

ground cover



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

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April 10

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

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

If you missed the last issue of 'Groundcover' I would like to introduce myself. My name is Jodie Odgers and I am the new Regional Landcare Coordinator (RLC) at the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

I guess I should tell you a little bit about me... Many years ago now, too many to think about really, I studied Conservation Ecology at University. So I have a keen interest in the environment and conservation. I also did an honors year where I investigated people's attitudes and behaviors towards the Common Wombat in North East Victoria.

For the last four years though I have called Birchip, a town in North West Victoria, home. Here, I worked for the Birchip Cropping Group (BCG), a not for profit agricultural research and extension organisation. At BCG I was a project officer on the 'Making Conservation Pay' team where I worked on projects that investigated ecosystem function in the Wimmera Mallee, biodiversity on farms and climate variability and climate change.

I am now looking forward to my new role at North Central CMA and hopefully meeting some of you and seeing some of the great work you and your Landcare groups have been doing. I got to hear about some of the exceptional work some other Landcare groups have been doing around Australia and also abroad at the National Landcare Forum in Adelaide. I attended the forum for two days and it was a great opportunity to meet many delegates and get a better understanding of the Landcare movement which is still very strong even given the changes over the last year.

The 'Supporting your Group' surveys that have been returned have been collated and we are now determining topics, format and locations for the training days that we will be rolling out over the coming months. I would like to say a big thank you to the groups that took the time to fill in the surveys and the lucky winners of the two prizes, \$250 worth of equipment and tools, will be announced soon!

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a huge thanks to Melanie Taube, our acting RLC over the past eight months - and I'm sure you all feel the same way! Mel has been a great source of information for me in starting my new role and she is heading off on maternity leave at the end of April. We at the North Central CMA thank her for all her great efforts and wish her well in her new job as a mum!

Before I sign off from my first edition of 'Groundcover' I would like to remind groups that it is important that we have the most up to date information about you! Even if you aren't active at the moment we still want to hear from you. It is important that we have the correct contact details as we don't want to be sending information to the wrong place - so please update your details by filling in the form or calling us at the office.

I look forward to meeting you soon....

Jodie Odgers

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EVENTS

Linking the vision

As most landcarers are well aware, biolinks play a vital role in addressing the loss of ecological function in the landscape through habitat loss, fragmentation and the decline in native vegetation condition.

An interesting upcoming forum in Bendigo will bring together key stakeholder groups and community members to explore the role of these increasingly important places in our landscapes.

To be held on 20 May in Bendigo, the North Central Biolinks Forum 'Creating a vision for landscape scale conservation in North Central Victoria' is an opportunity to learn more about landscape connectivity, see a presentation on the 'North Central Biolinks: Principles and Approaches' report, and to identify and discuss potential opportunities to improve and restore functional landscape connectivity.

The biolinks forum is an initiative of the City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) natural environment advisory committee, which is made up of community representatives and stakeholder agencies, including the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA). North Central CMA is also a key supporter and sponsor of the event.

In 2009 the CoGB and the Shire of Campaspe commissioned a study into biolinks within the two municipalities.

The interesting program includes Dr Jim Radford from Bush Heritage Australia talking about the science of landscape connectivity; a presentation on the report from Ben Kroker from the City of Greater Bendigo; a snapshot of regional landscape projects; key information on how biolinks sit within government priorities; and a workshop session to address the key question of "where to now?".

The forum will run from 5pm to 8.30pm at the Banquet Room at the Capital Theatre in View Street. There is no cost and a light meal will be provided. For catering purposes please register by 12 May to Ben Kroker on 03 5434 6000 or b.kroker@bendigo.vic.gov.au. To access a copy of the report go to www.bendigo.vic.gov.au

Fabulous fungi

Ecologist and photographer Alison Pouliot is well known for inspiring people to become more aware of the wonderful world of fungi, and we've heard many rave reviews of her sessions.

Now lucky Landcarers in the south of our region (but they're open to anyone) have the opportunity to attend one of four fungal ecology workshops during the best time of the year for fungi spotting.

Alison invites you to join her for a "weekend foray deep into our local forests for an illustrated journey into a little known world". Fungal specimens from the local areas will also be on display for discussion and examination.

Workshop details are: Woodend on 24 and 25 April, to book phone 03 5427 1845 or email wnci@netcon.net.au; Daylesford on 1 and 2 May, to book phone 03 5348 3569 or email info@dnc.com.au; Trentham on 15 and 16 May, to book phone 03 5424 1354 or email info@trenthamcentre.com

There will also be a seminar at Kyneton on Wednesday 5 May. For enquiries email Alison at alison@alisonpouliot.com or go to www.alisonpouliot.com

Horse sense at Newham

Running horses on a small property while retaining and enhancing environmental values can be quite a challenge. So Melbourne Water has initiated a free event to support horse people in Macedon Ranges Shire and Hume City Council.

The event, which comprises a seminar and property visit from mid-afternoon, will be held on 10 April from 9.30am to 5pm; register from 8.45am. Morning tea, refreshments and lunch will be provided.

It will be presented by Jane Myers, well-known small horse property management expert and author. Topics will include pasture improvement, grazing and manure management, property design, water conservation and supply, and trees and plants.

There will be tips to improve horse health, how to save money and for better management, as well as opportunities to share experiences with other horse property owners. There will also be information on Melbourne Water grants for landholders on waterways. Attendees will receive a free management guide and a laminated aerial photo of their property.

The seminar venue is the Newham Hall in Rochford Road. Registration is essential. Please note attendance is restricted to residents of the two shires mentioned. Contact Chrissie Frantzeskos at Melbourne Water on 03 9235 2157 or email chrissie.frantzeskos@melbournewater.com.au. Tell your horse-loving friends and neighbours, too.

Weed Society seminar

Weeds are often on the Landcare agenda and the upcoming Weed Society of Victoria Inc is presenting a great seminar on successful weed management stories, and what people have done to monitor and evaluate their weed management programs.

The seminar, to be held at Tullamarine on 15 April, will present some high profile guest speakers. Topics for discussion will include distribution and abundance; planning for successful control; a case study on the National Willows Program; the effects of herbicides and picking flowers on seed production; an update on the national Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) program; and a community based approach to cactus control.

The AGM will also be held during the seminar, which runs from 8.50am to 5.20pm at the DPI, Mickleham Road, Tullamarine. The cost for non-members is \$120. Registrations close on 11 April. Lunch and morning and afternoon tea will be provided. Contact Ros Shepherd on 03 9576 2949.



Native Birds Brochure Launch in Echuca

The Echuca Landcare Group and Echuca and District Branch of the Bird Observers Club of Australia are launching their joint brochure entitled 'Native Birds of the Echuca-Moama District' on Wednesday 5 May.

The brochure will be launched by Mayor of Campaspe Shire, Cr. Peter Williams, with keynote speaker being Mr Chris Tzaros of Woodland Bird Conservation Project "Birds Australia". Bird information will be presented by members of the Echuca & District Branch of Bird Observers & others.

The launch will be held at the Tourist Information Centre in Echuca from 7.30pm onwards and a light supper will be served. RSVP to C. Headberry 03 54821560 or email to moamahedder@gmail.com by 3 May 2010.

Woodland Bird Conservation Workshop

Are you interested in learning about woodland birds and how you can get involved in protecting threatened species?

The North Central CMA, with support from Birds Australia and Connecting Country, are holding a 'Conserving Woodland Birds Workshop' on Friday 23 April from 10.00am to 4.00pm at Campbells Creek Community Hall, Elizabeth Street, Campbells Creek.

There will also be a field visit – bookings are essential and participants need to bring a pen, paper, clipboard and wet weather clothing.

Morning tea and lunch will be supplied. To RSVP phone the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124.

Field Day on 2nd Generation REVEGETATION

Taking the next step-the ground flora.

Have you ever wished you could bring back the wildflowers to a patch of bush, eliminate the weeds from your revegetation or get plants for free by regeneration of native species?

These issues and more will be discussed and demonstrated at this field day. Attendees will experience hands-on some of the simple practical techniques involved.

Ian Higgins, Friends of Campbells Creek Landcare Group member and revegetation expert with the North Central Catchment Management Authority has been experimenting with restoration of riparian native vegetation since 1986. Come along to hear about his experiences with bushland regeneration along Campbells Creek (and take a peek at the new creekside path before its launch as well!).

Ian said he'd be 'showing off' some of the landcare group's riparian and dryland revegetation work of varying ages to demonstrate what can be achieved.

WHEN: Sunday 2 May, 2010 - 9.30am start to 12.30pm

WHERE: Lindsay Park in Campbells Creek, 2.5 km south of Castlemaine on Midland Hwy (the road to Daylesford), with parking in Lindsay St. just 100 m north of "Book Heaven". There's plenty of parking space!

Light snacks and refreshments provided. Please bring gloves and suitable clothing and if you can a trowel or mattock.

Further details visit the Friends of Campbells Creek web site www.focc.org.au. Or contact either Ian Higgins at ian.higgins@nccma.vic.gov.au or Paul Mee at paulmee@impulse.net.au or on 0448 803 890

NEWS

More funding for facilitators

The Australian Government has announced a new stream of funding that could lead to more support for Landcare groups in the region. Landcare groups and particularly networks may be eligible to apply for this funding.

The Caring for Country Landcare Facilitators Initiative will provide up to \$33.6 million over four years to host organisations to employ 56 facilitators Australia-wide for four years in nominated regions, including the North Central CMA region (although the government noted that the competitive process does not guarantee an appointee in every region).

Successful applicants will receive up to \$150,000 a year, which can be utilised to employ a full-time or up to three part-time facilitators.

The new facilitators will work with groups to improve knowledge and skills, provide coordination and support services, interface with regional NRM bodies, and promote sustainable farm and land management practices to deliver improved ecosystem services and landscape scale conservation.

It will be the responsibility of the successful applicant organisations to ensure that facilitators deliver on agreed work programs.

North Central CMA has applied for funding and will advise our Landcare community and stakeholders of the outcome as soon as funding is confirmed.

Flying foxes far from home

Lyndall Rowley, Research and Development Officer at North Central CMA reports that Grey-headed Flying Foxes have arrived in Bendigo - the first time the species has been recorded in numbers within the city limits. These animals can travel up to 100km in a night, so keep your eyes out for nocturnal visitors.



They were first reported in the second week of March when a Bendigo Field Naturalist, John Lindner, saw them in the fernery at Rosalind Park. A count has revealed that over 1800 flying foxes have decided to make Bendigo their temporary home.

It is unclear exactly why these migratory animals have arrived. However, as many of us know, there are some notable flowering events happening in the Bendigo region this year: Grey Box seemed to flower prolifically, now the Red Ironbark is flowering early and well, and Yellow Gum blossoms are starting to emerge. Lyndall says the flying foxes have obviously sniffed out a golden opportunity!

Grey-headed Flying Foxes, sometimes known as 'fruit bats', consume mainly nectar and pollen from many species of native eucalypts, as well as some other native species. They also eat some fruit and leaves of particular plants.

According to the Department of Sustainability and Environment website, they commonly travel 30km and more from their camps to find suitable food, especially blossoms.

It is not known what has driven the colony into the centre of Bendigo. It could be an event elsewhere, such as failed flowering, or a direct habitat disturbance, or it could be a sign of things to come due to climate change.

It is expected the flying foxes will stay in Bendigo during autumn for their breeding season and while suitable food is available. They will then disperse northwards. Perhaps we might see them again next year.

For more information on these interesting animals go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenpa.nsf

Sign up for these

We all have unwanted visitors from time to time. Now the Department of Primary Industries is providing free fence signs to help farmers and businesses in the grains industry protect themselves against new and emerging biosecurity threats, including insects, mites, snails and organisms.

Fence signs tell all visitors, contractors and workers to contact the owner before entering the property, so that any biosecurity risks can be assessed prior to entry. The signs may also inform visitors about any access restrictions, vehicle wash down bays, boot wash stations, visitor registration and other quarantine initiatives.

Grain farmers can also obtain a free copy of the new Farm Biosecurity Manual for the Grains Industry manual. This will help you to assess your farm security and identify your risks.

For free signs and/or a manual, contact Jim Moran at DPI Bendigo on 03 5430 4479 or email jim.moran@dpi.vic.gov.au. Farmers and community members who notice potential biosecurity threats can report them to the exotic plant pest hotline on 1800 084 881.

Indigenous crew in the finals

The North Central CMA's Barapa Barapa work crew is a finalist in the Leighton Holdings Indigenous award, one of the categories for the 2010 National Landcare Awards, to be announced in Canberra on 24 June.

Under its drought employment program in 2008/09, North Central CMA employed 12 indigenous men from the Barapa Barapa community to undertake site assessments along 26km of the Loddon River, from Appin South to Kerang.

Due to historic reasons, the Barapa Barapa community's connection to country around the Kerang Lakes and Gunbower Forest has diminished. The North Central CMA identified this as a priority natural resource management issue and sought expressions of interest from the community to participate in the program.

The site assessments focused on Aboriginal cultural heritage, but also identified a variety of flora and fauna, and pest plants and animals. The team assessed river condition, including deep pools, riparian vegetation, fish habitat, bank erosion, rubbish, and waterway and boundary fencing in need of repair.

The project provided Barapa Barapa community people an important opportunity to reconnect with their traditional country. Altogether 266 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites were recorded and mapped on this stretch of the Loddon.

The river health site assessment information will be utilised to determine priority works and measures to protect, restore and enhance the health of the Loddon River.

Well done to all crew members and those involved in developing the initiative at North Central CMA, and best of luck in Canberra!

New face at Connecting Country

The Mount Alexander Shire-based Connecting Country project has appointed a new project manager, Latarnie McDonald. After a big effort getting the project up and running, inaugural manager Krista Patterson-Majoor has resigned to have her first baby.

Latarnie McDonald has a wealth of experience with landholders and landscape management. Inspired by her grass roots experience of family conservation farming and grazing native grasslands, she has worked as a district extension agronomist, agri-ecologist and more recently a consultant for sustainable foods and environments.

Some achievements include an industry-funded study tour to the US and Canada for organic food and fibre production, supply chains and multifunctional biodiversity; as well as working on-ground with landholders to trial and develop new management techniques to sustain natural resources while improving biodiversity and profitability



Latarnie may be contacted via email at lmcdonald@connectingcountry.org.au or by calling the Connecting Country office on 03 5472 1594. Welcome aboard Latarnie.

Get on blog watch

Connecting Country has launched its new monitoring blog, set up to support the collection, analysis and sharing of environmental monitoring information. All contributions are welcomed.

Each month the blog will feature a local species of plant or animal to encourage community members to look out for it. The featured species for March was the Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*). Go to www.moncc.wordpress.com/featured-species/march/ to read more.

The blog can be used with the community web-mapping portal, which allows individuals and community groups to view, create and share information about their local landscapes. The application is built using Google Maps technology and has the same base satellite imagery and street map information as the Google Maps website.

If you spot anything interesting, let Connecting Country know via the blog, and show where it is via the mapper. For more instructions see "quick tips" on the blog. Go to www.moncc.wordpress.com

Love your FTLA

The Farm Tree and Landcare Association (FTLA) will hold a one-day forum in conjunction with its annual general meeting (AGM) – open to all members – on 7 May. To jog your memories, the FTLA is the important body that manages many, if not most, groups' insurance and incorporation.

Executive officer Susi Johnson says the AGM day is the "FTLA's primary means of obtaining direction from you, the members - so come along!". Notices will be sent out to all groups via the nominated contacts as soon as the program is finalised. Members of member groups can also stand for election.

It looks like the keynote speaker will be Kim Chance, the chair of the new Australian Landcare Council.

While we're on the subject of the FTLA – where would we be without this vital support? And there are a few things you can keep in mind to make its job a lot easier – as well as ensuring you don't land in any insurance mess up the track.

Groups should always ensure their key contact details are updated with the FTLA. Contacts, both general mailing and email, and billing, can be one or several people. The general contact will usually be the secretary, but some groups, particularly where the secretary doesn't use email, nominate another person. Some groups prefer that the renewals and any financial questions go directly to the billing contact, usually the treasurer.

If contacts are not kept up to date you may miss out on important information, particularly renewal notices and notice

of AGMs. You may also miss out on the potential support of prospective volunteers who contact the FTLA to offer their services.

More critically, your insurance may have lapsed and you may not even be aware of this scary state of affairs. Susi notes that some groups assume that their membership is current because they haven't seen a renewal notice that went to an old contact. As a result they have been operating without insurance! One group discovered this only when it tried to make a claim.

The FTLA looks after the interests of a massive 16,000 member households, each individual member of an FTLA member group is an FTLA member, and the FTLA is required by law to know and list all members.

All groups need to supply a membership list each year, and it should be updated at least annually. The FTLA prefers that changes be made directly to the list it sends out with the renewal.

Amongst its other roles, the FTLA serves as a two-way information conduit. Susi asks that groups forward items of interest from the FTLA to their group members, and to send her items they believe are of interest to the wider Landcare community. If possible, please provide an email address so you can take advantage of short-notice information and opportunities.

The FTLA also supplies the mailing list for the Victorian Landcare magazine, which is posted to all members of all member groups. So if you've been missing your copy, again check the current address details. The FTLA does not give members' details to any outside organisation.

Finally, if you need a letter of support from the FTLA for a funding application, please contact Susi as early in the piece as possible, as at least a week's turnaround time is needed to meet these requests.

You can contact Susi at ftla@vff.org.au

Soils health check on line

Better soil health is now just a click of your computer mouse away, thanks to the expanded soil health pages on the Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) web site.

There is a goldmine of information here – if only we had time to read it all! Just a few topics in the 100 new pages of content include soil properties, including organic matter, structure and type; management practices including tillage, trafficking and tracks; soil processes including formation, degradation and the carbon cycle; and general tools including risk management, integrated systems and land capability.

Users can now carry out their own simple soil health check via a list of questions, to help them work out if their soils need some preventative care or even urgent "first aid". The next step might be putting together a soil health management plan – there are templates and help to do this on the website, too.



You will also find a wide range of maps and soil surveys dating back to the 1940s, and the most recent land resource assessment of the Wimmera region.

The search function has been improved to help users find the information they are looking for. Go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/vro/soilhealth

Soils in strife

Those who attended the excellent North Central Regional Soils Forum last month heard that overall, our soils are in strife – but we can do something about this dire situation with new management techniques and technology.

Dr Christine Jones certainly had everyone's attention when she told the forum that top soil depths at Ballarat had halved in the last 25 years, and that the water-holding capacity of Victorian soils in the first years of white settlement had been a whopping 20 times greater than now, due to the much higher organic matter (carbon) content.

It was no surprise to hear that pressures on soils will intensify, and the focus on carbon will increase as farmers work to feed our booming population within the constraints of climate change and ever-declining water security.

Many landholders who believed they were managing their soils conservatively have had an unpleasant wake up call in recent years, as they watched them "blow" as a result of insufficient vegetation or stubble cover caused by low rainfall.

Boosting soil organic matter (carbon) levels is the answer to rebuilding and retaining our depleted soils, and – most importantly – increasing their water and nutrient-holding capacity, according to Dr Jones.

She says it is easy to increase soil carbon with some simple strategies: maintaining green groundcover at all times, establishing summer-active grasses, avoiding high-analysis fertilisers, cell/pulse/rotational grazing, and "appropriate disturbance" such as pasture cropping, which mimics the activities of native animals.

The forum also heard from farmers who are participating in the discussion groups being run as part of the North Central CMA's 'Farming for Sustainable Soils' project.

The four groups have discussed possibilities, planned their new activities and strategies, and will soon be putting all their work into practice. It will be interesting to hear how they are travelling in the future.

Their comments at the forum about practices in their districts suggest that many farmers are already taking positive steps in the right direction.

More and more lucerne and other perennial pasture species are going in, and more farmers are direct drilling, retaining stubbles and using precision farming (controlled traffic) techniques, and modifying machinery (government support for the latter would be appreciated).

There is a huge amount of interest in new technology including the use of GPS systems and computer tools

such as Yield Prophet, and more farmers are looking at integrated pest management, biological farming techniques, composting, earthworms, grazing winter cereals and fodder crops, setting up stock containment areas and establishing saltbush.

There are profound challenges of course. While farmers contemplate the potential benefits of new methods, paying the bills from year to year is still the priority, while waiting for a return on their investment in soil health in the long term. Deciphering the huge amounts of information out there is also a big issue.

Ultimately, says Andrew Campbell, a "third agricultural revolution" would comprise "closed loop farming systems", which don't leak or lose water, energy, nutrients or carbon. Before we attain that ultimate goal, any return on investment in soils now would "increase rapidly in coming years".

Meanwhile, a paddock walk at your place, armed simply with a penetrometer and a hand auger, can provide lots of useful information about the state of your soils, and help you save on inputs and time.

For more information about North Central CMA's 'Farming for Sustainable Soils' project, please contact Phil Dyson, project manager by calling the North Central CMA office on 03 5448 7124.

Seeking champion trees

There are already four trees from the North Central region on the National Tree Register of Big Trees, and this is a call for all tree lovers (that's all of us) to put us on the map with some local nominations.

Perhaps you have a local Ironbark, Black Box, Buloke or Golden Wattle that you have always thought was a "big one". Your favourite tree could be joining or even surpassing the Spanish Fir in the botanical gardens at Daylesford, the Ponderosa Pine at Castlemaine, the Chilean Wine Palm in Bendigo and Guildford's mighty River Red Gum, which is 500 years old.

The register has been set up to locate and record the largest specimen of every indigenous and exotic species in Australia – woody weeds are not included! We can go for gold – the register will feature national, state and regional champions, and the five largest specimens of each species, irrespective of their champion status.

Anyone can nominate a tree, and the list is constantly changing as people take a closer look at the trees in their back paddocks, on the roadsides, and in parks, gardens and backyards. Each nominated tree is awarded points based on a set of measurements.

The register has been set up to promote the preservation of big trees as impressive examples of tree growth, natural beauty, valuable genetic resources and inspiring symbols of conservation.

It aims to generate greater appreciation of our flora, promote the conservation and propagation of trees, work



closely with all Australian and state forestry and environmental departments, support local government, and link with botanical gardens and other organisations.

The web site features photos, point scores and more information on each champion tree, updated lists of all nominations and an attractive, easy to use format. It's lots of fun. Go to www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au

If "your" tree achieves champion status, please let 'Groundcover' know so we can tell everyone!

Joan joins VLC

The Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) is proud to announce that Landcare champion Joan Kirner – who was so instrumental in getting us all going more than 20 years ago – has agreed to be the patron of the organisation.

The VLC was formed at the end of 2008 to effectively represent the members of Landcare groups and networks across Victoria, and to give us all a voice in this time of change. A recent update says the body aims to "be part of the (change) process, rather than watch it go by". The VLC is also represented on the National Landcare Network (NLN).

Already a number of Landcare networks have provided foundation funding, and the council has established a task force to recommend actions we can take to inform and extend the Victorian Government's Land and Biodiversity White Paper outcomes to the Landcare community. The NLN has also met with Australian Government Agriculture Minister Tony Burke.

The VLC is about to contact all groups and networks, asking you to join at a nominal cost. Your voice and support can make a difference.

It also plans to expand the number of delegates from each CMA region from two to 10. This will provide better community representation, reduce the workload on current delegates and enable the organisation to achieve more. If you are interested in being a delegate, the VLC is keen to hear from you.

Barry Elliott, president of the Trentham Landcare Group in the south of our catchment, and Rod Allen are the delegates for the North Central CMA region.

For more information go to www.landcarevic.net.au/vlc or www.nln.org.au. To contact Barry email gelliott@netcon.net.au or Rod Allen at rodaau@yahoo.com

Sneak a peek

Even if you are not a resident of the Macedon Ranges Shire, its web site offers some good information for those involved in writing grant applications.

You will find a good listing of State and Federal government and non-government grants; links to searching tools; links to websites which offer tips, tools and information; and – here's a good one – tips on how to link your application with statistics and demographic data.

The shire would also like to remind its residents that its web address has changed. Go to www.mrsc.vic.gov.au

Worth a surf

As always there is plenty of interesting stuff on the web – it's just a matter of finding the time to go surfing.

The 'Fifteen Years of the Joint Venture Agroforestry Program' report from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation can be downloaded for free and this is good value, as the book is for sale for \$25!

It synthesises the knowledge generated over the last 15 years in the area of farm forestry research, development and extension. The main topics are farm forestry for multiple benefits; products and markets; public policy, investment options and grower initiatives; and socio-economic issues, training and extension.

Usefully, it also interprets the relevance of the knowledge for today's issues, and identifies future woody crop research, development and extension priorities. Go to www.rirdc.infoservices.com.au

Also on things woody, 'Australia's Forests at a Glance 2010' is a Bureau of Rural Sciences publication that contains up-to-date facts and figures about our forests and their management. It shows the key features of Australia's forest industries, including their size, location, contribution to the economy and export markets. Go to www.daff.gov.au/brs/publications/series

An extensive range of Landcare papers and information can be accessed at the Australian Agriculture and Natural Resources (AANRO) website. However this site will work best if you know what you are looking for; general searches can be cumbersome. Visit www.aanro.net

The internet site 'From the Soil Up' always has an interesting and diverse range of news and views, including the practical experiences of innovative farmers around the nation.

For example, Angus Maurice from Wellington, in central NSW, provides insight into the issues, improvements and management history of one of the paddocks that he has been managing with pasture cropping practices. Go to www.vimeo.com

Alan Clarke, another farmer from NSW, has modified his tyne combine by making and installing coulter on the front to cut through grasses, thus preventing valuable ground cover from being pulled out of the ground. Alan is hoping to recruit native grasses while still growing crops in a profitable manner.

Go to www.vimeo.com

And here's one that might put a cat among our project pigeons: France's highest court has ruled that 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".

For more, go to www.fromthesoilup.com.au. If you like what you see, consider subscribing.



FUNDING NEWS

Support for studies

To demonstrate its commitment to rural communities, the Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria offers six scholarships a year to young people studying in agriculture and related fields.

These scholarships can be a big help to families, as they are worth up to \$6,000 a year for the duration of a course.

To be eligible, students must have been under 26 on 1 January, and must be in the first or second year of their first undergraduate degrees. The tertiary institution must be in Victoria.

Young people must be committed to future careers in farming, agriculture, agribusiness, food science, forestry, horticulture or veterinary science, and/or intend to provide consultancy, research, technical or other services to agriculture.

Applications for 2010 close on 31 May. For more information go to www.ruralfinance.com.au, contact Ms Tanya Murphy at scholarships@ruralfinance.com.au or phone 03 5448 2608.

Junior Landcare

Don't forget that the second of the four rounds of Junior Landcare Grants for this year closes on Friday 14 May. Go to www.juniorlandcare.com.au for details.

Macedon Ranges scheme

Applications for the Shire of Macedon Ranges' 2010-2011 Community Funding Scheme close on 30 April, and intending applicants should note there are a number of changes to the scheme.

These include new guidelines and application form, compulsory contact with a council officer, an online application option and the introduction of environment assessment criteria.

The shire has also introduced another great initiative – four free grant-writing workshops to replace the information session. These were held in March and unfortunately we did not receive this information in time to include it in the March edition of 'Groundcover'.

To download a copy of the guidelines and an application form go to www.mrsc.vic.gov.au

Bushfire support

For communities in our region which were affected by the February 2009 bushfires, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal's Bushfire Grants Program is offering grants between \$1,000 and \$30,000.

You need to be a not for profit organisation with an ABN or an incorporation certificate.

Projects must benefit the broader community, contribute to community renewal and/or rebuilding in a variety of areas including social and community well-being, and the environment, and they should demonstrate a benefit in the medium to long term (up to 36 months after the fires).

Projects that are identified as part of the community recovery plans and by community recovery committees in affected communities will receive priority.

Applications close on 24 May. For more information phone 1800 170 020, go to www.frrr.org.au or email info@frrr.org.au

Youth projects

Groups seeking to engage and work with young people should check out the Myer Foundation's G4 (small grants) Fund, which offers up to \$5,000 for projects that contribute to the wellbeing of young Australians aged 12 to 25.

Eligible projects, including events, must involve environmental education driven by, targeting and/or involving young people, and/or build the capacity of youth organisations and/or involve activities and initiatives that address young people's health.

Only small community based organisations may apply. You must be incorporated. The current round closes on 21 April. There will also be two more rounds in 2010, closing on 7 July and 27 October.

For more information phone 03 9207 3040 or go to www.myerfoundation.org.au/programs

COURSES

Time for tea

Fusion Farms is presenting a three-day practical workshop on how to "hydrate, enhance and heal your soils" by understanding the soil food web and how to make biologically active aerated compost tea.

The workshop focuses on practical techniques for applying compost and compost teas for small, medium and larger-scale gardening, farming, grazing and forestry operations. The workshop is focused on taking the mystery out of the complex science of soil microbiology, while providing common-sense solutions to improving soils and reducing input costs.

Topics Include making inoculum compost, creating beneficial soil biology, nutrient retention, building soil structure, disease and weed suppression, and using the Keyline system with compost tea injection.

The cost is not small at \$420 – but note this is a Farm Ready approved course, meaning farmers will be reimbursed for their attendance by this government program. Check with Farm Ready by quoting course number FRTC0670.

The course runs from 13 to 15 May. For more information and to book, go to www.fusionfarms.com



LANDCARE FORUM REPORT

The face and direction of Landcare is changing, groups can no longer rely on generous swags of government support, but the movement will survive and thrive into a new exciting future - thanks to its passionate people and its strong links with its communities.

This was one of the main messages from the National Landcare Forum, held in Adelaide recently, according to some of our local Landcarers who were there.

Us Landcarers are a diverse lot, and this was reflected in the opinions expressed by the 650 people who attended and even in the feedback of our own north central representatives. But that doesn't stop people from enjoying multiple coffee conversations; inspiration and interaction were highlights of the event for many.

One of the main tasks was to workshop the draft of the new National Landcare Framework. Not everyone was happy with the arrangements, which saw the participants divided into 50 small groups, each commenting on just one aspect of the framework (thus unable to comment on others).

The responses again reflected a diversity of opinion, but most Landcarers think we do need this new framework; as Barry Elliott notes, we have had the Decade of Landcare, and how we need a new policy to replace it and take us forward.

Mal Brown was in a group focusing on the purpose of the framework, and there was consensus that the document should secure both government commitment to Landcare, and ongoing financial support for both the movement and its onground works.

Some found the enormous program on day one – involving 20 speakers but no audience interaction or questions – rather overwhelming, but there was praise for many speakers and it was noted that the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, spoke very well.

Workshops and presentations both invoked gloom – think climate change and food security; and light at the end of the tunnel – think new partnerships and innovative partnering strategies (such as the Green Nomad movement in southern Queensland), new pest plant and animal control methods, and carbon emissions-eating algae.

Participants got a clear message that we cannot rely solely on government funding and that we must get smarter at partnering with the corporate sector to continue to make a difference. As Penny Wall notes, there is no magic bullet and we all have to take ownership of Landcare and our future.

On the sunny side, the success of junior Landcare and other educational programs for young people is heartening, as is the "very positive" attitude of the new generation of young Landcarers at the forum and around the country.

To check out the proceedings in more detail, and access the technical papers, go to www.nationallandcareforum.com.au and/or www.landcarefacilitator.com.au