

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 10

Get your 'Ground Cover' direct

The newsletter you are reading is for ALL members of Landcare and Friends groups in our region.

If you would like to receive it directly, rather than via your group, jump on our direct email list. All you have to do is send an email request to landcare@nccma.vic.gov.au or phone reception on 03 5448 7124.

Group executive members - please distribute 'Ground Cover' to as many of your members as possible. Landcarers have diverse interests and needs, and what may seem irrelevant to you may be of value to others.

NEWS

We have a new Regional Landcare Coordinator

Lets find out more about her!

Name: *Jodie Odgers*

Nickname: I have never had one!

Born In: Mt Waverley (Melbourne)

Live: Bendigo

I relax by... catching up with friends and family over a nice meal and a quality bottle of vino.

My previous job was... Making Conservation Pay Project Officer with Birchip Cropping Group.

Three people I'd like to invite to dinner... tough one as I would love to invite more than three! But if I had to narrow it down I would say Nelson Mandela, George Michael and my best friend Colleen who lives in the UK.

What I'm looking forward to in this new role the most... a new challenge, meeting new people and working with some proactive people that are passionate about the environment and sustainability.

Jodie commences her role with North Central on 22 March.

Her contact details are

Jodie Odgers

Regional Landcare Coordinator

North Central
Catchment Management Authority
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Five for forum

It's an important event, at a critical period in Landcare's history. So additional Federal Government support is now enabling North Central CMA to sponsor not just two but five community members to attend the National Landcare Forum in Adelaide on 23 to 25 March.

North Central CMA received expressions of interest from a number of community members and now has a strong delegation heading to Adelaide.



Help us to support you

In the February edition of 'Ground Cover' we reported that all Landcare groups in the region would be receiving a survey about groups' training and information needs and their "group health status", as well as some simple questions that will help us report more accurately to the state team and relevant government bodies.

The survey was posted to all groups in late February, but if you have not received your 'Supporting your Group' survey, please contact Mel Taube on 03 5440 1883 and she will post or email one out to you ASAP. The deadline for completed surveys is Friday 19 March.

Completing the training component is particularly important, as the topics, formats and locations of training and information events to be run over the next few months will be determined by YOUR responses to the questionnaire.

As an extra incentive we are again offering two prizes of \$250 worth of equipment or tools. We know surveys are a chore – but please help us to help you!

Birds in big strife

As some of you may have seen on the news recently, we could be facing a wave of bird extinctions following a dramatic crash in bird numbers in our Box-Ironbark forests over the past five years.

This is the dire warning from new research by leading ecologists Professor Ralph MacNally, director of the Australian Centre for Biodiversity at Monash University, and Professor Andrew Bennett and Dr Jim Radford, of Deakin University.

A study across northern and central Victoria showed about two-thirds of bird species, including lorikeets, pardalotes, thornbills and honeyeaters, have declined dramatically.

Most worrying is that species thought to be secure, such as the Red Wattlebird, Striated Pardalote, Grey Shrike Thrush and Laughing Kookaburra, have declined as much as or more than species already of conservation concern.

Researchers believe the decline in bird numbers is because climate change (particularly lower rainfall) has resulted in reduced habitat quality and greatly reduced food availability. This has compounded the effects of broad-scale habitat loss and fragmentation.

They say the collapse of so many different bird species strongly suggests that the availability of all food has crashed. Breeding activity also appears to have fallen sharply.

All that makes what we do as Landcarers to protect and enhance existing habitat, and create new habitats, even more important.

Minister for a day

Righto, all you armchair experts: if you've ever thought you could do a better job as the Minister for Agriculture, here's your chance. The Australian Farm Institute Farm Policy

Journal wants your words on what Australia's agriculture policies should look like over the next five years.

The institute is running an essay competition and the topic is: 'If I were the Australian Minister for Agriculture'. Two agricultural Einsteins will each receive a cash prize of \$500, and a complimentary one-year full membership to the Australian Farm Institute, valued at \$275.

The judging panel – including the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Tony Bourke – will select two winning entries – one from a farmer and the other from an agribusiness person. These will be published (along with a number of other papers on the same topic) in the May 2010 edition of the Farm Policy Journal.

To enter you must be a full-time farmer, tertiary student or agribusiness participant. (Agricultural consultants are not eligible.) Entries must not exceed 2,000 words. Entries will be judged on originality, comprehensiveness, practicality and clarity.

Your policy statement should contain an initial statement about your overall objectives for the agriculture sector over the next five years, and the policies and programs you would implement, or the things you would change to achieve those objectives. This is a bit easier than the "real thing" - a budget for any proposed measures is not required!

The competition closes on 26 March. The website has more helpful information about the competition and essay content. The AFI team says it can also help with editing tips and assistance. Go to <http://www.farinstitute.org.au/news-and-events/upcoming-events/writerscompetition.html>

New national facilitator

Brett de Hayr has been appointed the new National Landcare Facilitator, replacing Coral Love, who has stepped down.

Mr de Hayr is the former Executive Director of Sustainable Agriculture for Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, and has held executive positions with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, the Cattle Council of Australia, and AgForce.

One of his tasks will be to support the development of the National Landcare Framework, working with the community to help identify the challenges and opportunities for the next 20 years. The framework will be discussed at the upcoming National Landcare Forum in Adelaide.

For further information about the framework go to www.landcarefacilitator.com.au or to provide input please contact landcareframework@daff.gov.au

CSIRO goes 'sustainable'

CSIRO has launched a new national research flagship focusing on agricultural sustainability. It will look at ways to increase agricultural productivity while maintaining environmental health, building global solutions for food security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



It will tackle critical challenges such as the need to reduce agriculture's carbon footprint, the need to improve productivity to ensure prosperous rural industries, long-term maintenance of healthy soils and ecosystems, making the best use of water, nutrient and energy resources, and developing complementary land use options for agriculture, forestry and natural ecosystems.

Specific targets include increasing productivity across Australia's key agricultural industries by at least two per cent a year over the next 20 years, and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions per unit of food and fibre production by at least 50 per cent by 2030 through a mix of productivity growth, emissions reduction, carbon storage in soils and vegetation.

The flagship will deliver its goals through new and enhanced technologies and practices, innovation in knowledge-based services, informing policy options, and building capacity and institutions.

The Sustainable Agriculture Flagship will draw on the skills of scientists from many different disciplines, and will collaborate with a range of organisations including the Rural Research and Development Corporations, peak agribusiness bodies and companies, government departments, research bodies and universities.

For more information go to www.csiro.au/org/SAF-overview.html

Perennials in focus

The Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre (FFIRC) – and many north central region farmers – believe deep-rooted perennial plants have a greater role to play on farms in our drying and variable climate, due to their ability to capture and effectively use seasonal and unseasonal rainfall, maintain growth throughout the year and protect soils.

FFIRC's vision is to have perennials adopted on 7.5 million hectares or 13 per cent of Australia's southern farmland by 2030. There's a lot to like about this: "The Australian wheatbelt farm will be transformed with more green paddocks year-round, and a mix of new pastures, shrubs and bands of trees set amongst highly successful cereal crops in a more resilient landscape".

FFIRC's website Future Farm Online is dedicated to providing information on the use of perennial plant-based farming systems and technologies to provide Australian broad acre agriculture with new productivity and sustainability gains, and better natural resource management outcomes.

Information on the site includes the role perennial plants can play on the farm, how perennials can be used to address specific land management issues, and what perennials are best suited to certain locations and climates. Go to www.futurefarmonline.com.au

Help monitor critters

Mount Alexander Shire landcarers can play an important role in helping the remaining populations of some of our favourite critters by joining Connecting Country's nest box monitoring program.

Connecting Country is calling for interested community members to get involved in a program to monitor the distribution and status of Brush-tailed Phascogales, Sugar Gliders and Feathertail Gliders, and woodland birds.

Part of a long-term strategy for monitoring the changes in the environment across the Mount Alexander region, the program will install 400 nest boxes across the shire. Community members are invited to nominate suitable sites for boxes and to assist with monitoring the boxes once a year.

For more information and to obtain a site nomination form, visit www.connectingcountry.org.au, call 03 5472 1594 or email krista@connectingcountry.org.au

In other Connecting Country news, on-ground projects are set to start soon, after a hectic round of site assessments and preparation of management plans. Krista would like to thank all those who expressed interest.

Connecting Country now also has a permanent home! The new office address is 37 Hargraves St, Castlemaine. Phone 03 5471 1594.

IPA comments still wanted

As noted in the February edition of 'Ground Cover', North Central CMA is currently developing a new regional Invasive Plants and Animals strategy (IPA), to replace the previous regional weed and rabbit action plans.

Now North Central CMA has extended the deadline for the community views and information survey. Comments are invited regarding IPA issues on and off your property, the pest species of greatest concern, causes of spread, the type of support that would be most helpful, and how pest management in our region can be improved.

The deadline for the completion of surveys is now 19 March. Go to the questionnaire on the North Central CMA web site at www.nccma.vic.gov.au and follow the links, or phone North Central CMA if you would like a paper copy to be posted to you. For more information contact Project Officer Wendy Shea on 03 5440 1887.

The new strategy will set priorities and goals for cost-effective IPA management across both private and public land, and guidelines for a coordinated approach to protecting our environments and farms from the introduction, establishment and spread of pest plants and animals.



Coffee anyone?

The Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network has got its weed mat and mulching materials "in the bag" – thanks to local coffee importers Genovese Coffee.

The good people at Genovese have supplied the network with 4,000 hessian sacks that would otherwise have been sent to the landfill. They are being used as weed and mulch mats, litter bags and to block rabbit burrows during fumigation.

Network coordinator Kevin Spence says this valuable support represents "impressive foresight" by the company, and its environmental responsibility and cooperation with Landcare is a "shining example of corporate responsibility and care". For his part, Genovese operations manager Martin Jackson says he is proud to be able to assist the network and Landcare.

Thousands of hessian bags, from a variety of sources, go to landfill every year. You may have a supply right near you.

Genovese sources, roasts, grinds and blends its own coffee beans, and makes a mean Italian-style espresso, so if you're buying coffee consider supporting a business that supports Landcare.

Thanks for 'hot spots'

North Central CMA's Melanie Watts reports a very pleasing turnout at the recent IPA workshops, with 38 and 28 people attending the Kerang and Cohuna events respectively. She says the people who attended provided very valuable information that will be used in this year's project and into the future.

The two workshops were held as part of the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands Enhancement project and the Gunbower Ramsar Site Enhancement project.

Community members were invited to report local information on weeds, particularly Weeds of National Significance (WoNS), rabbits and foxes. Attendees mapped their "hot spots" on large maps of the project areas. Information on turtle and (on ground) bird breeding areas was also gathered.

If you were unable to attend, but live in the project areas and would like to have some input, please contact Melanie Watts on 0427 887 254 or melanie.watts@nccma.vic.gov.au

Book offer one

Our Community's training arm, the Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance, offers a program of practical training in four key areas: grants and fundraising; community group governance; marketing and media; and organisational management.

Participants receive official recognition plus ongoing access to a range of resources to support further learning.

To celebrate the launch of the 2010 training program, Our Community is offering a free book 'The Simple Secrets of Successful Community Groups Volume 2: Another 400 Tips on Running a Successful Community Group' to any group that

sends two or more attendees to a training event. The offer expires on 10 March.

Note that Our Community's courses are not free. But Our Community can tailor training programs to meet specific needs. To find out more about the training program and many other community group resources on this site, go to www.ourcommunity.com.au/training/calendar.form

OHS and you

In the context of occupational health and safety, there does not seem to be much difference between a volunteer and an employee, according to a report on the Our Community web site.

All Australian governments have agreed to a national approach to reformed safe

work laws, and the draft model Safe Work Act (2009) has significant implications for community organisations, including Landcare groups.

Volunteers are now defined as workers, and a primary duty of care is owed them in the same way as for paid staff. There are exemptions for all-volunteer associations with no paid staff (although not for primarily-volunteer organisations).

There are limited exemptions from prosecution for association officers and workers who are volunteers (although the full meaning of these exemptions remains unclear).

Our Community says the changes will introduce a new level of possible complication for small groups. We will try and present more information on this important issue in the next 'Ground Cover'.

Premier prize

Do you know an organisation in your community that supports and inspires its volunteers to do amazing things? Do you know someone who has displayed outstanding leadership in volunteering and made a real difference to the community? Of course you do!

So take the next step and acknowledge your favorite volunteer or organisation by nominating them for the 2010 Premiers Community Volunteering Awards.

The two winners in each category (one each from metropolitan and regional Victoria) take home a massive \$5,000 cash prize to continue their groups' good work. All finalists receive a \$500 prize.

Categories are the Community Volunteering Achievement Award, the Community Volunteering Leadership Award, the Young People's Community Participation Award and the Community Volunteering New Technology Award.

Nominations – which do involve some thinking and writing – close on 24 March. For more information phone 1800 092 032 or go to <http://www.awardsaustralia.com/pcva.html>



Book offer two

In association with Our Community, Westpac Social Sector Banking has launched its new book 'Guide for Community Board Members: Understanding Finances'.

This guide is the second in a series offered to community groups free of charge, following the 'Guide for Community Treasurers', which was launched in 2008 and revised late last year.

The 'Guide for Community Board Members' contains the vital information that you need to know to understand financial reports including balance sheets, income and expenditure statements and cash flow statements, as well as accounting methods, planning and troubleshooting.

Both books can be read online, downloaded in PDF format, or ordered free of charge

via the Our Community website – visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/freeguides. Westpac also claims to offer tailored solutions for community group financial needs. Email socialsectorbanking@westpac.com.au

From the frontier

The web site From the Soil Up always has an interesting, diverse and sometimes contentious range of news and views on farming, sustainability and the environment.

For example, what about this one: France's highest court has ruled that US agrochemical giant Monsanto did not tell the truth about the safety of its best-selling weed-killer Roundup. The court confirmed an earlier judgment that Monsanto had falsely advertised its herbicide as "biodegradable" and claimed it "left the soil clean".

Closer to home, and less contentious, are several items about pasture and "no kill" cropping methods. A farmer in NSW has modified his tyne combine by making and installing coulters on the front of the machine in order to cut through grasses. This prevents valuable groundcover being pulled out of the ground. The farmer hopes to recruit native grasses while still growing profitable crops.

Another article tells the story of another farmer's foray into pasture cropping, and the financial and environmental benefits he has witnessed (and others have measured) of this low input system.

The story of one farmer's approach of 'no kill cropping' may also be of interest, as he strives to achieve a balance between profit, soil and landscape function, biodiversity and a healthy social life. (Good to see the last item factored in!)

For more on these topics and plenty of other good stuff, go to www.fromthesoilup.com.au. If you like what you see, please support Carolyn Ditchfield who puts it all together.

Wetlands day out

Around 50 community members – some coming all the way from South Australia – attended the recent World Wetlands Day celebrations at Reedy Lake Ibis Rookery, organised by North Central CMA.

Held to promote the start of the Kerang Ramsar Wetlands Enhancement Project, the event focused on Indigenous cultural heritage and bird watching. Those present thoroughly enjoyed the many delights of the cultural trail, the famous two-storey Ibis rookery bird hide and a big lunch.

By the way, a day trip to the Reedy Lakes is highly recommended. The cultural trail is marked and easy to navigate, and the bird hide has plenty of posters to help with identification.

Second Gen evaluation

Clear Horizon, with the help of the state Landcare team (sited within DSE) has spent the last couple of months collecting data and stories about the results of an evaluation of the second investment phase of the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare Program.

On 17 March Clear Horizon will be running an evaluation and workshop in Bendigo for stakeholders, including the Landcare community, to analyse data, share the stories and play an important role in developing the recommendations for the program in future years.

The event is at the Bendigo Jockey Club from 10am to 3pm. People who have already been involved in the evaluation or who are interested in its outcome are particularly welcome.

For more information contact Grant Godden on 03 9637 8190 or email grant.godden@dse.vic.gov.au

Buried treasure?

Group treasurers can be unsung heroes – keeping those important financial records, looking after our funding dollars and juggling the books - er - we mean balancing the exercise books.

Now the folks at Westpac have come up with a great way for you to show how much you appreciate your treasurer, who makes such an important contribution to your group.

Nominating him or her for the Westpac Community Treasurers' Award will put your treasured treasurer in the running for a \$5000 prize for your group and a trophy. As well, the 30 top entrants in the state will receive a free place in one of Westpac's 'Beyond Survival' financial seminars.

There are three categories: small organisations with an annual income of less than \$10,000 a year; medium organisations with an annual income of between \$10,000 and \$250,000 a year; and large organisations, with an annual income of more than \$250,000 a year.



The nominee must be the treasurer of a community group that is an incorporated association and has been in existence for at least two years.

Nominations close on 26 March. For more information go to: http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/financial/financial_article.jsp?articleId=3568. To access an application form go to <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/files/TreasurersEntry2010.pdf>. Or email treasurersawards@ourcommunity.com.au or phone 03 9320 6800.

Web fans wanted

The Department of Planning and Community Development invites interested Landcare members to become involved in a reference group that will be a sounding board for community views that inform the development of a new web portal for volunteers.

The aim of the new portal is to support volunteers and volunteer-based organisations, and strengthen community participation via on-line communications, engagement, support and resources for volunteers.

The reference group members will be selected to represent a cross-section of organisations. Three or four meetings will be held this year. If you are interested or want more information contact Stephanie Cam at the state Landcare team on 03 9412 4254 or email stephanie.cam@dse.vic.gov.au

EVENTS

Soils forum

Don't forget the upcoming regional forum on soils, which promises to be a stimulating and challenging day - for free!

To be held on Wednesday 31 March in Bendigo, the North Central CMA's North Central Regional Soils Forum will focus on managing and rebuilding our regional soils, soil carbon and communities building healthy landscapes. The day will also include presentations from six regional natural resource management groups, a session on future hypotheticals (scary stuff), and plenty of time for discussion and networking.

To get everyone thinking and talking, organisers have secured two top-flight speakers: Andrew Campbell and Dr Christine Jones, as well as well known ABC presenter Jonathon Ridnell as forum facilitator.

The forum, which is a component of the North Central CMA's Farming for Sustainable Soils Project, runs from 8.30am to 5pm, at the Bendigo Club, Park Street Bendigo, with lunch and refreshments provided. There is no cost for participants, but places are strictly limited.

To confirm your attendance, please phone North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au no later than Friday 19 March.

More rocket science

Newstead's Rocket Science, a popular series of community discussions, continues on 28 March with a talk about the future of our rivers by Dr Paul Sinclair.

Dr Sinclair will address the question of whether it is possible to reconcile competing demands for a scarce resource in a drying climate. He is Healthy Ecosystems Program Manager with the Australian Conservation Foundation and well known for his book 'The Murray: a river and its people', published in 2001.

The session runs from 3.30pm to 4.30pm at the Dig Café. Bookings are essential – phone Dig on 03 5476 2744. For more information contact Geoff Park on 03 5476 2593 or go to <http://rocketscience2.wordpress.com>

Woodlands talk

Two of Australia's foremost experts on woodlands and woodland birds will give everyone something to sing about at Newstead on 11 March, at an evening event hosted by Connecting Country and the Newstead Landcare Group.

Please note the venue of this event has changed and is now the Newstead Community Centre – not the Ray Bradfield Room in Castlemaine. A free bus will run from Castlemaine and return, departing from the market building at 7pm.

Professor Andrew Bennett, landscape ecologist from Deakin University, will talk about the importance of woodlands and how we can take care of them and our wildlife. Dr Chris Tzaros, author of 'Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Forests' and now conservation manager for Birds Australia, will introduce us to some of the birds of our woodlands and how to keep tabs on their survival.

The presentation will be followed by the launch of Connecting Country's new booklet 'Connecting Community', which tells the stories of people working to understand and restore their local woodland environments.

The evening – which is free - will start at 7.30pm and includes supper. To reserve a seat on the free bus phone 0466 012 030 or email info@connectingcountry.org.au

Indigenous culture talk

Malmsbury District Landcare Group has come up with a great initiative – a talk on Aboriginal Indigenous culture by Dr Vincent Clark, to held on Thursday 11 March.

Dr Clark will discuss the pre-European history of the district and the importance of protecting the remaining heritage sites. He will also discuss how the Aboriginal Heritage Act impacts on local community groups and the need to consider heritage factors before commencing projects on the ground.

There will be some examples of Aboriginal tools to look at, and ample opportunity to ask questions after the talk.



The free talk starts at 7.30pm and the venue is the Malmsbury Town Hall, next to the gardens. A light supper will be provided. All welcome. For more information or to RSVP, please contact John or Sue Walter on 03 5423 9383 or email john.walter2@bigpond.com

21st century farming

Event three of the innovative 'Farming in the 21st Century' series, with the catchy title of 'Ship Shape Sheep', will explore sheep health issues at a forum at Elmhurst on 10 March.

Topics will include a Bestwool/Bestlamb program overview, sheep nutrition, mulesing and drench alternatives, the outlooks for lamb and wool, and sheep export inspection criteria.

The forum runs from 12pm to 5pm at the Elmhurst Hotel, with lunch provided. There is no cost. Please register by 5 March with Ann Maree Browne on 03 5355 0272.

If you can't get to this one, there are five other excellent events on the 2010 program: Nifty Navigation, which will explain the latest in satellite navigation tips and tools; Piping Project and Growing Grain will look at options for farmers along the Wimmera Mallee pipeline; Carbon Crazy investigates carbon emissions in the agriculture sector and how to mitigate them; Soil Savvy will look at interpreting soil tests and managing soils for optimum productivity; and Bioenergy, Biofuels and Biochar explores opportunities for farmers in the bioenergy industry and the potential applications of biochar as a soil conditioner.

Farming in the 21st Century is a series of events held annually to explore 21st century farming options and best practice methods to help improve farm sustainability and productivity. Organisers say the forums are ideal for farming families wanting to sharpen their knowledge and skills, and unearth practical alternatives

The initiative is a partnership between Pyrenees Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, Ararat Rural City, Project Platypus and the Department of Primary Industries. It is supported by sponsors including Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and the Grampians Pyrenees Regional Development Board.

For more information go to <http://www.farming21c.com.au/> or contact the DPI's Lucy Stott on 03 5355 0520 or email lucy.stott@dpi.vic.gov.au

Roadshow for 'next gen'

The good folk at Loddon Murray Community Leadership have turned their attention to the young people in our agricultural sector, and have put together the Next Gen Farmers Educational Roadshow.

This free three-day event, for people aged between 18 and 30 who are currently employed in agriculture or agriculture-related industries, is designed to build confidence and networks, and foster the sharing of knowledge and skills, with the aim of supporting the "next generation" to lead agriculture in the future.

As well as visits to innovative dairy, livestock, irrigation and dryland farms, workshop topics will include project management, goal-setting and presentation skills. A series of forums will look at climate change and the changing face of agriculture, and participants will be introduced to resources and tools to help them in their farming enterprises, as well as equip them for future leadership positions.

This is a great opportunity to access industry experts and inspirational speakers, meet and share experiences with like-minded people, learn new skills and even join a new internet group.

The road show, which starts at Wedderburn, gets into gear on 28 to 30 March. Applications close on 12 March and places are limited. For an application form go to www.lmclp.org.au, email program@lmclp.org.au or contact Kerry Anderson on 03 5470 5122.

COURSES

Keyline and carbon

A Keyline and carbon farming workshop coming up in Woodend will offer participants three days of technical and practical sessions about systems and techniques which both conserve water and build soils.

The three-day on-site workshop will outline all the principles and techniques of Keyline design. Other topics will include soil carbon sequestration, dam design and placement, grazing to increase fertility, gravity-fed water systems and holistic management.

The key tool of the Keyline system – the Yeomans Keyline plough – will be used for demonstrations, complete with a custom compost tea injection rig.

Best of all, the course is FarmReady approved, which means if you are a primary producer (or family member) you are eligible for reimbursement for the cost of the workshop.

The three-day course will be presented by Bendigo Keyline practitioner Darren Doherty, a registered teacher of the Permaculture Institute, certified whole farm planner (University of Melbourne) and approved Keyline™ designer.

The workshop will be held at Taranaki Farm near Woodend on 12 to 14 April. The cost is \$550, which includes lunch, morning and afternoon teas, and course notes. For more information go to www.fusionfarms.com or phone 0488 031 484.

Parks says thank you

Many of our landcarers work closely with Parks Victoria staff and on Parks Victoria land, for the mutual benefit of all concerned. Now Parks has come up with two great initiatives to say "thank you" to these volunteers.



It is running two free two-day courses - First Aid Level II and AgVet Chemical Users. The courses are available (pending space) for any individual or volunteer members of any groups which regularly volunteer on Parks Victoria-managed land.

Volunteers working on projects that do not have a first aid officer present at activities are particularly invited to attend one of the two first aid courses, which will be held on 19 and 20 April at PV Brimbank, and at DPI Knoxfield on 29 and 30 April, both from 8.30am to 4.30pm, with lunch provided.

There are 11 places available in each course; one person only (who must be an active volunteer) per group please.

The two AgVet Chemical Users courses will be held at Knoxfield on 4 and 5 May, and at Werribee on 13 and 14 May, both from 8:30am to 5pm with lunch provided.

There are 10 places available in each course, with preference given to active volunteers. Volunteers working on present and future projects that require the use of 'restricted use' chemicals will be given preference.

Travel and accommodation costs for all courses are not covered. Those attending the chemical users' course must also purchase their own Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP) for \$44.

To apply for these courses, forward your name, phone number, email address, address, preferred location and date, group name and contact ranger's name to sjfield@parks.vic.gov.au by 31 March.

FUNDING NEWS

Polluters pay

Applications for the Environmental Protection Authority's new funding program - Inspiring Environmental Solutions – close on 31 March.

Funds are sourced through a legislative scheme where the 'polluter pays'. In a successful prosecution, the magistrate can order the guilty party to fund a community environmental project instead of, or in addition to, paying a fine.

Proposals should tackle significant environmental issues and work with communities to bring about changes in the way people think and act around issues like climate change, pollution, air or water quality and resource use. There are six categories, including rehabilitation of an environment which has been affected by waste or pollution.

For more information go to <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/projects/community-project-funding.asp>. To access funding guidelines go to <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/projects/docs/IES-program-guidelines.pdf>. Or contact EPA at ies@epa.vic.gov.au or on 03 9695 2722

Focus on animals

Those with a special interest in conserving our Indigenous critters may want to check out the M.A. Ingram Trust, which offers small grants up to \$5,000 (usually between \$1,000 and \$2,000).

The trust funds education and research into the origin, history, habits, lives and uses of Indigenous mammals and birds, the relationships of one or more with others, and the flora providing their habitats and food supplies.

When funds are limited, the trustees may have a preference for applications funding essential equipment for field-based research. Email applications for this year close on 15 April.

For more information go to <http://www.statetrustees.com.au/index.cfm?pageID=123>, contact charitabletrusts@statetrustees.com.au or phone 03 9667 6740. To access the guidelines go to <http://www.statetrustees.com.au/uploads/MA%20Ingram%20Trust%20-%20%20Guidelines%20&%20Application%20Form.pdf>

Innovate, collaborate

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation is already well-known to some Landcarers in the region, having given valuable support and seed funding to the Mount Alexander-based initiative Connecting Country.

Foundation grant applications close on 31 March. Projects should be innovative and serve as a model for future projects; demonstrate collaboration with other groups, particularly community groups; result in long term improvement of the natural environment; and indicate how information about the project's outcomes will be shared with others.

Before submitting an application, you must email a small summary to the executive

officer for pre-approval at beth@nwf.org.au. For more information go to <http://www.nwf.org.au/> or contact the executive officer Beth Mellick on 03 5472 1316.

Volunteer Action Small Grants

New members, more volunteers, greater capacity to do and achieve more - we would all like to see that! So here's an opportunity to be creative with your recruiting through a Volunteer Action Project Small Grant.

To encourage volunteering and help groups to increase their memberships, the State Landcare Team (DSE) Volunteer Recruitment Initiative is launching Volunteer Action Small Grants, worth between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

Projects should strengthen your capacity to effectively recruit and retain members and volunteers; focus on engaging volunteers and new members in activities; and make a positive contribution to the environment.



The main focus of projects must be to encourage new volunteers and members, either through engagement and recruiting activities, or on ground works that include a strong recruitment and engagement component.

Examples might include a community planting day, with funding for plants and materials, or a bus trip around your projects for community members. DSE says the types of projects it will accept is "quite broad".

Any incorporated Landcare or Friends group can apply. However, preference may be given to groups that have attended the special training days being run in conjunction with the program. (You should still give it a go if you're interested in this grant.)

The training days run from 10am to 4pm at Werribee on 3 March, Camperdown on 4 March, Horsham on 5 March, Melbourne on 10 March and Frankston on 11 March. For more information or to book, contact Grant Godden on 03 9637 8190, email grant.godden@dse.vic.gov.au

Applications for Volunteer Action Small Grants close on 5 April. These should be submitted to the Regional Landcare Coordinator Jodie Odgers either by posting to North Central CMA at PO Box 18, Huntly Victoria 3551 or email to landcare@nccma.vic.gov.au

For application forms and guidelines, go to <http://www.landcarevic.net.au/vri/volunteer-action/volunteer-action-small-grants>. For more information contact Grant Godden, Victorian Landcare Project Officer on 03 9637 8190, email grant.godden@dse.vic.gov.au or Melanie Taube on 03 5448 7124, email melanie.taube@nccma.vic.gov.au

Both the training sessions and the grants are part of DSE's Landcare Volunteer Recruitment Initiative (VRI). The four key objectives of the Initiative are to increase the number of volunteers participating in Landcare activities by 12 per cent; increase the number of Landcare members involved in Landcare by 10 per cent (how is your group going?); support the formation of new groups in regions not covered by Landcare; and support the formation of Landcare networks.

Junior landcare

Landcare Australia's Junior Landcare Grants Program aims to get kids actively involved in their environment and it is a great, hands-on way to get them connecting with and learning about nature.

Any school or organisation that would like to involve their students in landcare projects, in conjunction with local landcare groups, can apply for grants to assist them with the cost of projects. Landcare groups can also approach schools with project ideas.

There are two types of grant available. Coles Junior Landcare School Garden Grant offers up to \$1,000 for schools and youth groups to create gardens in their schools or communities, including bush tucker gardens, waterwise gardens and vegetable gardens.

For more information and application forms go to <http://www.juniorlandcare.com/coles>

The Yates Environmental Management Planning Grant offers up to \$1,000 for schools and youth groups to undertake school environmental management plans or to undertake works identified in a plan done earlier.

Closing dates for the rounds for both funds this year are: 5 March, 4 May, 6 August; Yates only 22 October. For more information and application forms go to <http://www.juniorlandcare.com/coles>

Just for starters

The state Landcare team's Volunteer Recruitment Initiative Landcare Start Up Grants are still available to support new groups and networks, and to support groups and networks that are reactivating after a recess period of more than 12 months.

Landcare groups in the North Central Region can receive \$600 to assist with group start-up (or reactivating) costs, while networks are eligible to receive \$1,200 to assist with their start-up costs. These costs might include incorporation, insurance, venue hire, maps, and administration expenses such as photocopying, laminating, faxing, phone costs and computer hire. Funds must be used within 12 months.

You can apply any time prior to 30 June. Contact Acting Regional Landcare Coordinator Melanie Taube on 03 5440 1883 or email melanie.taube@nccma.vic.gov.au until 30 April 2010. For support with network formation contact Melanie or Landcare Project Officer Robyn McKay on 03 5440 1876 or email robyn.mckay@nccma.vic.gov.au

This newsletter is collated and edited by Virginia Adrian