



North Central chat

NOVEMBER 2012

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

A message from the Regional Landcare Coordinator

Hi everyone,

Summer is almost here and I am starting to wonder where the year has gone! As per usual it has been another hectic month.

On the first Saturday of the month I headed north to the Cohuna Festival where the North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) hosted an event 'Discover Gunbower Creek by Canoe'. The weather was glorious and we had plenty of willing participants who spent the afternoon on the water, learning about the inhabitants of the creek and how the surrounding land uses can influence the health of the waterway. At one part of the tour we struggled to paddle through a section of the creek because it was full of the Pale Yellow Water Lilly (*Nymphaea sp.*). It is an introduced species that is characterised by its heavy green foliage and pale yellow flowers. The lily causes problems by blocking waterways and impacting on irrigation and recreational use. The North Central CMA, in partnership with Goulburn-Murray Water, is currently undertaking works to control the Pale Yellow Water Lilly on the Gunbower Creek.

After an hour or so on the water we paddled back to Apex Park for the launch of the new North Central Waterwatch Fish Field Guide. This is the second in a series of field guides produced by North Central CMA Waterwatch. Congratulations to Cass Davis, Regional Waterwatch Coordinator, who has produced yet another fantastic resource. Each group will receive a copy with this edition of the newsletter in the mail - enjoy!

This month I also took part in a Native Grass Identification (ID) course hosted by the North Central CMA Landcare team and Trust for Nature. Paul Foreman taught us how to identify grasses over two days. This was clearly a highlight of the year for me. Paul is a local botanist and ecologist with more than 20 years of experience and his

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ability to ID grasses was nothing short of amazing! Each group spent a day in the laboratory learning the techniques of identifying grasses and using the sometimes scary keys before spending a day in the field putting what we learnt into action.

A friendly reminder before I say farewell for another edition of the chat - please make sure you submit your outstanding final reports.

Until next time,

Jodie Odgers

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News...

Baynton Sidonia Landcare Group ran another successful seminar

Almost 100 people packed into the Baynton Hall on Saturday 20 October to learn from Monash University's Dr Beth Gott about Aboriginal Uses of Indigenous Plants.

Dr Gott explained to the audience that each Aboriginal clan, prior to European settlement, was responsible for the ecological health of its area - they did not 'own' land in the European sense.

Roots provided the bulk of the Aboriginal diet and chief among these in the local area was 'Murnong' or yam daisy, once abundant and widespread, but now almost extinct here. Other roots prepared and eaten were the roots of orchids, lilies, bracken, and some water plants.

Dr Gott described a frequent burning regime that kept the woodland open and clear of the larger understorey plants that would suppress the valuable root-producing plants. Burning, on the say so of the Elders, would be completed in sections, producing a mosaic effect. She explained that the burning of grasslands maintained an open structure between grass tussocks which gave room for food plants to grow and was also where many small animals lived and formed an important part of the Aboriginal diet.

Dr Gott reiterated the adage frequently quoted in Aboriginal circles "Look after the land and the land will look after you". She also quoted Deborah Bird Rose, the Sydney-based academic, "We have to learn to listen to what the land says about itself".

Earlier in the afternoon, Dr Gott had conducted a tour of a Glenhope garden that features mainly indigenous understorey plants. She then demonstrated some Aboriginal techniques in fibre production but agreed not to pull up any plants to show their edible roots!

Bob Gray, Chairman of the Landcare group, said "We were really lucky to have someone of the calibre of Dr Gott come and talk to our group. Her knowledge is extraordinary and she is quite an inspiration to all. The feedback we have received from seminar participants is that there is a considerable number of people in the area deeply interested in the Aboriginal way of life and land management and hungry for more information."

Weed of the month...

Weeds Identification Guide - North Central Victoria.

Coming into summer you might see this weed that spreads easily from seed. It's a grass that is found throughout the North Central CMA region. Have you spotted this one before?

Grass

AFRICAN LOVEGRASS

Eragrostis curvula

(Weeping Lovegrass, Curved Lovegrass)

Description: A vigorous tussocky grass to 120 cm tall and reproducing by seed.

Flowers: Same colour as the plant. Found in clusters on small branches at the end of each stem. Each cluster may contain 3-14 flowers up to 10 mm long and 1 mm wide. Flowers in summer.

Leaves: Vary from green to blue green, usually hairless and curled at the edges. Blades 25-35 cm long and 3 mm wide. Obvious ridges run the length of the leaves making them rough to touch. A conspicuous ring of hairs between the leaf blade and its covering sheath.

Stems: Slender and erect. Sometimes bent at the lower nodes.

Note: A highly persistent summer weed that will dominate sparsely covered and disturbed areas. Spreads easily from seed.

Regionally Controlled Weed Perennial

CONTROL OPTIONS

VECTOR OF SPREAD

J F M A M J J A S O N D



The evening's lecture was preceded by an excellent meal catered for by Burke and Wills Track Winery. The event was funded with Bushfire Recovery funding via the North Central CMA.

The next seminar in the series will be about insects and will take place in early February 2013. Further information is available by emailing info@bsclg.com.au.

Victorian Coalition Government unveils Environmental Partnerships plan

Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Ryan Smith, is encouraging all Victorians to get more involved in helping protect and enhance the environment under a new partnership approach.

The Victorian Coalition Government's recently released 'Environmental Partnership' lays the foundation for government, business, industry, community groups and individuals to work together to undertake practical and effective actions to preserve the environment for current and future generations.

Mr Smith says Environmental Partnerships are built on three fundamental aspirations: Value, Act and Enjoy.

"All Victorians value their natural environment and together we need to take action to protect and conserve the environment so we can enjoy these wonderful natural assets now and into the future.

"Environmental Partnerships sets a clear pathway for action by government, community and businesses to work in partnership to maintain a healthy environment and lifestyle while securing a competitive economy.

"The Coalition Government aims to deliver better environmental outcomes through practical action, effective regulation and better services. We will use innovative options that better integrate planning at a local, regional and state level to target investment and improve on-ground outcomes."

Mr Smith says Victoria's environment faces a range of pressures from increasing resource use, extreme weather events and a rapidly growing population.

"Victoria's population is expected to increase by 3.2 million by 2051. This is growth that will require homes, energy, food and jobs to support it. As a responsible government we need to provide for this growth, however it should not be at the expense of the environment," Mr Smith says.

Environmental Partnerships identifies eight priorities to help achieve the vision of a healthy Victorian environment that supports the state's economic prosperity and community wellbeing, these are:

- Maintain healthy biodiversity and productive landscapes from catchment to coast
- Manage our valuable parks, forests and other public land for the benefit of the community
- Manage risks to our communities and landscape from bushfire and floods
- Reduce pollution and improve waste management
- Be smarter with energy and water and prepare for the potential impacts of climate change
- Support practical local action
- Drive best practice environmental regulation and innovative market approaches
- Ensure accountable and efficient environmental agencies.

Mr Smith also announced \$1 million in community grants, as part of the Coalition Government's Communities for Nature initiative and the *Healthy Parks, Healthy People* program, to help Victorians do their share in creating a healthy environment (see Pages 7 and 8 of this newsletter).



Campaspe Valley Landcare Group - Spring wildflower walk

The Campaspe Valley Landcare Group held another successful spring wildflower walk on Sunday 21 October, at Mike Jones' 40-acre property in Barfold. Over 30 people attended and after a bacon and egg sandwich breakfast, all headed off for a look at the many and varied wildflowers.



Mike's property has been under a Trust for Nature conservation covenant since 1996. The covenant assists in the protection of the indigenous flora and fauna by, amongst other things, restricting the felling of trees and grazing of animals. The property backs onto the Barfold Common and was completely burnt out in the Black Saturday bushfires in February 2009.

Due to the wet weather since the fires, regeneration has been prolific. However, the thick understorey and many fallen trees have resulted in an explosion of the rabbit population and this, Mike believes, has led to a reduced wildflower display this year.

Last year Mike created ten small exclusion areas around the property to protect indigenous flora from grazing by rabbits, hares, wallabies and kangaroos. This year, in some of the areas, there is a definite difference in the extent of grazing and the number of wildflowers within the exclusion areas, compared with ground immediately outside. It will be interesting in years to come,

especially after a few dry years, to see how marked this difference becomes.

Even though the number of wildflowers was down this year, there were still many to be seen on the walk - the most common being Daphne Heath, Shiny Everlasting, Billy's Buttons, Milkmaids, Narrow-leaved Bitter-pea (*pictured left*), Chocolate Lily, Wax-lip Orchid, Guinea Flower, Yam-daisy, Rice Flower, Golden Moths and Creamy Stackhousia. Other finds were Australian Bluebell, Grey Parrot Pea, Leopard Orchid, Pink Bells, Purplish Beard Orchid (*pictured below*), Twining Fringe Lily and Black-anther Flax-lily.

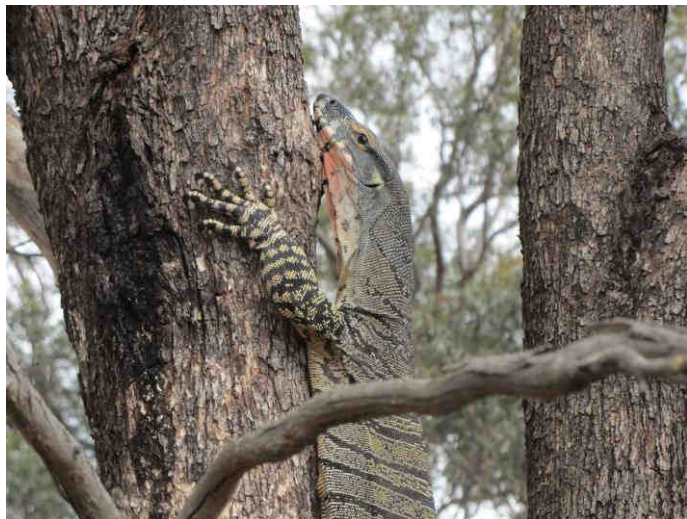
Another very rare orchid, the Crimson Spider Orchid (*Caladenia clavescens*), has been found at Mike's place. This orchid is only found in a few locations and only in the goldfields area. A fenced exclusion area protects the orchid - the only one ever to be found in this part of the goldfields. Unfortunately, it doesn't appear every year and hasn't since the fire but Mike is still hopeful it will appear again...maybe next year.





Snaps of the month!

Last month I asked you to send in photos that you thought were interesting or just cool! Here are two that I have received.....



The weather is warming up and you might be lucky enough to see one of these fellas when you are out and about. The photo above was taken by Anthony Sloan, North Central CMA Catchment Restoration Officer, when out in the field inspecting flood recovery works. This Lace Monitor, also known as a Tree Goanna, is Australia's second-largest land lizard; they occasionally reach a length of two metres.

Can you identify the plant in the picture below? Max Schlachter, Mount Alexander Region Landcare Facilitator at Connecting Country, took it during the Campaspe Valley Landcare Group's spring wildflower walk. Some have suggested that it is a type of gall. If you know what it is then please let me know and I can share it with everyone in the next newsletter?



Send your snaps, we would love to include them in the next edition of the newsletter. Email them to jodie.odgers@nccma.vic.gov.au.

Finding the Needle Grass in a Hay Paddock

A successful Chilean Needle Grass identification workshop was held in Castlemaine on 25 October, with participants coming from near (next door) and far (Blackwood) to learn more about identifying and controlling this invasive spear grass.

The workshop was presented by Matt Sheehan, a local resident and National Weed-spread Coordinator for Chilean Needle Grass. Matt gave an excellent talk on how to differentiate between Chilean Needle Grass and some very similar native spear grasses in the field. With a cold and blustery wind helping to invigorate the minds of all involved, it only took a few minutes for seemingly harmless grasses on the adjacent roadside to be revealed as non-other than Chilean Needle Grass! Participants then went for a walk along nearby roadsides where there was plenty of Chilean Needle Grass to practise identifying - and practise pulling out.

Matt informed us that Chilean Needle Grass is a particularly clever plant (in a class of clever plants) because it has the ability to set seed at three different locations along the stem, including at the very base of the plant in some conditions. This, of course, presents a serious challenge to control efforts.

He also told us that there have been some great control program success stories in other parts of Victoria, particularly on agricultural sites. One of the biggest hurdles is identifying the plant in the first place. For the average botanist, this can only be done easily when the seed is set, roughly between October and January. Needle Grass seeds have a tiny corona, or raised ring at the top of the seed, where it joins the awn. This is absent in native spear grasses.

The workshop was organised by a group of concerned local residents who have taken action to try and eradicate the grass from their neighbourhood with help from the McKenzies Hill Action & Landcare Group. The workshop was part of a project funded by a North Central CMA Victorian Landcare Grant that includes on-ground works to remove Chilean Needle Grass in the area.



Events

Myrtle Rust - Information session

This is a reminder that there will be an information session about Myrtle Rust in Bendigo, Monday 3 December. Myrtle Rust is a serious fungal disease affecting the plant family Myrtaceae, which includes eucalypts and many other Australian native species.

Myrtle Rust has been detected in Victoria and is of serious concern because the fungus spreads very easily and the disease cannot be eradicated.



Date: 3 December 2012

Time: 10 am - 12 pm

Venue: The Capital Theatre, 50 View Street, Bendigo

Cost: None

RSVP: Not required

For further information please contact Anthony Sheean at the City of Greater Bendigo on 03 5434 6374.

Courses and resources

A new publication about Dung Beetles - available April 2013

Renowned Dung Beetle expert Dr Bernard Doube and organic agriculture expert Tim Marshall have teamed up to produce a new publication on Dung Beetles.

Dung Beetles: a friend to farmers and the environment is the definitive resource for farmers and land managers on the benefits and use of Dung Beetles.

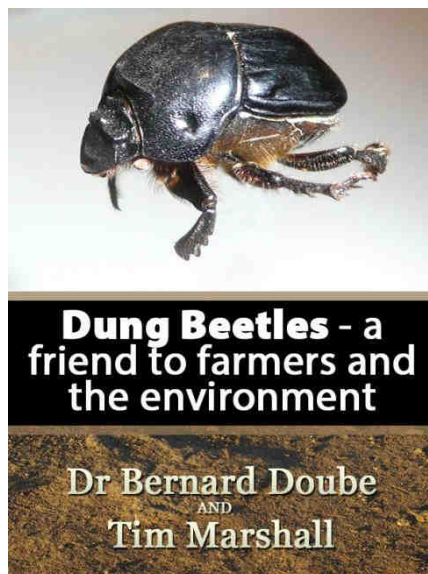
Covering both native and introduced species, this A4 colour booklet outlines the agricultural and environmental benefits of Dung Beetles.

There are sections on soil improvement, water quality improvement and pasture improvement, along with detailed descriptions and guidelines on the establishment and management of Dung Beetle colonies.

The publication will also feature specific regional information (at least one page per region) that will enable the booklet to have local relevance for your stakeholders.

Commonwealth funding for one region in South Australia has enabled the production of 1,500 copies and these will be available only to the sponsoring group in that region.

Additional commitments to printing this definitive publication will enable a much wider group of stakeholders to enjoy its benefits.



The authors are seeking expressions of interest in forward orders from organisations that support farmer groups, such as NRM groups, Landcare groups, Catchment Management Authorities, local councils and regional development boards.

If you would like to be involved in this project, and secure a fantastic resource for your group, email Bernardo@dungbeetlesolutions.com.au or phone 08 8339 4158.

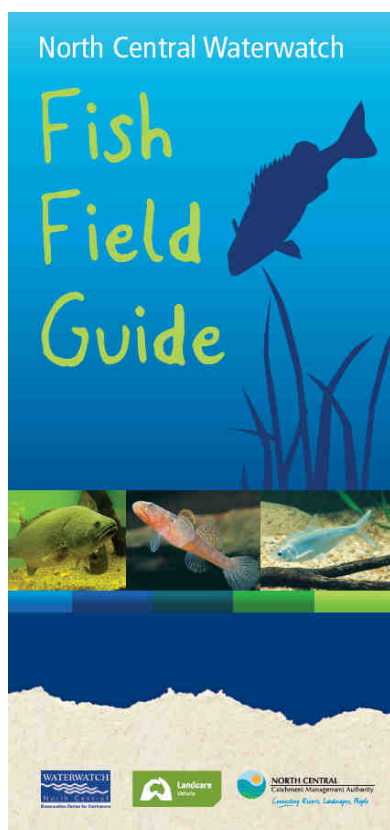
North Central Waterwatch Fish Field Guide

The new North Central Waterwatch Fish Field Guide is available for the community, landholders, school groups and Waterwatch monitors.

This is the second field guide in a series of three field guides being developed by North Central Waterwatch to help the community identify aquatic fauna found in our local waterways.

This new guide follows the huge success of the North Central Waterwatch Frogs Field Guide which provides information on frogs, including their description, what their calls sound like, breeding times and their habitats. The Fish Field Guide includes keys on tail shape, a description of species - including the fin position for easy identification - their habitat, conservation, breeding cycles, diet and also the threats to native fish in north central Victoria.

The field guide also highlights threatened species listed under state and/or national legislation and provides information on fish that have been translocated into the North Central CMA region.



Funding news

Parks Victoria 2012-13 Healthy Parks Healthy People Grants for Community Groups now open

2012-2013 Healthy Parks Healthy People Grants:

- Help local groups to deliver projects which protect and enhance the natural, cultural and heritage values of parks and reserves
- Provide diverse recreational, educational, cultural and tourism opportunities of importance to local communities
- Facilitate the involvement of the wider multicultural community in environmental and recreational projects
- Increases community awareness and understanding of parks and their values.

Healthy Parks Healthy People Grants are available to community-based groups/not for profit organisations such as (but not confined to):

- friends groups
- service clubs
- cultural groups
- migrant resource centres
- schools
- historic societies

View and download information from www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

Prospective applicants should contact the relevant Ranger-in-Charge for the park or reserve in which your group is planning to undertake the project, to obtain an application form and to discuss the proposal. The application can be filled in with the assistance of local staff and must be endorsed by the Ranger-in-Charge prior to submission.

Applications close 17 December 2012

Projects will commence as soon as possible after the pool of projects is assessed and successful projects approved.

Please phone 13 1963 if you are unsure of who to contact or for any further advice.

Communities for Nature Grants

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the Victorian community to contribute to practical on-ground solutions for local environmental issues.

The Communities for Nature grants program seeks to:

- support practical community action to deliver measurable environmental outcomes
- support community groups and volunteers undertaking works of primarily an environmental nature
- support communities with relevant and timely information to assess priorities at the local level to determine the best returns in undertaking on-ground works.

Communities for Nature grants are targeted towards local community groups and organisations, including schools.

Projects are expected to address local environmental issues such as:

- Biodiversity and habitat preservation (preservation of areas known for their biodiversity and habitat values)
- Threatened species recovery
- Sustainable management of native wildlife
- Revegetation (of areas that enhance existing habitat or connectivity)
- Cleaning up waterways (creeks, wetlands, streams, rivers and seas)
- Control of weeds and pest animals.

The program has up to \$700,000 to invest for the 2012 Small Grants funding opportunity for grants of up to \$10,000 each.

To apply

1. Visit www.dse.vic.gov.au/communitiesfornature and download the program guidelines and FAQs. You can also view the application form. If you are unable to access the internet, please call the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356 (during business hours).

2. It is strongly recommended that you contact the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356 to be put in touch with someone in your region who can provide technical input into your application.

3. Seek approval from the relevant land manager/owner to undertake works and consult with your local Shire/Council regarding any permits for works you may need.

4. Log on to www.dse.vic.gov.au/communitiesfornature.

5. Click on the application link to create a log on and draft your application. NB: your draft can be saved until you are ready to submit.

6. Print a copy of your application prior to submission and check all content. NB: You will be unable to edit your application after you submit it.

7. Remember to attach your map showing the project area/s as a shape file (see instructions on the webpage showing how to create your map).

Applications close at midnight Wednesday 19 December 2012.

For additional information please see the Communities for Nature Funding Guidelines and the Frequently Asked Questions on the webpage or call the Grants information line during business hours on PH: 1300 366 356.

