, tea tree, lilly pilly, paperbark, myrtle, guava, midyim, rose apple, brush box and New Zealand Christmas bush.

The first signs of Myrtle rust infection are tiny raised spots that are brown to grey, often with red-purple haloes. Up to 14 days after infection, the spots produce masses of distinctive yellow or orange spores. The tiny spores of Myrtle rust are easily spread on contaminated plant material, equipment, vehicles, clothing and shoes, as well as by animals, wind and water.

To avoid spreading the disease the DPI recommends;

- do not touch, move or collect samples of the suspect plant
- before entering or leaving bushland ensure vehicles are left outside or have been washed clean
- ensure clothes, hats, gloves have been washed clean
- use a detergent bath to clean footwear
- wipe down personal effects/tools with wet cloth and detergent or disinfectant
- place personal rubbish in a sealable bag and wipe down the outside of the bag before removing from the site
- minimise equipment use
- keep to tracks
- do not move or transfer plants into other areas in case of hidden contamination

Report of suspected Myrtle rust can be made by calling 1800 084 881 or email photos of the suspect material together with a contact phone number and the plant location to plant.protection@dpi.vic.gov.au.

EVENTS

Paddock potential of native grasses

You are invited to attend an information day discussing the potential of native grasses from a production perspective. The event will be held at the Serpentine Hall, Chapel Street Serpentine on Thursday 22 March from 9.30am – 2.30pm.

Tim Barden from Ko-Warra Native Grasses and well known native grass expert Eris O'Brien will present on the day covering topics on native grasses and pastures such as:

- establishment
- management
- grazing for production
- feed and forage value
- weed control
- reducing fire hazard
- winter and summer active species
- undersowing with traditional species such as lucerne.

A grass identification session will also be held and farmers attending can bring samples (in a closed plastic bag please) that they are keen to have identified.

The information sessions will also feature brief presentations from agency staff detailing projects that are happening in the local region with a focus on sustainable farming and conservation.

A local site tour (participants to make their own way) will follow the presentations which will provide an opportunity to see firsthand the progress of a local trial site as well as another session for questions (weather permitting).

The day is funded through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative. The North Central CMA's Adopting Sustainable Farming Practices project and Box Gum Grassy Woodlands project and the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network project 'Kooyoora Connections' support the event which includes a free morning tea and BBQ lunch catered by the Serpentine Football-Netball Club.

To register your attendance, RSVP to the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or by email info@nccma.vic.gov.au before 20 March 2012.



National Tree Day- are you on board?

Since 1996 more than 2.8 million volunteers have planted over 17 million native trees, shrubs and grasses at National Tree Day events across the country. Here at Planet Ark, we would love National Tree Day 2012 to be the biggest and best Tree Day ever!

We would really appreciate your help in recruiting Site Coordinators to run Tree Day events and activities by including the information below in your newsletter, website, Facebook page or other communication channel, or passing it onto your networks by email. To download the National Tree Day logo or a photo to go with your story or post, visit <http://treeday.planetark.org/media/>.



Planet Ark is calling on environment groups, community groups, councils, schools and businesses to get involved in National Tree Day and help inspire people in their communities to learn about their natural environment and do something positive to help protect it for future generations.

This year National Tree Day is on Sunday 29 July 2012, with Schools Tree Day scheduled for Friday 27th July – however, you may register a site or activity on any day that suits you.

National Tree Day is not just about tree planting – you can register other activities such as follow-up maintenance at a previous planting site, weed control, bush regeneration or seed collecting. Activities like guided walks, gardening workshops, kids activities, and plant or mulch give-aways are also popular for Tree Day, either in addition to, or instead of, tree planting or maintenance activities.

To register a National Tree Day activity or find out more about what's involved, visit the Tree Day website at www.treeday.planetark.org or call the National Tree Day Hotline on **1300 88 5000**.

All public sites are listed on the Tree Day website for volunteers to find.

Fishing for ideas... have your say

Anglers can suggest ideas and learn more about their recreational fisheries at 13 forums being held across Victoria in April and May, including Kerang and Bendigo. This is the fourth year that Fisheries Victoria is holding community forums listening to recreational fishers and providing updates about what is happening with their freshwater and marine fisheries.

Fisheries Victoria Executive Director Anthony Hurst said broadening engagement with recreational fishers was a key component of the Victorian Government's \$16.2 million Recreational Fishing Initiative.

"We want to hear ideas from fishers at a local level to better align our programs, including how we invest recreational fishing licence fees to improve fishing opportunities," Mr Hurst said.

Those who cannot make it along on the night can send in their ideas online via www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing.

Kerang: Tuesday, 8 May, 7pm
DPI Offices, 26 Wellington St

Bendigo: Wednesday, 9 May, 7pm
Bendigo Legion Angling Club,
Gateway Rotary Park,
26 High St, Kangaroo Flat

FUNDING NEWS

Coles 2012 Junior Landcare Grants

Schools, kindergartens, day care centres and youth groups looking to start their own garden program can apply for a Coles Junior Landcare garden grant by registering with Junior Landcare.

2012 grants are now open. The closing dates are as follows:

Round 1: Closed

Round 2: Closes Friday 4th May, 5pm (EST)

Round 3: Closes Friday 27th July, 5pm (EST)

Visit www.juniorlandcare.com.au or www.coles.com.au.

Campaspe Grassy Woodlands Project- Are you interested in conservation?

The North Central CMA is seeking landholders in the Lower Campaspe Catchment area interested in caring for their remnant Box-Gum and Grey-Box Grassy Woodlands.

Financial assistance is available for landholders who qualify within the guidelines. This funding is provided by the Australian Governments *Caring for Our Country* initiative and is being made available to the North Central CMA for on ground works, including fencing and revegetation in the project area. The project focuses on the nationally endangered White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely's Red



There are particular criteria for landholders to be eligible for funding and which may help in self assessing your properties eligibility. Such as;

- The land must be within the North Central CMA pre-determined area.
- At least one of the characteristic trees must be present.
- The understorey must be less than 50% cover of exotic weeds.
- The understorey must contain native grasses and wildflowers.
- The land must be at least 0.5ha in size.
- The patch must have the potential for natural or assisted regeneration.

If your property fits within the criteria or you require any further information on the Campaspe Grassy Woodlands Project phone Daniel Arnold, North Central CMA Project Officer, on 03 5448 1875 or email daniel.arnold@nccma.vic.gov.au.

Corporate Express Junior Landcare Go Green Grants Program now open

Corporate Express and Landcare Australia are proud to launch a \$75,000 grants program to fund environmental projects in schools and community groups across the country.

Fifteen successful schools and groups will receive a Go Green Grant of up to \$5,000 to support innovative projects that bring about education in environmental issues, focus on sustainability, promote recycling initiatives or help improve the school's or local area's natural environment.

Corporate Express understands that the next generation of Landcarers can make all the difference to the planet and has partnered with Landcare Australia to support the local schools and youth groups that educate this next generation about the importance of environmental conservation and protection.

"Environmental sustainability is a core component of our business, so we are delighted to have the opportunity to make a further positive impact in the community by supporting teachers and students with the Go Green Grants Program," said Jay Mutschler, President of Corporate Express Australia and New Zealand.

Heather Campbell, Landcare Australia CEO, is looking forward to seeing more young people working on sustainability projects and learning about their roles in the future protection of our land and natural environment.

"Junior Landcare is all about creating learning opportunities in outdoor 'living classrooms' and encouraging young people to care for the environment. This Corporate Express Junior Landcare grants program is a great way to actively engage young Australians in a hands-on environmental project," she said.

Further to the grants program, teachers will also have a chance to win a \$5,000 shopping spree with Corporate Express by entering the Go Green Shopping Spree competition.

Applications for both the Go Green Grants program and Go Green Shopping Spree competition are open until Tuesday 1 May 2012. To find out about the grant criteria and to download an application form, go to www.landcareonline.com.au or call Landcare Australia on 02 9412 1040 for more information.



Applications for the 2012-13 Community Action Grants close shortly

The Australian Government is seeking applications for 2012-13 Community Action Grants from community groups to help them conserve and protect their local environment.

As part of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative, Community Action Grants recognise the contribution that community groups make to the Caring for our Country priority areas of:

- Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
- sustainable farm practices, or
- biodiversity and natural icons.

As in previous rounds, local community, farming and Indigenous groups can apply for a grant between \$5,000 and \$20,000 (ex GST) to fund projects that encourage active participation and build the skills and knowledge of the community to protect and restore our environment and natural resources. Projects may include hosting a local field day, developing natural resource management plans, educating land owners in sustainable agriculture techniques and on ground works.

Community Action Grant applications are subject to a competitive assessment process. Applications will be assessed based on alignment to Caring for our Country priorities, community engagement, project feasibility and value for money. All successful applicants must finish their project by 30 June 2013.

To date Community Action Grants have funded more than 1,250 projects to a value of \$23.5 mil and have been delivered by more than 920 community groups across Australia.

For more information on eligibility and to submit a Community Action Grants application visit the Caring for our Country website www.nrm.gov.au or telephone 1800 552 008.

Applications close at 5pm (AEDT) on Tuesday 27 March 2012.

COURSES & RESOURCES

Getting it right!

This is quite possibly one of the handiest websites you may come across... The governments Not for Profit Compliance website www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au/home – it is a single point of entry for organisations to access regulatory information, licenses, forms and related compliance resources. In a nutshell the website answers all of those tricky questions about how a not for profit organisation needs to comply with Victorian and Commonwealth regulatory requirements. Check it out.

Calling all women in the Loddon Murray region - Three day study tour...

To complete our Resilient Women Leading Change project, Community Leadership Loddon Murray Inc. is pleased to announce a three day study tour for women across the Loddon Murray region to build the skills, knowledge, confidence and networks of women in the Loddon Murray region.

Details are currently being finalised for this three-day study tour on Friday 20 April to Sunday 22 April which will encompass site visits, presentations from women in leadership positions, skill workshops, industry information panels, and showcase opportunities for women to be involved in leadership positions at a local, state, national and industry level.

The cost to attend is only \$50 (including GST) and includes twin-share overnight accommodation, and all meals and workshop materials. To register your interest contact Ellen White by phone on 0409 013 448 or by email to treglison3@bigpond.com.

The Resilient Women Leading Change project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under Australia's Farming Future and is being coordinated by Community Leadership Loddon Murray Inc.