

ground cover



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority
Connecting Rivers, Landscapes, People

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

December 2011

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hello everyone,
Merry Christmas!!!

'Tis the season to be jolly' and it has been a great time of year for me to get out and about and celebrate the festive season with some of you. I hope you have all had the chance to get together, celebrate and reflect on the achievements of your group.

It has been a busy couple of months in here and if you were thinking to yourself 'did I miss the November edition of Ground Cover?' - No you didn't. We decided not to put out a November edition as it was pretty hectic organising events, celebrations and finalising the 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants. Besides, what's better than finishing the year with a jam packed Christmas edition of Ground Cover?

One of the highlights of the year for me would definitely have to be the 25th Anniversary dinner event on Friday, 25 November at Bress Winery. The night was a great success with almost 200 people coming from all over the catchment to celebrate this significant milestone. Those who came got to sample some of the local produce while catching up with old friends and making new ones. Guest speaker Shanaka Fernando entertained the crowd with stories from his life and how he came about opening 'Lentil as Anything' - the first pay as you feel restaurant in Melbourne. He impressed everyone when he mentioned he rode to the event from Melbourne - yes, Melbourne!



Stuart McLean (North Central CMA Board Member), Derek de Vrieze (Community Banking Manager, bankmecu), Tamsin Byrne (Sutton Grange and Axe Creek Landcare Groups) and Maurie Dynon (Guildford Upper Loddon Landcare Group) cutting the 25th Anniversary cake. Photo: courtesy of Anthony Webster.

THIS MONTH'S CONTENTS

NEWS	Page 2
EVENTS	Page 5
COURSES & RESOURCES	Page 5
FUNDING NEWS	Page 6

The 25th Anniversary event was a great opportunity to recognise members of the Landcare community who were nominated for the Victorian Landcare Honour Roll. We were lucky enough to get two honour roll recipients, Maurie Dynon and Tamsin Byrne, to cut the cake and officially celebrate 25 Years of Landcare. Both Maurie and Tamsin have made significant contributions to their Landcare communities and were nominated by members of their group to be placed on the Victorian honour roll.

I hope you enjoy this last edition of Ground Cover for 2011. We will be back in January to kick off 2012.

Before I sign off for the year I would like to thank you all for yet another fantastic year on behalf of the Landcare Team at the North Central CMA. It is a pleasure to work with so many motivated, knowledgeable and enthusiastic people.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a safe and happy new year!

Jodie Odgers

Regional Landcare Coordinator
North Central Catchment Management
Authority
PO Box 18 Huntly, VIC 3551
Phone: 03 5448 7124
Email: jodie.odgers@nccma.vic.gov.au



NEWS

2011 State Landcare Awards

Media contact Kate Walshe Victorian Government

Victoria's Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith has paid tribute to thousands of Landcare volunteers across the state at the 2011 Victorian Landcare Awards ceremony at Government House with Governor Alex Chernov AO QC.

Mr Smith said the awards celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Landcare and the great work done by thousands of volunteers across the state who make a difference in their local environment by supporting and maintaining the great natural assets throughout Victoria.

"Landcare is a grass-roots environmental movement that was started by a group of Victorian farmers in the 1980s and what has been achieved since then deserves our praise and ongoing support," Mr Smith said.

"The winners of the 2011 Victorian Landcare Awards embody the enthusiasm and commitment that has made Landcare in Victoria what it is today and I'd like to congratulate the Highly Commended and all nominees for their solid efforts.

"These Victorians give up their time to make a difference in their local areas and the Victorian Landcare Awards are a great opportunity to celebrate and recognise the real difference volunteers can make to the environment and to our community," Mr Smith said.

"The Victorian Coalition Government delivered \$12 million in the 2011-12 Budget to fund 60 Landcare facilitators across the state to assist in managing practical programs that help the environment.

"The government has also delivered \$600,000 for Landcare to progress the vital work that Landcare volunteers perform in Victoria.

"These awards recognise what Landcare is all about, people working together to put the environment first, while strengthening community partnerships.

"I hope that all Victorians will join me in recognising the significant impact that Landcare has had on our environment and our community," Mr Smith said.

North central region – Honour roll recipients

10-15 years

Gerard Briody, Tamsin Byrne, Charlie Dean, Dal McErvale, Moira McLennan, Lawrence Richmond and Peter Wingfield

15-20 years

Clare Claydon, Maurice Dynon, Barry Herbertson, Bernadine Kelly, Stephen Loader, Helen Muller, Robert Muller and Peter Stone

20-25 years

David Jolly

25+ years

Ian Higgins and Alexander Wiseman

2011 State Landcare Award Winners

Urban Landcare Award – Friends of Merri Creek

Leighton Holdings Indigenous Award – Darren Perry

Local Government Landcare Partnership Award – Corangamite Shire Council

Toshiba Landcare Community Group Award – Friends of Willow Park

Be Natural Young Landcare Leader Award – Cate Barham, Ocean Grove Coastcare

Westpac Education Award – Ballarat Christian College

Citipower and Powercor Landcare Network Award – South Gippsland Landcare Network

Australian Government Individual Landcarer Award – Shaun and Lisa McIntyre, Panyabyr Landcare

Australian Government Coastcare Award – Friends of the Great South West Walk

Australian Government Local Landcare Facilitator/Coordinator Award – Belinda Brennan, South Gippsland Landcare Network

Australian Government Natural Resource Management (NRM) Award – West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Australian Government Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices Award – Gecko CLaN Pasture Cropping Project

DPI Sustainable Farming Awards (regional)

Corangamite Region – Troy Missen, Woody Yaloak Catchment Group

East Gippsland Region – Rick and Jenny Robertson, Bengworden Landcare

North East Region – Neil Paulet and Janice Horsfield, Tallangatta Valley Landcare

Port Phillip and Westernport Region – Faye Tuchtan and Graham Wood, Bass Valley Landcare

West Gippsland Region – Elizabeth Balderstone, Woodside Landcare

Rural Press Primary Producer Award – Elizabeth Balderstone

Heather Mitchell Memorial Fellowship – Karen Brisbane, Goulburn Murray Landcare

Dr Sidney Plowman Travel and Study Award – Malcolm Thompson, Mallee Landcare

Bushfire Recovery Award

- Baw Baw Shire Council

- Nillumbik Shire Council Natural Environment Recovery Working Group

- Upper Goulburn Landcare Network

Long Service to Landcare Award – Max Skeen

Key environmental organisations pledge to work together

Leading environmental non-profit organisations, Greening Australia and Landcare Australia have recently signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on projects and programs that can be delivered more effectively in partnership between both organisations.

Both will apply their extensive expertise and experience to determine appropriate opportunities to work collaboratively, which could potentially include opportunities under the Carbon Farming Initiative and the Land Sector Package of the Clean Energy Future Plan, among others.

To read more about both organisations, please visit www.greeningaustralia.org.au and www.landcareonline.com.au.

Which eucalypt is that?

Written by Connecting Country

How long have eucalypts been in Australia and are they unique to this continent? These were some of the questions answered in Connecting Country's first Eucalypt ID Workshop held at Ian Grenda's property in Maldon on 6 November.



Participants put their identification skills to the test. Photo courtesy of Connecting Country.

Michael Luke and Greg Guy took the 15 participants through a detailed exploration of eucalypts with particular emphasis on those common in central Victoria. Information covered botanical features, distribution, regeneration, adaptive patterns and variations within species.

Greg explained the use of a 'key' to identify different species and participants were given hands-on identification practice using various collections of fruit, bark, juvenile foliage and buds as markers.

The Eucalypt ID Workshops were also held in Castlemaine, Sutton Grange and Newstead. Connecting Country is currently planning its 2012 educational program and details will be announced as soon as available.

Community Action Grants announced

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig, and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Mike Kelly, have announced \$7 million in Community Action Grants as part of the Caring for our Country initiative.

The program, now in its third year, enables local community groups to take action and make a difference through the conservation and protection of their local environment.

To date Community Action Grants have funded more than 1,250 projects to a value of \$23.5 million and are delivered by 927 community groups across Australia. In this round of funding there were a total of 365 successful projects across Australia, 90 of which are Victorian projects. Out of the 90 Victorian projects nine are from the North Central CMA region and will be delivered by four Landcare and five community groups.

The total funding for the north central Victoria projects is \$143,790 with individual project funding ranging from \$5,350 to \$20,000.

More information about Caring for our Country, including a complete list of successful Community Action Grant projects go to www.nrm.gov.au.

Congratulations to the nine groups in the north central Victoria region that were successful in securing funding. They are:

- Australian Freshwater Turtle Conservation & Research Association Inc.
- Avoca Business & Tourism Inc.
- Baynton Sidonia Landcare Group
- Blampied Kooroocheang Landcare Group
- Campaspe Rive and Land Management Group
- Friends of Cornish Hill
- Natte Yallock Landcare Group
- Newstead Landcare Group
- Redesdale Fire Land Management Sub Committee

Can't see the grassland for the trees: Inappropriate tree planting in native grasslands

Written by Jim Radford, Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Deanna Marshall, Trust for Nature.

Seemingly vacant roadsides and miscellaneous public reserves scattered throughout agricultural landscapes often harbour native grassland remnants. Often, there is a lack of understanding that these valuable treeless ecosystems are an integral part of the landscape, and support much biodiversity not found in treed ecosystems.

Inappropriate tree planting can be a major threat to these grassland remnants. Trees may compete for resources (space, light, water, nutrients) with grassland species, altering species composition and vegetation structure.

Even if tree planting may not significantly damage grassland remnants, site preparation may have major impacts. Disturbance such as cultivation, deep ripping and weed control results in habitat destruction, damage to the soil crust, weed invasion and soil erosion that can be expensive or even impossible to repair.



Inappropriate tree planting at Towaninny South Flora Reserve.
Photo: Courtesy of DSE.

The natural distribution of vegetation types, such as 'woodlands', 'treeless plains' and 'drainage lines' are strongly linked to soils and associated parent materials and geomorphic processes. These patterns are not random. Revegetation projects should aim to match species with these natural patterns.

Altering the vegetation structure can also have unintended consequences for fauna. For example, Plains-wanderers will not inhabit grassland areas close to trees because of the threat from birds of prey that use trees as perch sites.

If your community group is planning any tree planting projects, be sure to check with the land owners/managers, be it Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Local Shire, Vic Roads etc., that trees are being planted in areas that are suitable and that you have approval from the land owners/managers to undertake the project.

Flood victims urged to seek support

While the floodwaters have receded, many of those affected are still experiencing hardship, particularly in negotiations with insurance companies, banks and utilities.

St Luke's wants affected people in the Kerang district, and the Campaspe, Central Goldfields and Buloke Shire communities to know that it's not too late to ask for a supportive helping hand with these difficult and sometimes distressing issues. Tony Naughton, financial counselling team leader at St Luke's, says some people may not be aware that his team is still helping people affected by floods and welcomes new enquiries. "People may not be aware of what our financial counsellors can do for them," said Mr Naughton. "If they are having problems

with their insurance company, or need support negotiating with banks and other lenders, a financial counsellor can help them understand their rights, discuss their options, and work with them to mitigate the financial impacts on households and businesses.

"It's not too late to seek some assistance, and there is no charge for our service. We encourage people to come forward for a chat or just to find out what we offer," he said.

In particular, Mr Naughton is keen to stress that it is not too late to lodge an insurance claim or to dispute a rejected claim. St Luke's counsellors can assist clients with appeals, free of charge. Rejected claims can be reviewed at no cost by the Financial Ombudsman Service, and the Insurance Law Service, which is also free, may also be of assistance. St Luke's can help clients access these services.

"Mould, rising damp and newly presenting structural damage are now issues for many people. There are also people still out of work or unable to move back into their homes. We can help clients to deal with these issues and get their lives back on track," Mr Naughton said. "We don't concentrate just on people's problems or short-term relief from daily crisis. Instead, we look with them at a future that they choose for themselves."

To contact St Luke's financial counselling service phone 1800 244 323. To contact the Insurance Law Service phone 1300 663 464.

Splendor in the grass

Written by John Childs

A two-day Grass Identification and Management course, presented by Ecologist Dr Graeme Lorimer PhD, from Biosphere Pty Ltd proved to be popular event in Bendigo in November.

It was jointly organised by the North Central CMA and Trust for Nature, and hosted by BRIT, Charleston Road campus. Thirty land managers were selected for the course, from areas as diverse as metropolitan Melbourne, to Kerang and Heathcote, through to the Grampians.

For an astrophysicist Dr Lorimer proved very down to earth, imparting a good understanding of the ecology of grasslands. The group made good use of the BRIT lab facilities, learning the principles of grass identification with the assistance of the CSRIO "Aus Grass" software, and a USB microscope. Theory was then combined with two field trips. On day one, to a former stock reserve close to campus and further afield on day two, to the Trust for Nature Kinypanial Grassland Reserve.

The course was seamlessly choreographed, by Kirsten Hutchinson, Trust for Nature (TFN), and Ashley Beven, North Central CMA.

The strong support for the course and positive comments from participants indicate there is a growing interest in native grass species, their ecology, and management.



Dr Graeme Lorimer talking to the group on one of the field trips.
 Photo: Courtesy of Kirsten Hutchinson, Trust for Nature (TFN)

Responsible banking from bankmecu

For more than 50 years bankmecu has been offering a range of responsible banking products and today is one of Australia's strongest and largest customer owned banks.

Being a customer owned bank makes us accountable to our customers, who are also our owners. We exist to return profits back to our owners and maximise benefits to all our customers in the form of better rates, lower fees and a responsible approach to banking.



We offer products such as our award winning goGreen® Car and Home Loans, credit cards, personal loans and savings and investment accounts which offer a responsible return on your cash. bankmecu customers can make a positive contribution to the environment and community simply by choosing to bank with us.

As part of our commitment to responsible banking, bankmecu has set up a world-first Conservation Landbank. Developed in partnership with Landcare Australia and Trust for Nature, the Landbank consists of 657 hectares on three properties in Victoria's West Wimmera region, where in partnership with Landcare and Trust for Nature we are protecting remnant forest and restoring degraded farmland.

Biodiversity redevelopment on the Landbank enables bankmecu to offset biodiversity loss associated with new home constructions we finance and provides bankmecu the opportunity to offset carbon emissions generated from the cars our customers purchase and we finance.

To find out more visit www.bankmecu.com.au or call 132 888.

EVENTS

2012 National Soils Forum - Bendigo, 8 and 9 March 2012

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is hosting the 2012 NATIONAL SOILS FORUM in Bendigo.

The forum will bring together key landholders, local farmers, scientists and policy makers to discuss how we secure the productive and environmental values of our soils in north central Victoria.

- Date:** Thursday 8 and Friday 9 March 2012
Times: Thursday 10am – 5.30pm: Field trips and trade exhibitions
 5.30 pm: Civic reception
 7pm: Gala dinner
 Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm: Forum and trade exhibitions
Venue: Quality Resort All Seasons, McIvor Road, Bendigo

Keynote speakers include Dr Julian Cribb, journalist, editor, science communicator and author of *The Coming Famine* and Dr. Peter Carberry, Deputy Director for the CSIRO Sustainable Agriculture Flagship program.

The forum will include field trips and trade exhibits, and cover climate change, contemporary farming systems, and economic circumstances that place pressure on the land.

The forum is delivered under the North Central CMA's *Farming for Sustainable Soils* project – an initiative supported by the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* program.

For further information and registration including details of field trips, contact the North Central CMA on 03 5448 7124 or email info@nccma.vic.gov.au Please RSVP by February 9, 2012.

COURSES & RESOURCES

12 month delay on OHS legal changes

The Victorian Government has proposed delaying changes to occupational health and safety laws that would see organisations assume greater responsibility for the welfare of their volunteers.

In a statement issued in late September, the Assistant Treasurer said that lack of clarity in the Commonwealth model regulations would make it difficult for Victoria to progress the legislative change next year.

However, as a federal initiative the Commonwealth government must agree to the delay and this would have implications for other states and territories. Whether or not the changes will be delayed is therefore still uncertain.



In the meantime, Volunteering Victoria has developed a fact sheet on the broad principles of the new legislation. Go to www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au and download Fast Facts – Health & Safety for Volunteers from the Resources section of the website.

Volunteering is catching: A study into young people's volunteering in Victoria 2011

From Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), this report explores volunteering engagement by young Victorians', in particular its impact and meaning for those who take part. The results can help organisations to make the most of their young volunteers; whether retaining existing volunteers or recruiting the next generation. This might be a useful read for groups interested in targeting the younger generations.

Download the report at www.yacvic.org.au/sector/items/2011/10/384510-upload-00001.pdf

Everyone is a winner - Volunteering later in life

Older people who volunteer can be somewhat taken for granted. Now a recent Victorian parliamentary inquiry has given Volunteering Victoria the chance to shed more light on how and why our older citizens volunteer and what that contribution means to our communities.

Read the full story at www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au/volunteering-victoria/position-papers/580-everyones-a-winner-volunteering-in-later-life

Protecting private land and the national reserve system

In the Victorian Riverina, a region that stretches from the South Australian border in the west to Rutherglen in the east along the Murray Floodplain, we are looking for private landowners who are interested in protecting their land forever.

This part of the State is rich in biodiversity and has been rated as nationally and internationally important. The Trust for Nature 'Protected Areas on Private Land' team is currently talking to people in the Victorian Riverina area about managing and protecting the fantastic natural values throughout the area - the grasslands, woodlands, waterways and wildlife.

Trust for Nature works with the National Reserve System in the Victorian Riverina to protect private land and habitat and therefore contribute to Australia's reserve system.

If you would like more information, please download the brochure from the website www.trustfornature.org.au or call Trust for Nature on (03) 8631 5888.

What is iMap?

iMap is an interactive mapping system, which displays key regional spatial information data which can be used for strategic Natural Resource Management planning at a property, community group and regional scale. The user is able to produce and download a map which contains the spatial data of interest, including the latest aerial imagery.

Head to the North Central CMA website www.nccma.vic.gov.au and click on the link under the 'Find it' section to try out iMap.

FUNDING NEWS

Flood recovery and enhancement works- funding now available

Individuals, Landcare and Natural Resource Management groups have until Monday 9 January 2012 to apply for grants of up to \$20,000 to undertake flood-related environmental recovery and enhancement works.

The North Central CMA is managing the funding made available by the Australian Government's *Natural Disaster Environmental Recovery* program to support the community to do this important work.

Mr Daniel Mudford, Flood Recovery Manager with the North Central CMA, said the funding is for projects that repair recent flood damage to previous environmental protection works, such as revegetation or fencing, and/or protect or enhance environmental benefits from the floods such as natural regeneration.

Mr Mudford confirmed the funding is in addition to the Australian Government's *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Funding* that was recently announced.

"This new funding extends our flood recovery program. It allows us to get much needed assistance to communities, landholders and Landcare groups to reinstate previous environmental works funded through government programs, such as Envirofund, that have not been covered until now. We have also seen many environmental benefits from the floods - including mass regeneration of native plants - that are important to protect as we may not see this happen again for a while.

"Funded activities may include flood debris cleanup, repairing damaged fences which were erected to protect native vegetation and erecting new fencing in areas where important native vegetation has germinated following the floods, particularly along waterways.

"Other possible activities include re-establishing damaged revegetation; weed control works where sites have been exposed to increased weed risk as a result of the floods (soil or plant material movement) and rabbit control to prevent predation on sensitive vegetation.

"Where works are aimed at protecting any environmental benefits from the floods, priority will be given to works that



target the critically endangered White Box, Yellow Box, Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodlands."

Further information including the guidelines and application form are available from the North Central CMA's website www.nccma.vic.gov.au. Ms Phoebe Smith from the North Central CMA is also available to answer questions and can be contacted on (03) 5440 1811 or 0419 177 620 or email phoebe.smith@nccma.vic.gov.au.

Victorian women's grants program open

The Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust's annual grant program is open for applications with this year's General Grants having a major focus on projects which foster partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls.

The Victorian Women's Trust says in the broader context, the grants program will address economic, cultural or social disadvantage experienced by Victorian women and girls.

In 2012 they will celebrate a unique 20-year partnership with Koorie Women Mean Business and their work to enhance the status, capacity, independence and well-being of Koorie women.

Accordingly the 2012 General Grants Program has a major focus on projects that foster partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls, working on issues within their communities to 'close the gap'.

Grants commonly range from \$2,000 – \$10,000, with occasional consideration of larger amounts. Applications close 5pm Monday 30th January 2012, with decisions made late July.

For more details visit www.vwt.org.au.

Action on the Ground Grants

\$99 million over four years in Action on the Ground funding (part of the Clean Energy Futures Program) has been announced by the Federal Agriculture Minister. This funding program is designed to enable on-farm trial and demonstration of practices and abatement technologies to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

This will be achieved by supporting landholders, research, industry, non-government, government and farmer 'care' 'grower' groups/organisations trial and demonstrate on-farm management practices and technologies that can reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase carbon stored in soil.

Grants up to a maximum of \$605,000 (inc. GST) are available for four years until June 2015, with funding between \$55,000 and \$385,000 (inc. GST) available in 2011/12.

For more information visit: www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/carbonfarmingfutures/action-on-the-ground or call 1800 025 005. Applications close on 8 February 2012.

Biodiversity Fund Opens

This funding is to build connectivity and resilience in the landscape by promoting biodiverse carbon plantings and revegetation, management of existing biodiverse carbon stores and managing pests in a connected landscape.

Under the first round of the Biodiversity Fund, more than \$30 million will be allocated to activities this financial year to help farmers and other land managers to store carbon, enhance biodiversity, manage pests and invasive species and increase resilience across the Australian landscape.

For more information please visit:

www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture or call 1800 008 678. Applications close 5 pm AEDT Tuesday 31 January 2012.

Funding Proposals Invited through Caring for Our Country

The Federal Government is seeking applications for grants for natural resource management and sustainable agriculture projects that address the Business Plan targets and can be completed by June 2013. Funding for \$64 million is available under this business plan for projects in the 2012/13 financial year.

For more information go to: www.nrm.gov.au or by calling 1800 552 008. Applications close 9 February 2012.

Biochar Research Funding

\$2 million in funding competitive grants for biochar research has been announced by the Federal Agriculture Minister under Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI).

For more information go to:

www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/cfi/biochar. Applications close 3 February 2012.

Merry Christmas
And have a safe and
Happy New Year!

